

*City of Alexandria, Virginia*

MEMORANDUM

DATE: APRIL 24, 2012

TO: THE HONORABLE MAYOR AND MEMBERS OF CITY COUNCIL

FROM: RASHAD M. YOUNG, CITY MANAGER 

SUBJECT: BUDGET MEMO #52: COMPARING COMPENSATION OF ELECTED OFFICIALS AND THEIR AIDES ACROSS NEIGHBORING JURISDICTIONS

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The purpose of this memo is to respond to City Council's request to compare the compensation of elected representatives in neighboring jurisdictions and that of their aides.

SUMMARY:

Each jurisdiction has a different way to compensate the work of their elected board/council members based on a number of factors including: amount of time spent conducting official public business, size of the jurisdiction (both population and geographic), precedent and limitations placed in their charters or other Administrative Regulations (AR). Additionally, how requests from the public to these elected officials are handled differs based on many of these same factors. There is no common practice or structure among jurisdictions in the Washington DC Metro area for elected officials' aides.

BACKGROUND:

City Council's most recent salary adjustment took effect on July 1, 2003 (Ord. 4276, November 16, 2002) which raised the Mayor's annual salary from \$25,000 to \$30,500 and Councilmembers' salaries from \$20,000 to \$27,500. Councilmembers also became eligible for the City's supplemental retirement plan, group life insurance and health insurance programs with the passage of this ordinance. Since that time, no other adjustments to City Council compensation have been made. The previous adjustment prior to the one in 2002 was made in 1987. Additionally, the passage of Ordinance 4276 amended City Code Section 2-1-4 and established a policy for review of City Councilmembers' and the Mayor's rates of pay.

The amount of the last salary adjustment for Administrative Aides to Councilmembers was approximately 3% which occurred at the start of FY 2007, and which raised Aides salaries to the current annual rate of \$21,412. The 3% increase in FY 2007 was aligned with the cost of living adjustment (COLA) City employees received that year. Aides did not receive a COLA in FY 2008, like City employees, however they did receive the \$500 one-time pay supplement provided to City employees in FY 2009. No COLAs or one-time bonuses have been approved for City employees since FY 2009.

COMPARATIVE JURISDICTIONS:

Below is a table that outlines rate of pay for elected officials and their administrative aides in neighboring jurisdictions:

Jurisdiction	Mayor's/Chair's Salary	Council/Board's Salary	Aide's Salary Average
Alexandria	\$30,500	\$27,500	\$21,412
Arlington	\$53,900	\$49,000	\$50,591
Fairfax County	\$75,000	\$75,000	\$30k-\$40k
Prince William County	\$49,452	\$43,422	N/A
Falls Church	\$9,800	\$9,200	No Aides
City of Fairfax	\$6,500	\$4,500	No Aides
City of Manassas	\$16,693	\$12,594	No Aides
District of Columbia	\$190,000	\$125,583	\$72k-\$139k
Montgomery County	\$108,976	\$99,069	\$92k-\$134k

COUNCILMEMBER SALARIES:

As amended by Ordinance 4276, City Code Section 2-1-4 explains that the rate of compensation for members of City Council and the Mayor shall be reviewed every three years, at least four months prior to the Council elections. The purpose of this review is to determine whether a cost of living adjustment is warranted based on any cost of living adjustments that have been afforded to City employees since the last such review. Since the last pay adjustment to City Council salaries in FY 2003, the approved budget has provided several COLAs to City employees. Following Section 2-1-4 of the City Code, if a COLA adjustment to Council salaries matched what was given to City employees since the date of Council's last increase, the Mayor's salary would increase to approximately \$34,500 annually and Councilmembers' salaries would be approximately \$31,000 (see table below). Arlington and Fairfax counties have not had an adjustment to elected official salaries since 2008.

		Fiscal Year				
	Base	2004	2005	2006	2007	2008
COLA/MRA %		1.02	1.02	1.02	1.05	1.015
Mayor	\$30,500.00	\$31,110.00	\$31,732.20	\$32,366.84	\$33,985.19	<b>\$34,494.96</b>
Councilmembers	\$27,500.00	\$28,050.00	\$28,611.00	\$29,183.22	\$30,642.38	<b>\$31,102.02</b>

COUNCILMEMBER AIDES' SALARIES:

For Aides, there is even more variability in the salary ranges among our neighboring jurisdictions. Three jurisdictions do not have dedicated aids for their elected board members. In these instances, the City Clerk's or City Manager's offices handle the requests from the public directly. In jurisdictions that do have aides, the work performed appears to be the major factor in determining compensation. Responsibilities of the aides vary depending on the need and desire of the individual member. Often, the individual members set the salaries of their aides directly as part of managing their individual annual office budgets they are given.

Currently, special regulations passed by Council (Docket Item #15, March 10, 1998) limits the salaries of aides to be less than that of their member of Council. Additionally, City Council Aide

positions are not on the salary scale because the City has no defined job classification for Councilmember aides. This is primarily as a result of the fact that the work performed varies among all of them based on the need and desires of each councilmember. It is therefore difficult to establish a salary that would be appropriate for each aide based on the variability amongst the work performed by each individual either internally comparable to other City positions or externally to neighboring jurisdictions. It should be noted that Aides are exempt from rules, regulations, classification plans, pay plans and ordinances presently per Section 2-5-4 of the City Code. Council may put them under such plans similar to other City employees should they choose to do so, though it must be done in writing.

STAFF: Laura Triggs, Acting Chief Financial Officer  
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