



Howard County
Compensation Review Commission

3430 Court House Drive
Ellicott City, MD 21043

December 7, 2021

Dear Chairperson Jones:

I am pleased to convey to the Howard County Council the final report of the 2021 Compensation Review Commission, and corresponding legislation.

By Council Resolution 118-2021 (adopted on September 8, 2021) and consistent with the requirements of Maryland and Howard County law, the following members were appointed to the Commission: Natasha H. Booms, Michael Butera, Karina Fisher, Ainy Haider-Shah, Eric Kelly, Kia Payne, and Kathryn Valentine. Over the past several months, the Commission interviewed and received written comments from the incumbent Council Members. The Commission also reviewed data related to Howard County budget, history, demographics, and projections coupled with a review of compensation and history for the Howard County positions and relevant, similar positions in other jurisdictions.

Our meetings were, of course, open to the public and we identified one meeting specifically as a public hearing.

After analysis of this data and substantial discussion, the Commission is recommending for the County Executive an increase of 3% in the first year of the new term and a 2.5% increase each subsequent year.

The Commission is recommending for members of the County Council that the base salary be \$73,663 for the first year of the term that begins December 2022 and that the salary be increased annually in equal dollar amounts so that in the fourth year of the term the salary is \$83,256. The Commission also recommends that the Chairperson of the Council should be paid a differential of \$3,500 over the base salary; that each Council Member be allocated a total of \$ 1,500 for the four year term that the Council Member may use to reimburse the costs of technology and electronic devices that are not provided by the County but are helpful in performing his or her duties; and that each Council Member be provided with a stipend of \$200 per month for communications services.

The Commission also recommends that the Council take specific action to authorize Zoning Board compensation at a rate no lower than the existing rate.

Commission members believe these salary recommendations will encourage those interested in public service to seek office without creating a Council composed of those who are only in it for the money. The recommendations also allow salaries to keep pace with inflation, to address the relatively high cost of living in Howard County, to appropriately compensate office holders for the intensive time demands on them, and to maintain a reasonable parity with the compensation of other elected officials elsewhere.

On behalf of the Commission members, I would like to thank the members of the County Council and the County Executive for giving us the opportunity to serve the community in this way. It has been a positive experience.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Michael A. Butera". The signature is written in a cursive style with a large initial "M" and a stylized "A".

Michael A. Butera, Chairperson



Howard County
Compensation Review Commission

3430 Court House Drive
Ellicott City, MD 21043

Report of the Compensation Review Commission

December 2, 2021

I. AUTHORITY OF COMMISSION

Section 10-302 of the Local Government of the Maryland Code authorizes Maryland charter counties to establish a commission to set compensation and allowances to be paid to members of each County's County Council, and Section 10-303 of the Local Government Article authorizes each County to set the compensation of the County Executive. In accordance with this State law authority, the Howard County Charter requires the County Council to establish a Compensation Review Commission every four years to review the compensation and allowances of the members of the County Council and to make recommendations to the Council on these matters for the ensuing four years. The Howard County Charter also requires that the Compensation Review Commission review and make recommendations on the County Executive's compensation following the same procedures used for the County Council.

Accordingly, this Compensation Review commission was established on September 8, 2021, by Council Resolution No. 118-2021, to make recommendations concerning the compensation and allowances for the members of the County Council and the County Executive to be elected in November 2022.

The following Commission members were appointed by Council Resolution No. 118-2021: Natasha H. Booms, Michael Butera, Karina Fisher, Ainy Haider-Shah, Eric Kelly, Kia Payne, and Kathryn Valentine.

II. STUDY

The Commission's role and responsibility were to recommend fair and equitable compensation for the positions of County Council member and County Executive. The

Commission did not consider the performance and personality of the incumbents. The Commission researched pertinent information concerning compensation issues and spent considerable time discussing the material. In addition, the Commission sought input from the County Executive and from all five current Council members to better learn the full range of duties and responsibilities of those offices and the incumbents' view on what they considered to be fair compensation given the changes that have occurred and continue to occur over time in those duties and responsibilities.

The Commission considered a variety of relevant pieces of information to evaluate current salaries and to form its recommendation for future salaries. These included the following: (1) responsibilities of the Council as a whole, (2) information received from the Council members, (3) benefits and perquisites to which these elected officials are entitled, (4) compensation of County Council members and County Executives (and analogous officials with different titles) from other counties in Maryland, other counties in Virginia, and a number of similar jurisdictions nationwide selected as similar by the National Association of Counties, (5) salaries of other County employees, (6) changes in salary and compensation for County officials and employees looking backward over time, (6) the cost of living in Howard County, (7) median incomes for Howard County individuals and household; and (8) selected demographic and economic information for the County, the State, and similar jurisdictions elsewhere.

In addition to the above, Amanda Mihill, Esq. from the County Office of Law, briefed the Commission on the legal issues involved in recommending compensation for the Council Members and County Executive as well as the application of the Open Meetings and Public Information laws and answered the Commissioners' questions about the application of laws.

COUNCIL MEMBERS

In reviewing information provided by Council Members and Council staff, the Commission concluded that Council Members worked each week on Council business for at least 30 hours and sometimes up to 80 hours. The workload is significant and intense particularly with the increased reliance on and access to social media and technology by both the Council Members and constituents.

Council Members have extensive responsibilities including handling legislative duties, zoning matters, alcoholic beverage matters, and reviewing and approving the County budget

each year. They spend a great deal of time doing constituent work and attending many meetings both in their districts and throughout the County. At times, contentious and complex issues can add substantially to the time demands.

Council Members are citizen legislators and some Members have other employment and all have other commitments for their time. Council Members have scheduling and other challenges as they accommodate their Council duties, their family obligations, and other responsibilities. Some Members participate in State, regional, and national entities as representatives of the Council. Although there was not a consensus among the incumbent Council Members about their compensation, all reported devoting enough hours to their duties that the Commission recognizes that the role should be considered as full-time.

COUNTY EXECUTIVE

Although an interview was not able to be held, the Commission received written comments from County Executive Calvin Ball.

The County Executive is responsible for the day to day operation of County government. By County Charter section 302, this is a full-time position. He is responsible for proposing the annual County budget, overseeing spending throughout the year, and for managing all departments of County government. The County Executive sets the direction for County government, makes policy in many areas and routinely makes major decisions that greatly affect the County and its residents. The Commission understands that County Executive's average work week is extensive with commitments that extend beyond normal business hours. He is responsible for an overall County budget of more than \$1.8 billion.

The Commission understands that County Executive spends a great amount of time dealing with the public and tries to attend County and community events to which he is invited. The County Executive seems to try to be accessible and visible to citizens.

The County Executive also participates in state and national organizations.

ANALYSIS

The Commission reviewed and discussed all of the background information provided by staff and the input provided by County Council Members. As previously stated, to determine the appropriate compensation for members of the County Council and the County Executive for the

term beginning after the election in 2022, the Commission considered and analyzed, in detail, a variety of issues.

The Commission agreed that it is essential that salaries for elected officials should be sufficient to attract a selection of high caliber and diverse candidates and to encourage participation in the process. To attract citizen representatives of all backgrounds and skills, the Commission thought that the salary must strike a difficult balance. It should not be so high as to make it the primary motivating factor for running for office, nor so low as to preclude people from running for office. These salaries should reflect the reality that it is a salary for full-time employment with extensive and varied responsibilities.

The Commission agreed that, because of the increased dependence on technology both as a boon and a burden (in that it provides residents 24/7 access to their government and compresses the timeframe of many activities involving our elected officials), the Executive and Council Members face considerable responsibilities and expectations with regard to serving a diverse, engaged, and challenging community, which should be reflected in their salaries.

The Commission compared the current salaries of the Council Members and the County Executive with those in other jurisdictions both in the State and elsewhere. The Commission reached its recommendations based on several key determinations. In reality, these positions are full-time and should be commensurately compensated. The roles of the officials in these positions has become more complex and demanding. These roles require individuals to have a breadth and depth of understanding of a myriad of issues and subjects, requiring considerable study and preparation. Compensation for Howard County's officials should on a par with those in peer jurisdictions and should reflect the County's economic standing. The Commission also considered the population of the County and each district in comparison to those figures in other jurisdictions.

The Commission considered the staff support, benefits, and perquisites available to Council Members and the Executive in forming its recommendations.

III. RECOMMENDATIONS

The Commission concluded that historically County officials have been under-compensated to a degree that has not been corrected by the annual adjustments recommended by previous commissions.

The Commission recommends that the base salary for a member of the County Council be \$73,663 for the first year of the term that begins in December 2022 and that the salary be increased annually in equal dollar amounts so that in the fourth year of the term the salary is \$83,256. The Commission also recommends that the Chairperson of the Council be paid a differential of \$3,500 over the base salary.

The Commission also recommends that the County Council's budget includes \$1,500 for each newly elected or re-elected Council Member to reimburse the costs of technology and electronic devices that are not provided by the County but are helpful in performing their duties. This fund is for the full term of the Council Member and any unused portion should be re-appropriated from year to year until the next election.

The Commission recommends that Council Members be provided a \$200 per month stipend for communications services and devices such as cell phones and hot spots.

The Commission recommends that the Council take specific action to authorize Zoning Board compensation at a rate no lower than the existing rate.

The Commission recommends for the County Executive an annual salary that is 3% greater than the current salary for the first year of the term that begins in December 2022 with a 2.5% increase each following December in the last three years of the term.

Respectfully submitted on December 7, 2021,

Natasha H. Booms

Michael A. Butera

Karina Fisher

Ainy Haider-Shah

Eric Kelly

Kia Payne

Kathryn Valentine