

## COMPENSATION REVIEW COMMISSION – 2021

### Questions to Council Members

For Council Members Jones, Jung, Rigby, and Yungmann, answers were provided by email. For Council Member Walsh, answers are paraphrased by staff from interview with the Commission.

#### **Stated as a weekly average, how much time do you devote to your duties as a Council Member?**

Walsh: 10 hours a week while on vacation but up to 60 hours, average 30, there is no down time

Jones: On average, I spend 30-50 hours a week on all of the above. Certain times are busier than others; for example during budget season. Other times not so much, for example recess in August.

Rigby: On a weekly average, I typically spend between 45 and 55 hours per week devoted to my duties as a Council Member.

Jung: 48-60

Yungmann: 25-30 hours

#### **What proportion of that time is devoted to (a) legislative matters (b) constituent services (c) attending meetings (d) managing employees and (e) other tasks (please describe)? Which of those are most important?**

Walsh: (b) staff mostly handles, maybe 3-4 hours; (c) 20 hours (d) 2 hours (e) social media, zoning board prep and participation; prep time, reading & studying ; legislative and zoning most important

Jones:

Rigby: (a) I would estimate that I spend roughly 20 hours a week on legislative matters. This includes all Council meetings & sessions, legislation drafting meetings with staff, meetings with Councilmembers & County Departments, and meetings with stakeholders. (c) I estimate that I spend roughly 10-12 hours a week attending meetings that are not related to legislation, which includes constituent services and constituent meetings. (d) I estimate that I spend roughly 5 hours a week managing employees. (e) I estimate that I spend 10-12 hours a week performing other tasks. This includes various events and community meetings that I attend in my capacity as Councilmember. This also includes monthly (and sometimes weekly) meetings participating in Howard County's Complete Streets Implementation Team, of which I am a voting member. There are also more irregular conferences, training sessions, and other educational programs that I participate in on a monthly basis, which add in to this total. (e) Since taking office, the Council has also spent over 160 hours in Zoning Board Sessions, which comes out to roughly 1-2 hours per week on average. I also spend 1-2 hours on average preparing for each Zoning Board Session.

Jung: (a) 20; (b) 8; (c) 20; (d) 8; (e) 4-putting out fires They are all important.

Yungmann: (a) 20% (b) 35% (c) 25% (d) 5% (e) attending community events 15% Legislative and community events are most important for my direct involvement. Constituent services can be handled by staff but I want to be involved. Had I left constituent service to staff my weekly average hours would be less.

**What skills and abilities must a person have as a Council Member and which of those are most important?**

Walsh: having legal background helpful to doing research and understanding legislation and government; trying not to be reactive; staying focused on own agenda

Jones: Honesty is a must! Other skills include people person skills, being able to compromise since we are a five-member body, a love for community service, and an open mind.

Rigby: Empathy, curiosity, and the ability to understand other people's experiences as extremely important skills that a person should have as a Council Member. Having a basic understanding of the authority and abilities of the County Council is important to have as a Council Member, as well as being an analytical thinker. Council Members also need fortitude, patience, and resilience to be successful in this job over the long-term. Perhaps the most important attribute is having a desire, willingness, and interest in learning more about complex processes and decisions that the Council has to make (including the County's budgeting process and financial considerations).

Jung: It helps to have a legislative or legal background, good writing skills, and a natural curiosity about a variety of subject matters. Patience, diplomacy and a keen interest in other people are useful.

Yungmann: Couldn't begin to answer. We are all different with varying strengths and skills.

**What do you think the total compensation package should be for the next Council?**

Walsh: not part time, obligations during the day and well into the evening; job is all-consuming, couldn't imagine having other work because cannot control schedule as council member. Should be paid as a full-time job or some of the obligations should be removed.

Jones: The compensation package should be no more than 10% more of the current salary.

Rigby: Council Members should earn at least Howard County's Area-Median Income for a 4-person household. It's important to tie the compensation for Council Members to the local cost of living in Howard County, especially as costs continue to rise rapidly in our county. This should also include full-time County benefits (existing benefits are appropriate).

Jung: I think the compensation package should reflect the complexity of the issues we deal with on a daily basis, the responsibility we have for being fully prepared to make difficult decisions, and the expectations of our constituents to respond quickly and effectively to their requests and concerns. At a minimum, I think the starting salary should be \$80K.

Yungmann: Less than it is now.

### **What else would you like to tell the Commission?**

Walsh: Council Members have no control over agencies of County government; not alerted to upcoming Administrative legislative proposals

Jones: The County Council has always been a part-time commitment, even though it feels full-time. But logistically, having a career, and possibly a family is part of the entire equation. Raising the salary anywhere close to AMI (\$107,000) would do a disservice to Howard County. We don't need "full-time"/career politicians. Thank you for all you do!

Rigby: I love serving in this role, and I truly appreciate the opportunity to work with my community and represent us on the County Council, but it has not been without hardship due to the wages that Council Members are paid. For the past three years, I have hired part-time childcare due to my part-time salary while needing to work in a more than full-time capacity. This job is not 9-5; there are constant time and work demands on Council Members, including during evenings, weekends, recess months, and on vacations. If Howard County wants quality candidates to run for positions on the Council, we should be paying them wages that they can live on in Howard County and wages that are commensurate with the work and responsibilities of Council Members. I think it's important for the Commission to consider what the purpose and role of a Council Member should be, especially when considering whether to make this position full-time.

Jung: This job has been underpaid for a long time. The salary creates a disincentive to serving for those who don't have a second income.

Yungmann: This is a volunteer position in many communities and we are fortunate to be paid a meaningful salary. The Howard Co BOE members invest just as much time as we do, without staff or support, and are paid \$17K/year. County Council should never be a councilmember's sole source of income because having any elected official dependent on keeping their job can lead to bad policy, influence and corruption. Not every job is suitable for every person at every stage in their lives. There are many avenues for community and public service no matter what a person's level of availability might be.