

**Bloomington Common Council  
Special Fiscal Committee Meeting  
Wednesday, October 8, 2025  
1:30-2:30 pm**

***Allison Conference Room (#225), Showers Building, 401 N. Morton Street***

***The public may also access the meeting at the following link:***

***<https://bloomington.zoom.us/j/87989869189?pwd=UzsibJwB5cFl7s53OP1MQGpDlb3yPm.1>***

**Chair: Isabel Piedmont-Smith**

Agenda:

1. Agenda review and approval
2. Setting salaries for elected officials
  - a. Review of CM survey responses
  - b. Suggestions for structuring discussion at Special Session Oct. 8 (later today)
3. Controller's updates
4. Improving the budget process
  - a. Next steps in moving toward outcome-based budgeting
  - b. Prioritization of outcomes
  - c. Increased public engagement
  - d. Ideas for budget calendar for 2026 (2027 budget)
  - e. Public Comment
5. Scheduling future meetings
6. Adjournment

REMINDER: Charge of the Special Fiscal Committee:

1. Work closely with the Controller to:
  - o Create a timeline and activity framework for the yearly budgeting calendar
  - o Track progress of the yearly budget and report back to the whole council.
  - o Track fund balances (esp. TIF, CRED, Bonds, etc.)
  - o Recommend scheduling of specific budget related discussions, presentations, and education for the full council.
2. Be responsible for supporting Council Staff with the 2026 Council Budget and presentation of that budget.
3. Continue the work started by the Ad-Hoc Salary Committee to fine-tune the Elected Salary Framework. The Special Fiscal Committee will be responsible for bringing forward the Elected Salary Ordinance for FY2026.
4. Explore and recommend improvements to the budgeting process.

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Bloomington City Special Fiscal Committee meetings can be watched on the following websites:

- Community Action Television Services (CATS) - <https://catvstv.net>
- YouTube - <https://youtube.com/@citybloomington>

Background materials and packets are available at <https://bloomington.in.gov/council/fiscal-committee/meetings?year=2025>

Pursuant to applicable law and policy, the following details are provided regarding the officers serving on this committee:

- Committee Members: Isabel Piedmont-Smith (Chair), Isak Nti Asare, Dave Rollo, Hopi Stosberg
- Appointed by: Council President
- Term: Beginning 2/19/2025; Expiration 2/18/2026

# CM Survey on Elected Officials' Salaries 2025

9 responses

[Publish analytics](#)

Your name

9 responses

Andy Ruff

Matt Flaherty

Kate

Courtney

Isabel Piedmont-Smith

Sydney Zulich

Isak

Hopi

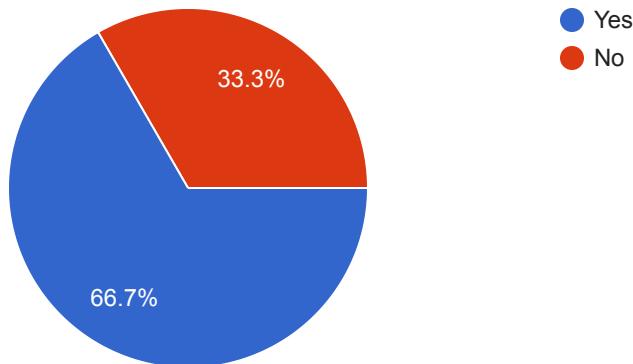
Dave



(1) Should the Council create a values-based and repeatable method for setting salaries, departing from the recent past practice of making minor adjustments to salaries based primarily on whatever the salary was the year before plus a cost of living adjustment (COLA)?

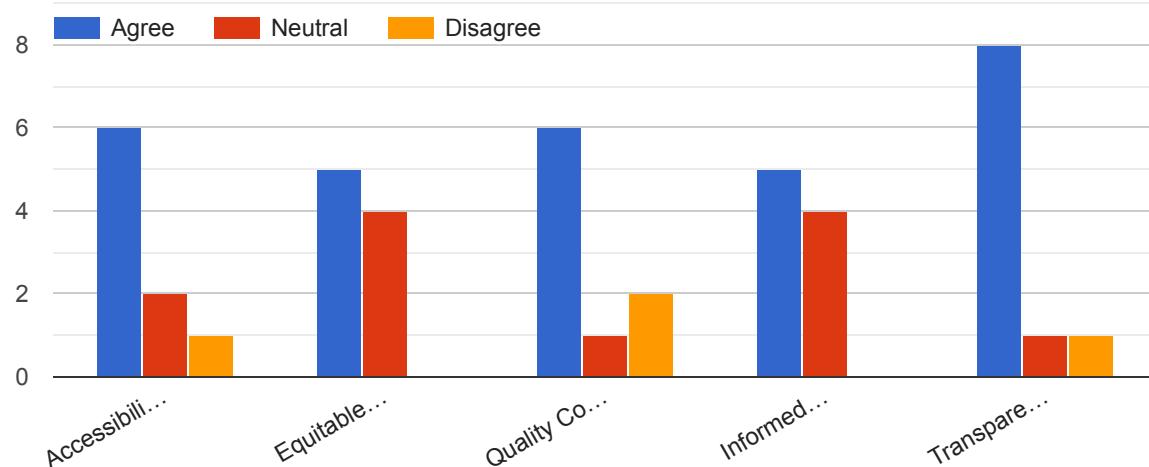
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9 responses



(2) Do you agree or disagree with the following Guiding Principles established by the Ad Hoc Committee on Council Salaries in Fall 2024?

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(3) If you disagree with one or more of the Guiding Principles, please indicate why, for each case, below.

4 responses

(I think this question puts anyone who disagrees on the defensive and is unfair -- everybody or nobody should be asked to explain their answers.) I do not agree that higher pay will make it possible for deeper engagement for council members. No matter how high my council pay is, I still cannot easily make meetings during the day, for example. Would I like to be able to conduct more meaningful engagement? Of course. Salary is not preventing me from being able to do so.

Informed Decisions - This does not seem to me a guiding principle for salary-setting. It's just something we should always strive to do as CMs. Also, "relevant objective data" is unclear. Some may think certain data is relevant, while others think it's irrelevant. This item just doesn't seem to belong on this list.

Claim in form: higher pay makes office attainable to people of all socioeconomic backgrounds. Why that's problematic:

Pay ≠ pipeline. Political science research shows little to no evidence that raising politicians' salaries meaningfully increases the share of working-class people who run or win. Structural barriers (time flexibility, caregiving, campaign costs) dominate.

The real barriers are incumbency and the cost of running. The major deterrents to entry are the structural advantages of incumbents (name recognition, donor networks, committee assignments) and the cost—both financial and personal—of mounting a competitive campaign. Studies consistently show that campaign finance requirements, not officeholder salary, are the bigger filter for who can run and win. Unless we address campaign finance, filing fees, and access to networks, higher salaries simply benefit those already in office.

Targeted fixes are cheaper and more effective. If the concern is accessibility, reforms like dependent-care reimbursements, more flexible meeting schedules, and campaign support for first-time candidates are far more directly linked to broadening participation than raising salaries.

Bloomington's local context magnifies the flaw. With a large student population, measures like "median household income" are volatile and distorted. Anchoring council salaries to such metrics risks large swings and optics problems without improving accessibility.

Overall: Accessibility is a real concern, but the binding constraints are incumbency and the upfront cost of running—not whether the part-time job pays \$21K or \$45K.

Claim # 2 Claim in form: elected officials should be compensated fairly relative to their responsibilities and to other Bloomington officials/department heads.

Why that's problematic:



Apples-to-oranges comparators. Benchmarking part-time legislators against full-time executives (mayor, department heads) misreads "co-equal" as "co-identical." The scope, liability, and daily management duties are not remotely the same. A more appropriate comparator is peer city councils in Indiana second-class cities, which cluster in the mid-\$20Ks.

We control our own time. Councilmembers exercise considerable discretion—and in reality, nearly complete control—over how much time to devote to the role. Some may choose to work 10 hours a week, others 30, but it is not an hourly position. Treating compensation as though it were tethered to hours worked misunderstands the nature of legislative service.

The "only when elected" slippery slope. This framing assumes that the work of representing a community only exists once one is elected and compensated. But the reality is that many of the activities cited—meeting residents, showing up at events, doing background reading—are things engaged citizens and aspiring officeholders already do. If we start counting every activity as "work" only when done by an elected official, it opens a slippery slope: what gets counted, and where does it stop?

Internal inconsistency. Even within council, the "equitable pay" framing breaks down. At-large members represent the whole city, while district members represent fewer constituents—should at-large members therefore be paid more? Should members with heavier committee loads earn more? The answer has always been "no," because council service is understood as a collective duty, not a piecework job. Introducing equity arguments framed this way invites unresolvable internal disparities.

Claim # 3 Claim in form: higher pay enables officials to engage more meaningfully with and serve the community.

Why that's problematic:

Pay does not equal performance. There is no empirical evidence that increasing salaries improves the quality of constituent service or legislative work. Councils with far higher salaries still face low trust and mixed results.

Service quality comes from commitment, not compensation. A councilmember's responsiveness and integrity are not functions of salary. Raising pay does not manufacture diligence, transparency, or empathy.

Internal inefficiencies are the real barrier. Much of the time lost in council work comes from unnecessary or duplicative processes, not inadequate compensation. A perfect example is this very survey—it is excessively long and requires time that could otherwise be spent on substantive council duties. When the structure of our internal work is inefficient, no salary level will correct that.

Perception matters. Justifying pay hikes as a path to "quality service" risks backfiring: constituents may see it as self-serving, which erodes trust and undermines the very quality of service we claim to be improving.

Accountability drives quality. Ultimately, voters—not salary scales—are the strongest mechanism ensuring that councilmembers deliver meaningful service. Those who underperform can be replaced at the ballot box.



Claim 4: I have no idea what this means.

N/A

**(4) For each of the following, please indicate whether you **agree** or **disagree** with the basis for salary-setting as proposed by the Ad Hoc Committee last year. If you disagree, **please explain why**.**

**4-a) Mayor:** Set salary at a level similar to compensation for Civil City senior leadership positions. The presumptive salary is the midpoint of the salary range for the highest Civil City pay grade.

7 responses

Agree

As the chief executive of the City I think it is okay to consider mayoral salary higher than midpoint of highest CC pay grade.

Neutral

I'm not sure if I think these should be measured against civil city in the same ways anymore.

The basis of the study is lacking comparisons of electeds with similar cities in Indiana. The salary should reflect this.



**4-b) City Clerk:** Set salary at a level similar to compensation for Civil City senior leadership positions. The presumptive salary is the midpoint of the salary range for leaders of Civil City departments.

7 responses

Agree

I don't consider the City Clerk a department head.

Agree, but I would put the Clerk's salary on par with the heads of the smallest department(s).

Neutral – depends on structure of role and office

I'm not sure if I think these should be measured against civil city in the same ways anymore.

City Clerks are elected, not appointed by the mayor, therefore is not a department head. Salary should be in alignment with other Indiana cities of similar size.



**4-c) Councilmember:** As a coequal branch of government, yet given the part-time nature of the role, salary to be set at a percentage of the mayor's salary. Percentage to be determined based on number of hours required to meet expectations.

7 responses

Agree

Though I don't disagree with the basic logic here I don't know that one can come up with a sound number for hours required to meet expectations.

I agree with the first statement, but not the second one. The mayor really is on call 24/7 in a way that Councilmembers are not. CMs can CHOOSE to be available any time their constituents ask them to be, but can also choose to limit their work hours. Also, the level of responsibility for any one of the 9 CMs is a lot less than the level of responsibility the mayor has. So number of hours per week does not seem the right calculation to tie CMs' salaries to the mayor's salary.

Disagree—

Coequal ≠ co-identical.

We are a coequal branch in constitutional authority, not in day-to-day operations. Coequality means checks and balances, not that we mirror the mayor's role in workload or structure. The mayor manages a full-time executive organization, hundreds of employees, and 24/7 accountability. Our work is legislative and oversight, deliberately structured as part-time citizen service.

2. The "hours worked" metric misunderstands our role.

We control our own schedules. Some councilmembers choose to devote 30 hours a week, others 10, and both are fulfilling their role.

Are we pegging this to a 40-hour work week? Does the mayor "clock out" at 5 p.m.? Clearly not. Applying an hourly logic to elected service misrepresents both the executive and legislative roles.

And even if we did accept an "hours worked" standard, what counts? Reading reports?

Attending a neighborhood potluck? Talking to a constituent at the grocery store? Once compensation is framed as hourly, the line between "work" and "life" blurs beyond usefulness.

3. Individual vs. collective.

Even if the council were somehow "co-identical" to the mayor, that would only apply to us as a body, not as individuals. If you linked our collective salary to the mayor's and then divided by nine (or six), you essentially end up at the rough level of our current pay. The math itself shows why this model doesn't justify a dramatic raise.

4. No internal equity logic.

If salaries were pegged to workload, would at-large members earn more than district members because we represent more constituents? Would committee chairs earn more than rank-and-file? These questions illustrate why the "percentage of mayor's salary" approach has no coherent internal principle to guide it.



I do think this is still valid, but other methods could also work.

Salary should be in alignment with other Indiana cities of similar size.



5. Do you think the salaries of elected officials in other Indiana cities should be considered when setting the elected officials' salaries in the City of Bloomington? If so, in what way?

9 responses

Yes. As one of several starting points for discussion and reference.

Yes - If other Indiana cities apply any sort of rationale for their elected official salaries (other than (a) peer benchmarking, which is just circular, or (b) whatever-last-year-was-plus-a-little more), it could help inform our own framework and policy rationale (if we decide to have one).

No. We do not know how other salaries are set, so we do not know if we agree with other cities' process or rationale. Also, doing things as they have been done tend to perpetuate inequities.

No. They work very differently than we do. This is a fruitless exercise unless both councils operate exactly the same way. Even then, the cities are likely very different machines. It is fine to make a comparison for the sake of ensuring we aren't an extreme outlier perhaps, but that is the only use in considering other salaries around the state.

Not necessarily, since I doubt that other Indiana cities have a values-based and repeatable method for setting salaries. They probably run on inertia just like we have for decades. That said, a comparison with other cities is a legitimate argument for gradually bringing up Bloomington salaries rather than doing it all at once.

Given the current political climate and the decrease in funds available, I am not in favor of anything more than a COLA raise for elected officials.

Maybe. But not sure it is super useful. Pegging our salaries to what other Indiana cities pay has its limitations because no two cities share the same context—Bloomington is a university town with a unique tax base, demographics, and cost of living, while places like Carmel, Fishers, or South Bend operate under entirely different conditions. Even within the “second-class city” category, populations, budgets, and governance structures vary widely, making comparisons apples-to-oranges. These benchmarks are also selectively invoked: if we look at the highest-paying cities, it pressures salaries upward, while looking at the median or lower end shows our current pay is already in line. More importantly, council service is not a job market where we are shopping around between different cities to decide where to run for office—Bloomington residents judge fairness by our own fiscal reality, not by comparisons to other municipalities. Public trust is local, not comparative, and our compensation should reflect that.

I think this has to be considered, but it can't be the only thing considered. Really, the salaries of elected officials across the state vary quite a bit. While there are some around the mathematical average, there are good reasons to be both above and below that average in terms of responsibilities and the fiscal reality of that city.

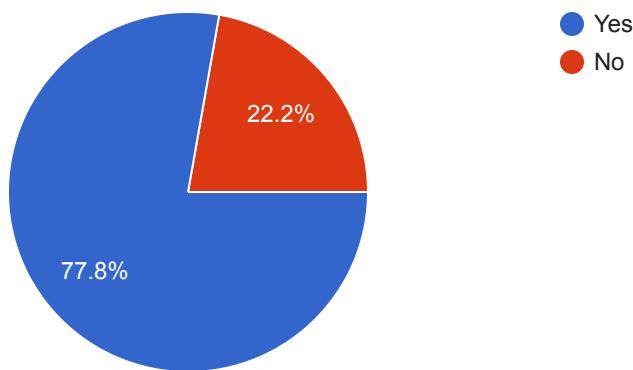


Yes. It sets parameters of compensation.

6. Given the uncertain financial future of Indiana cities in light of SEA 1, do you think elected officials should receive, at most, a 2.7% COLA increase for 2026?

 Copy

9 responses



7. If you answered yes to number 1 and yes to number 6, what do you think is a good timeline for developing a values-based and repeatable method for setting salaries for elected officials?

7 responses

2-3 years

N/A

This is tough because delay perpetuates the status quo, which I find to be unfair. I would like it to be developed this year for a vote this year. I think there is good groundwork in existence - the work done with the consultant. And I think many CMs last year said 1) they were up for yearly increases or stair-stepping an increase, which would mean another increase for 2026 and 2) we could discuss again in 2025.

As we are leaving office, if anything. For the next council to follow. I don't think it's reasonable to do much more than a COLA adjustment most cycles. I'm unsure about a "values-based and repeatable" approach to setting salaries -- what exactly does this mean? Values will change over council bodies and considering outside (national and state) circumstances; locking that in to a repeatable process could be problematic down the road. And how often is this process looking to be repeated? Every year? Every term? If a set process does wind up being implemented, I would hope very clear guidelines are set limiting how often pay increases could happen.

Set salaries for the year after elections.

I think that one of our values right now has to be responsible fiscal stewardship and you cannot reduce the salary for an elected official. In these economic times it makes me very uneasy to increase elected salaries substantially and then face the possibility of large reductions in future years, but elected salaries have to stay the same.

IDK. I am open to more discussion.

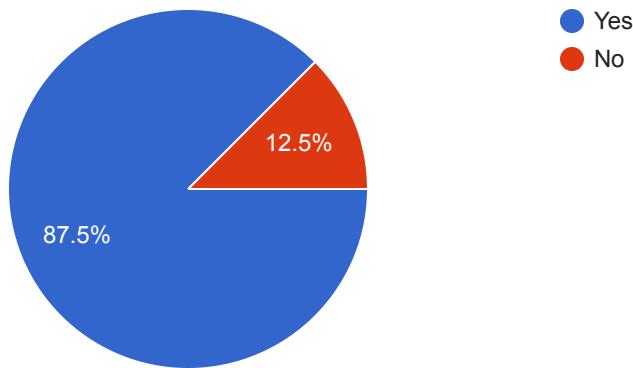
**8. The next three questions are about the concept of increasing our own salaries.**



8-a) Do you think it is ever fair for city council members to increase their own salaries beyond a COLA?

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8 responses

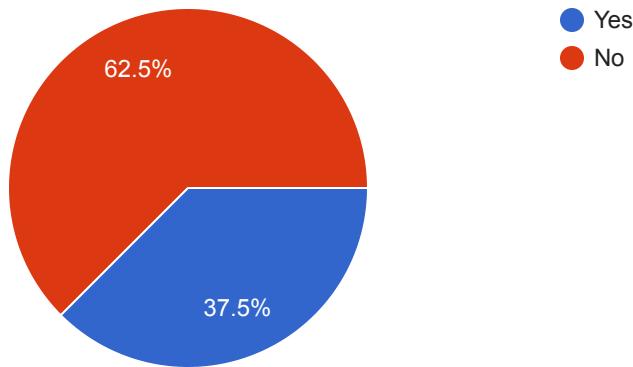


Yes  
No

8-b) Should this only be done in 2027, to take effect for the new Council term to start 1/1/28? (or the equivalent time period in the next term)

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8 responses

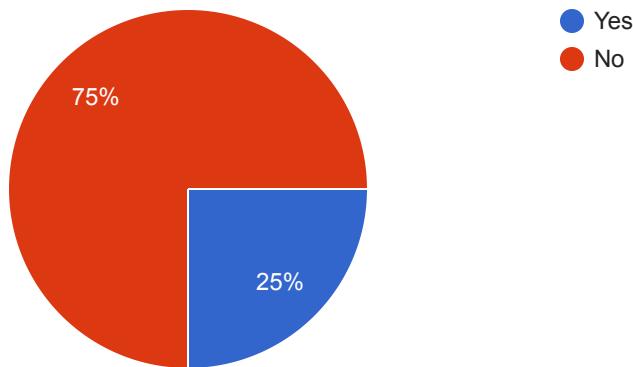


Yes  
No

8-c) Should this only be done in 2026, to take effect on 1/1/27 when people decide whether or not to run for a Council seat? (or the equivalent time period in the next term)

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8 responses



Yes  
No



**9. Do you think elected officials' salaries should be tied to the Area Median Income?**

All elected officials, or just CMs?

9 responses

CMs

Maybe. It depends on what this means and how it's "tied to" AMI. Broadly, I think we should approach elected official salaries within a similar framework as all compensation at the city. There are unique elements and differences of course (e.g., prior experience or specific degrees/professional certifications are not directly relevant), but a lot of the same basic rationale applied to the city's recent compensation system updates should also apply to elected official salary considerations.

No. With the consultant last year, we found this measure to not be a good basis. Our economy is not super local when it comes to jobs - you are competing with remote jobs worldwide.

That might be worth some exploration.

No, it should be tied to the amount of work and level of responsibility.

All salaries should have a similar approach.

All elected officials

No. While I think it is an interesting number to keep in mind, our student population skews both our AMI stats and our housing costs, so I think measuring against the cost of living in Bloomington would actually be a better yardstick if we are going to use that kind of statistical information.

Yes.



## 10. What other considerations should go into elected officials' salary-setting, that were not considered by the Ad Hoc Committee last year?

8 responses

I don't know of everything that was considered last year.

I think last year's process was thorough and informed by consultant experts, as strongly urged by the mayor (though subsequently abandoned when she didn't like the proposal). That said, there are certainly other ways to think about or approach elected official salary considerations (and other values one might bring into consideration), which is what we designated a specific committee to do. I look forward to hearing what the committee comes up with, and I can say that for me question (1) is really the heart of the issue. I likely cannot support a proposal that isn't grounded in a well-articulated policy rationale.

I don't remember if we talked about - what should council look like? Should it be 8 or 9 homeowners every term? Should it be people with different experiences, ambitions, skills, degrees?

The city is contending with revenue loss thanks to SEA 1 and possible federal initiatives. Please don't go down that road at this moment. Yes, I was very opposed in the first place to a massive pay increase for ourselves. But anything greater than a COLA increase at this time is a tremendous disservice to the city and the residents. We need to be fiscally cautious right now; I suspect there will soon be a lot of people needing more city services, if the economy starts to suffer more, and we need to be able to provide those services. I think we are also going to want to support our residents more as state and federal services begin to dry up. I would much rather that money go toward covering needs.

The fiscal realities of the city, given that SEA 1 will reduce revenues significantly over the next few years. That said, I think we could afford an increase a bit higher than the 2.7% COLA for 2026 (if based on principles a majority agree upon).

The funds that will be used to pay for any potential increase in salaries and the political climate.

A community anchor with a ceiling (e.g., tied modestly to median income, capped at a set percentage);

Consider an Independent citizen commission review for legitimacy;

Consider benefits package and perhaps targeted accessibility supports instead of across-the-board salary hikes.

It would be really interesting if elected positions were to have "job descriptions" created and see how they get assessed by the HR department's rubric. I think that would be a more accurate way to compare with civil city.

As another note, there is a range in how well elected officials serve the community-how competent they are, how much time they spend on their job, how much they fulfill community expectations and needs. While whether or not someone gets elected or reelected has some bearing on how well they serve, it's not necessarily an indicator given voting patterns. I think a core question involves whether compensation should meet a minimum based on an official who may do a crummy job but we still have to pay for 4 years, or be based on an aspirational servant leader who is doing a phenomenal job. No matter what the pay is, I think either of those possibilities are out there and we could end up in a situation of underpaying a great person or overpaying incompetence.

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## Councilmember Responses to Salary Survey – October 2025

Name: Isabel Piedmont-Smith

(1) Should the Council create a values-based and repeatable method for setting salaries, departing from the recent past practice of making minor adjustments to salaries based primarily on whatever the salary was the year before plus a cost of living adjustment (COLA)? (Yes or No)

Yes

(2) Do you agree or disagree with the following Guiding Principles established by the Ad Hoc Committee on Council Salaries in Fall 2024? (Agree, Neutral, or Disagree)

a. **Accessibility of Public Service** - The level of compensation makes elected office attainable for community members of all socioeconomic statuses.

Agree

b. **Equitable Pay** - Elected officials are compensated equitably according to their respective levels of responsibility and relative to other Bloomington elected officials and departmental leadership.

Agree

c. **Quality Community Service** - Compensation enables elected officials to meaningfully engage with and serve the Bloomington community.

Agree

d. **Informed Decisions** - Council makes informed decisions about elected official compensation in alignment with these Guiding Principles and based on relevant objective data.

Neutral

e. **Transparent and Documented Process** - A transparent, repeatable process guides compensation decisions for elected officials, and results are clearly communicated.

Agree

(3) If you disagree with one or more of the Guiding Principles, please indicate why, for each case, below.

Informed Decisions - This does not seem to me a guiding principle for salary-setting. It's just something we should always strive to do as CMs. Also, "relevant objective data" is unclear. Some may think certain data is relevant, while others think it's irrelevant. This item just doesn't seem to belong on this list.

(4) For each of the following, please indicate whether you agree or disagree with the basis for salary-setting as proposed by the Ad Hoc Committee last year. If you disagree, please explain why.

4-a) **Mayor:** Set salary at a level similar to compensation for Civil City senior leadership positions. The presumptive salary is the midpoint of the salary range for the highest Civil City pay grade.

Agree

4-b) **City Clerk:** Set salary at a level similar to compensation for Civil City senior leadership positions. The presumptive salary is the midpoint of the salary range for leaders of Civil City departments.

Agree, but I would put the Clerk's salary on par with the heads of the smallest department(s).

4-c) **Councilmember:** As a coequal branch of government, yet given the part-time nature of the role, salary to be set at a percentage of the mayor's salary. Percentage to be determined based on number of hours required to meet expectations.

I agree with the first statement, but not the second one. The mayor really is on call 24/7 in a way that Councilmembers are not. CMs can CHOOSE to be available any time their constituents ask them to be, but can also choose to limit their work hours. Also, the level of responsibility for any one of the 9 CMs is a lot less than the level of responsibility the mayor has. So number of hours per week does not seem the right calculation to tie CMs' salaries to the mayor's salary.

**(5) Do you think the salaries of elected officials in other Indiana cities should be considered when setting the elected officials' salaries in the City of Bloomington? If so, in what way?**

Not necessarily, since I doubt that other Indiana cities have a values-based and repeatable method for setting salaries. They probably run on inertia just like we have for decades. That said, a comparison with other cities is a legitimate argument for gradually bringing up Bloomington salaries rather than doing it all at once.

**(6) Given the uncertain financial future of Indiana cities in light of SEA 1, do you think elected officials should receive, at most, a 2.7% COLA increase for 2026?**

No

**(7) If you answered yes to number 1 and yes to number 6, what do you think is a good timeline for developing a values-based and repeatable method for setting salaries for elected officials?**

**(8) The next three questions are about the concept of increasing our own salaries.**

**8-a) Do you think it is ever fair for city council members to increase their own salaries beyond a COLA? (Yes or No)**

Yes

**8-b) Should this only be done in 2027, to take effect for the new Council term to start 1/1/28? (or the equivalent time period in the next term) (Yes or No)**

No

**8-c) Should this only be done in 2026, to take effect on 1/1/27 when people decide whether or not to run for a Council seat? (or the equivalent time period in the next term) (Yes or No)**

Yes

**(9) Do you think elected officials' salaries should be tied to the Area Median Income? All elected officials, or just CMs?**

No, it should be tied to the amount of work and level of responsibility.

**(10) What other considerations should go into elected officials' salary-setting, that were not considered by the Ad Hoc Committee last year?**

The fiscal realities of the city, given that SEA 1 will reduce revenues significantly over the next few years. That said, I think we could afford an increase a bit higher than the 2.7% COLA for 2026 (if based on principles a majority agree upon).

## Councilmember Responses to Salary Survey – October 2025

Name: Sydney Zulich

(1) Should the Council create a values-based and repeatable method for setting salaries, departing from the recent past practice of making minor adjustments to salaries based primarily on whatever the salary was the year before plus a cost of living adjustment (COLA)? (Yes or No)

No

(2) Do you agree or disagree with the following Guiding Principles established by the Ad Hoc Committee on Council Salaries in Fall 2024? (Agree, Neutral, or Disagree)

a. **Accessibility of Public Service** - The level of compensation makes elected office attainable for community members of all socioeconomic statuses.

Agree

b. **Equitable Pay** - Elected officials are compensated equitably according to their respective levels of responsibility and relative to other Bloomington elected officials and departmental leadership.

Agree

c. **Quality Community Service** - Compensation enables elected officials to meaningfully engage with and serve the Bloomington community.

Agree

d. **Informed Decisions** - Council makes informed decisions about elected official compensation in alignment with these Guiding Principles and based on relevant objective data.

Agree

e. **Transparent and Documented Process** - A transparent, repeatable process guides compensation decisions for elected officials, and results are clearly communicated.

Agree

(3) If you disagree with one or more of the Guiding Principles, please indicate why, for each case, below.

(4) For each of the following, please indicate whether you agree or disagree with the basis for salary-setting as proposed by the Ad Hoc Committee last year. If you disagree, please explain why.

4-a) Mayor: Set salary at a level similar to compensation for Civil City senior leadership positions. The presumptive salary is the midpoint of the salary range for the highest Civil City pay grade.

4-b) City Clerk: Set salary at a level similar to compensation for Civil City senior leadership positions. The presumptive salary is the midpoint of the salary range for leaders of Civil City departments.

4-c) Councilmember: As a coequal branch of government, yet given the part-time nature of the role, salary to be set at a percentage of the mayor's salary. Percentage to be determined based on number of hours required to meet expectations.

(5) Do you think the salaries of elected officials in other Indiana cities should be considered when setting the elected officials' salaries in the City of Bloomington? If so, in what way?

Given the current political climate and the decrease in funds available, I am not in favor of anything more than a COLA raise for elected officials.

(6) Given the uncertain financial future of Indiana cities in light of SEA 1, do you think elected officials should receive, at most, a 2.7% COLA increase for 2026?

Yes

(7) If you answered yes to number 1 and yes to number 6, what do you think is a good timeline for developing a values-based and repeatable method for setting salaries for elected officials?

(8) The next three questions are about the concept of increasing our own salaries.

8-a) Do you think it is ever fair for city council members to increase their own salaries beyond a COLA? (Yes or No)

8-b) Should this only be done in 2027, to take effect for the new Council term to start 1/1/28? (or the equivalent time period in the next term) (Yes or No)

Yes

8-c) Should this only be done in 2026, to take effect on 1/1/27 when people decide whether or not to run for a Council seat? (or the equivalent time period in the next term) (Yes or No)

No

(9) Do you think elected officials' salaries should be tied to the Area Median Income? All elected officials, or just CMs?

All salaries should have a similar approach.

(10) What other considerations should go into elected officials' salary-setting, that were not considered by the Ad Hoc Committee last year?

The funds that will be used to pay for any potential increase in salaries and the political climate.

## Councilmember Responses to Salary Survey – October 2025

Name: Isak

(1) Should the Council create a values-based and repeatable method for setting salaries, departing from the recent past practice of making minor adjustments to salaries based primarily on whatever the salary was the year before plus a cost of living adjustment (COLA)? (Yes or No)

Yes

(2) Do you agree or disagree with the following Guiding Principles established by the Ad Hoc Committee on Council Salaries in Fall 2024? (Agree, Neutral, or Disagree)

a. **Accessibility of Public Service** - The level of compensation makes elected office attainable for community members of all socioeconomic statuses.

Disagree

b. **Equitable Pay** - Elected officials are compensated equitably according to their respective levels of responsibility and relative to other Bloomington elected officials and departmental leadership.

Neutral

c. **Quality Community Service** - Compensation enables elected officials to meaningfully engage with and serve the Bloomington community.

Disagree

d. **Informed Decisions** - Council makes informed decisions about elected official compensation in alignment with these Guiding Principles and based on relevant objective data.

Neutral

e. **Transparent and Documented Process** - A transparent, repeatable process guides compensation decisions for elected officials, and results are clearly communicated.

Agree

(3) If you disagree with one or more of the Guiding Principles, please indicate why, for each case, below.

Claim in form: higher pay makes office attainable to people of all socioeconomic backgrounds.

Why that's problematic:

Pay ≠ pipeline. Political science research shows little to no evidence that raising politicians' salaries meaningfully increases the share of working-class people who run or win. Structural barriers (time flexibility, caregiving, campaign costs) dominate.

The real barriers are incumbency and the cost of running. The major deterrents to entry are the structural advantages of incumbents (name recognition, donor networks, committee assignments) and the cost—both financial and personal—of mounting a competitive campaign. Studies consistently show that campaign finance requirements, not officeholder salary, are the bigger filter for who can run and win. Unless we address campaign finance, filing fees, and access to networks, higher salaries simply benefit those already in office.

Targeted fixes are cheaper and more effective. If the concern is accessibility, reforms like dependent-care reimbursements, more flexible meeting schedules, and campaign support for first-time candidates are far more directly linked to broadening participation than raising salaries.

Bloomington's local context magnifies the flaw. With a large student population, measures like "median household income" are volatile and distorted. Anchoring council salaries to such metrics risks large swings and optics problems without improving accessibility.

Overall: Accessibility is a real concern, but the binding constraints are incumbency and the upfront cost of running—not whether the part-time job pays \$21K or \$45K.

Claim # 2 Claim in form: elected officials should be compensated fairly relative to their responsibilities and to other Bloomington officials/department heads.

Why that's problematic:

Apples-to-oranges comparators. Benchmarking part-time legislators against full-time executives (mayor, department heads) misreads "co-equal" as "co-identical." The scope, liability, and daily management duties are not remotely the same. A more appropriate comparator is peer city councils in Indiana second-class cities, which cluster in the mid-\$20Ks.

We control our own time. Councilmembers exercise considerable discretion—and in reality, nearly complete control—over how much time to devote to the role. Some may choose to work 10 hours a week, others 30, but it is not an hourly position. Treating compensation as though it were tethered to hours worked misunderstands the nature of legislative service.

The "only when elected" slippery slope. This framing assumes that the work of representing a community only exists once one is elected and compensated. But the reality is that many of the activities cited—meeting residents, showing up at events, doing background reading—are things engaged citizens and aspiring officeholders already do. If we start counting every activity as "work" only when done by an elected official, it opens a slippery slope: what gets counted, and where does it stop?

Internal inconsistency. Even within council, the "equitable pay" framing breaks down. At-large members represent the whole city, while district members represent fewer constituents—should at-large members therefore be paid more? Should members with heavier committee loads earn more? The answer has always been "no," because council service is understood as a collective duty, not a piecework job. Introducing equity arguments framed this way invites unresolvable internal disparities.

Claim # 3 Claim in form: higher pay enables officials to engage more meaningfully with and serve the community.

Why that's problematic:

Pay does not equal performance. There is no empirical evidence that increasing salaries improves the quality of constituent service or legislative work. Councils with far higher salaries still face low trust and mixed results.

Service quality comes from commitment, not compensation. A councilmember's responsiveness and integrity are not functions of salary. Raising pay does not manufacture diligence, transparency, or empathy.

Internal inefficiencies are the real barrier. Much of the time lost in council work comes from unnecessary or duplicative processes, not inadequate compensation. A perfect example is this very survey—it is excessively long and requires time that could otherwise be spent on substantive council duties. When the structure of our internal work is inefficient, no salary level will correct that.

Perception matters. Justifying pay hikes as a path to "quality service" risks backfiring: constituents may see it as self-serving, which erodes trust and undermines the very quality of service we claim to be improving.

Accountability drives quality. Ultimately, voters—not salary scales—are the strongest mechanism ensuring that councilmembers deliver meaningful service. Those who underperform can be replaced at the ballot box.

Claim 4: I have no idea what this means.

**(4) For each of the following, please indicate whether you agree or disagree with the basis for salary-setting as proposed by the Ad Hoc Committee last year. If you disagree, please explain why.**

**4-a) Mayor: Set salary at a level similar to compensation for Civil City senior leadership positions. The presumptive salary is the midpoint of the salary range for the highest Civil City pay grade.**  
Neutral

**4-b) City Clerk: Set salary at a level similar to compensation for Civil City senior leadership positions. The presumptive salary is the midpoint of the salary range for leaders of Civil City departments.**  
Neutral — depends on structure of role and office

**4-c) Councilmember: As a coequal branch of government, yet given the part-time nature of the role, salary to be set at a percentage of the mayor's salary. Percentage to be determined based on number of hours required to meet expectations.**

Disagree—

Coequal ≠ co-identical.

We are a coequal branch in constitutional authority, not in day-to-day operations. Coequality means checks and balances, not that we mirror the mayor's role in workload or structure.

The mayor manages a full-time executive organization, hundreds of employees, and 24/7 accountability. Our work is legislative and oversight, deliberately structured as part-time citizen service.

2. The “hours worked” metric misunderstands our role.

We control our own schedules. Some councilmembers choose to devote 30 hours a week, others 10, and both are fulfilling their role.

Are we pegging this to a 40-hour work week? Does the mayor “clock out” at 5 p.m.? Clearly not. Applying an hourly logic to elected service misrepresents both the executive and legislative roles.

And even if we did accept an “hours worked” standard, what counts? Reading reports? Attending a neighborhood potluck? Talking to a constituent at the grocery store? Once compensation is framed as hourly, the line between “work” and “life” blurs beyond usefulness.

3. Individual vs. collective.

Even if the council were somehow “co-identical” to the mayor, that would only apply to us as a body, not as individuals. If you linked our collective salary to the mayor's and then divided by nine (or six), you essentially end up at the rough level of our current pay. The math itself shows why this model doesn't justify a dramatic raise.

4. No internal equity logic.

If salaries were pegged to workload, would at-large members earn more than district members because we represent more constituents? Would committee chairs earn more than rank-and-file? These questions illustrate why the “percentage of mayor's salary” approach has no coherent internal principle to guide it.

**(5) Do you think the salaries of elected officials in other Indiana cities should be considered when setting the elected officials' salaries in the City of Bloomington? If so, in what way?**

Maybe. But not sure it is super useful. Pegging our salaries to what other Indiana cities pay has its limitations because no two cities share the same context—Bloomington is a university town with a unique

tax base, demographics, and cost of living, while places like Carmel, Fishers, or South Bend operate under entirely different conditions. Even within the “second-class city” category, populations, budgets, and governance structures vary widely, making comparisons apples-to-oranges. These benchmarks are also selectively invoked: if we look at the highest-paying cities, it pressures salaries upward, while looking at the median or lower end shows our current pay is already in line. More importantly, council service is not a job market where we are shopping around between different cities to decide where to run for office—Bloomington residents judge fairness by our own fiscal reality, not by comparisons to other municipalities. Public trust is local, not comparative, and our compensation should reflect that.

**(6) Given the uncertain financial future of Indiana cities in light of SEA 1, do you think elected officials should receive, at most, a 2.7% COLA increase for 2026?**

Yes

**(7) If you answered yes to number 1 and yes to number 6, what do you think is a good timeline for developing a values-based and repeatable method for setting salaries for elected officials?**

Set salaries for the year after elections.

**(8) The next three questions are about the concept of increasing our own salaries.**

**8-a) Do you think it is ever fair for city council members to increase their own salaries beyond a COLA? (Yes or No)**

Yes

**8-b) Should this only be done in 2027, to take effect for the new Council term to start 1/1/28? (or the equivalent time period in the next term) (Yes or No)**

No

**8-c) Should this only be done in 2026, to take effect on 1/1/27 when people decide whether or not to run for a Council seat? (or the equivalent time period in the next term) (Yes or No)**

Yes

**(9) Do you think elected officials' salaries should be tied to the Area Median Income? All elected officials, or just CMs?**

All elected officials

**(10) What other considerations should go into elected officials' salary-setting, that were not considered by the Ad Hoc Committee last year?**

A community anchor with a ceiling (e.g., tied modestly to median income, capped at a set percentage);

Consider an Independent citizen commission review for legitimacy;

Consider benefits package and perhaps targeted accessibility supports instead of across-the-board salary hikes.

## Councilmember Responses to Salary Survey – October 2025

Name: Andy Ruff

(1) Should the Council create a values-based and repeatable method for setting salaries, departing from the recent past practice of making minor adjustments to salaries based primarily on whatever the salary was the year before plus a cost of living adjustment (COLA)? (Yes or No)

Yes

(2) Do you agree or disagree with the following Guiding Principles established by the Ad Hoc Committee on Council Salaries in Fall 2024? (Agree, Neutral, or Disagree)

- a. **Accessibility of Public Service** - The level of compensation makes elected office attainable for community members of all socioeconomic statuses.  
Neutral
- b. **Equitable Pay** - Elected officials are compensated equitably according to their respective levels of responsibility and relative to other Bloomington elected officials and departmental leadership.  
Neutral
- c. **Quality Community Service** - Compensation enables elected officials to meaningfully engage with and serve the Bloomington community.  
Neutral
- d. **Informed Decisions** - Council makes informed decisions about elected official compensation in alignment with these Guiding Principles and based on relevant objective data.  
Neutral
- e. **Transparent and Documented Process** - A transparent, repeatable process guides compensation decisions for elected officials, and results are clearly communicated.  
Agree

(3) If you disagree with one or more of the Guiding Principles, please indicate why, for each case, below.

(4) For each of the following, please indicate whether you agree or disagree with the basis for salary-setting as proposed by the Ad Hoc Committee last year. If you disagree, please explain why.

4-a) **Mayor:** Set salary at a level similar to compensation for Civil City senior leadership positions. The presumptive salary is the midpoint of the salary range for the highest Civil City pay grade.

As the chief executive of the City I think it is okay to consider mayoral salary higher than midpoint of highest CC pay grade.

4-b) **City Clerk:** Set salary at a level similar to compensation for Civil City senior leadership positions. The presumptive salary is the midpoint of the salary range for leaders of Civil City departments.

I don't consider the City Clerk a department head.

4-c) **Councilmember:** As a coequal branch of government, yet given the part-time nature of the role, salary to be set at a percentage of the mayor's salary. Percentage to be determined based on number of hours required to meet expectations.

Though I don't disagree with the basic logic here I don't know that one can come up with a sound number for hours required to meet expectations.

(5) Do you think the salaries of elected officials in other Indiana cities should be considered when setting the elected officials' salaries in the City of Bloomington? If so, in what way?

Yes. As one of several starting points for discussion and reference.

(6) Given the uncertain financial future of Indiana cities in light of SEA 1, do you think elected officials should receive, at most, a 2.7% COLA increase for 2026?

Yes

(7) If you answered yes to number 1 and yes to number 6, what do you think is a good timeline for developing a values-based and repeatable method for setting salaries for elected officials?

2-3 years

(8) The next three questions are about the concept of increasing our own salaries.

8-a) Do you think it is ever fair for city council members to increase their own salaries beyond a COLA? (Yes or No)

Yes

8-b) Should this only be done in 2027, to take effect for the new Council term to start 1/1/28? (or the equivalent time period in the next term) (Yes or No)

Yes

8-c) Should this only be done in 2026, to take effect on 1/1/27 when people decide whether or not to run for a Council seat? (or the equivalent time period in the next term) (Yes or No)

No

(9) Do you think elected officials' salaries should be tied to the Area Median Income? All elected officials, or just CMs?

CMS

(10) What other considerations should go into elected officials' salary-setting, that were not considered by the Ad Hoc Committee last year?

I don't know of everything that was considered last year.

## Councilmember Responses to Salary Survey – October 2025

Name: Hopi

(1) Should the Council create a values-based and repeatable method for setting salaries, departing from the recent past practice of making minor adjustments to salaries based primarily on whatever the salary was the year before plus a cost of living adjustment (COLA)? (Yes or No)

Yes

(2) Do you agree or disagree with the following Guiding Principles established by the Ad Hoc Committee on Council Salaries in Fall 2024? (Agree, Neutral, or Disagree)

a. **Accessibility of Public Service** - The level of compensation makes elected office attainable for community members of all socioeconomic statuses.

Agree

b. **Equitable Pay** - Elected officials are compensated equitably according to their respective levels of responsibility and relative to other Bloomington elected officials and departmental leadership.

Agree

c. **Quality Community Service** - Compensation enables elected officials to meaningfully engage with and serve the Bloomington community.

Agree

d. **Informed Decisions** - Council makes informed decisions about elected official compensation in alignment with these Guiding Principles and based on relevant objective data.

Agree

e. **Transparent and Documented Process** - A transparent, repeatable process guides compensation decisions for elected officials, and results are clearly communicated.

Agree

(3) If you disagree with one or more of the Guiding Principles, please indicate why, for each case, below.

N/A

(4) For each of the following, please indicate whether you agree or disagree with the basis for salary-setting as proposed by the Ad Hoc Committee last year. If you disagree, please explain why.

4-a) **Mayor:** Set salary at a level similar to compensation for Civil City senior leadership positions. The presumptive salary is the midpoint of the salary range for the highest Civil City pay grade.

I'm not sure if I think these should be measured against civil city in the same ways anymore.

4-b) **City Clerk:** Set salary at a level similar to compensation for Civil City senior leadership positions. The presumptive salary is the midpoint of the salary range for leaders of Civil City departments.

I'm not sure if I think these should be measured against civil city in the same ways anymore.

4-c) **Councilmember:** As a coequal branch of government, yet given the part-time nature of the role, salary to be set at a percentage of the mayor's salary. Percentage to be determined based on number of hours required to meet expectations.

I do think this is still valid, but other methods could also work.

**(5) Do you think the salaries of elected officials in other Indiana cities should be considered when setting the elected officials' salaries in the City of Bloomington? If so, in what way?**

I think this has to be considered, but it can't be the only thing considered. Really, the salaries of elected officials across the state vary quite a bit. While there are some around the mathematical average, there are good reasons to be both above and below that average in terms of responsibilities and the fiscal reality of that city.

**(6) Given the uncertain financial future of Indiana cities in light of SEA 1, do you think elected officials should receive, at most, a 2.7% COLA increase for 2026?**

Yes

**(7) If you answered yes to number 1 and yes to number 6, what do you think is a good timeline for developing a values-based and repeatable method for setting salaries for elected officials?**

I think that one of our values right now has to be responsible fiscal stewardship and you cannot reduce the salary for an elected official. In these economic times it makes me very uneasy to increase elected salaries substantially and then face the possibility of large reductions in future years, but elected salaries have to stay the same.

**(8) The next three questions are about the concept of increasing our own salaries.**

**8-a) Do you think it is ever fair for city council members to increase their own salaries beyond a COLA? (Yes or No)**

Yes

**8-b) Should this only be done in 2027, to take effect for the new Council term to start 1/1/28? (or the equivalent time period in the next term) (Yes or No)**

No

**8-c) Should this only be done in 2026, to take effect on 1/1/27 when people decide whether or not to run for a Council seat? (or the equivalent time period in the next term) (Yes or No)**

No

**(9) Do you think elected officials' salaries should be tied to the Area Median Income? All elected officials, or just CMs?**

No. While I think it is an interesting number to keep in mind, our student population skews both our AMI stats and our housing costs, so I think measuring against the cost of living in Bloomington would actually be a better yardstick if we are going to use that kind of statistical information.

**(10) What other considerations should go into elected officials' salary-setting, that were not considered by the Ad Hoc Committee last year?**

It would be really interesting if elected positions were to have "job descriptions" created and see how they get assessed by the HR department's rubric. I think that would be a more accurate way to compare with civil city.

As another note, there is a range in how well elected officials serve the community-how competent they are, how much time they spend on their job, how much they fulfill community expectations and needs. While whether or not someone gets elected or reelected has some bearing on how well they serve, it's not necessarily an indicator given voting patterns. I think a core question involves whether compensation should meet a minimum based on an official who may do a crummy job but we still have to pay for 4 years, or be based on an aspirational servant leader who is doing a phenomenal job. No matter what the pay is, I think either of those possibilities are out there and we could end up in a situation of underpaying a great person or overpaying incompetence.

## Councilmember Responses to Salary Survey – October 2025

Name: Courtney

(1) Should the Council create a values-based and repeatable method for setting salaries, departing from the recent past practice of making minor adjustments to salaries based primarily on whatever the salary was the year before plus a cost of living adjustment (COLA)? (Yes or No)

No

(2) Do you agree or disagree with the following Guiding Principles established by the Ad Hoc Committee on Council Salaries in Fall 2024? (Agree, Neutral, or Disagree)

- a. **Accessibility of Public Service** - The level of compensation makes elected office attainable for community members of all socioeconomic statuses.  
Neutral
- b. **Equitable Pay** - Elected officials are compensated equitably according to their respective levels of responsibility and relative to other Bloomington elected officials and departmental leadership.  
Neutral
- c. **Quality Community Service** - Compensation enables elected officials to meaningfully engage with and serve the Bloomington community.  
Disagree
- d. **Informed Decisions** - Council makes informed decisions about elected official compensation in alignment with these Guiding Principles and based on relevant objective data.  
Neutral
- e. **Transparent and Documented Process** - A transparent, repeatable process guides compensation decisions for elected officials, and results are clearly communicated.  
Neutral, Disagree

(3) If you disagree with one or more of the Guiding Principles, please indicate why, for each case, below.

(I think this question puts anyone who disagrees on the defensive and is unfair -- everybody or nobody should be asked to explain their answers.) I do not agree that higher pay will make it possible for deeper engagement for council members. No matter how high my council pay is, I still cannot easily make meetings during the day, for example. Would I like to be able to conduct more meaningful engagement? Of course. Salary is not preventing me from being able to do so.

(4) For each of the following, please indicate whether you agree or disagree with the basis for salary-setting as proposed by the Ad Hoc Committee last year. If you disagree, please explain why.

4-a) **Mayor:** Set salary at a level similar to compensation for Civil City senior leadership positions. The presumptive salary is the midpoint of the salary range for the highest Civil City pay grade.

4-b) **City Clerk:** Set salary at a level similar to compensation for Civil City senior leadership positions. The presumptive salary is the midpoint of the salary range for leaders of Civil City departments.

4-c) **Councilmember:** As a coequal branch of government, yet given the part-time nature of the role, salary to be set at a percentage of the mayor's salary. Percentage to be determined based on number of hours required to meet expectations.

**(5) Do you think the salaries of elected officials in other Indiana cities should be considered when setting the elected officials' salaries in the City of Bloomington? If so, in what way?**

No. They work very differently than we do. This is a fruitless exercise unless both councils operate exactly the same way. Even then, the cities are likely very different machines. It is fine to make a comparison for the sake of ensuring we aren't an extreme outlier perhaps, but that is the only use in considering other salaries around the state.

**(6) Given the uncertain financial future of Indiana cities in light of SEA 1, do you think elected officials should receive, at most, a 2.7% COLA increase for 2026?**

Yes

**(7) If you answered yes to number 1 and yes to number 6, what do you think is a good timeline for developing a values-based and repeatable method for setting salaries for elected officials?**

As we are leaving office, if anything. For the next council to follow. I don't think it's reasonable to do much more than a COLA adjustment most cycles. I'm unsure about a "values-based and repeatable" approach to setting salaries -- what exactly does this mean? Values will change over council bodies and considering outside (national and state) circumstances; locking that into a repeatable process could be problematic down the road. And how often is this process looking to be repeated? Every year? Every term? If a set process does wind up being implemented, I would hope very clear guidelines are set limiting how often pay increases could happen.

**(8) The next three questions are about the concept of increasing our own salaries.**

**8-a) Do you think it is ever fair for city council members to increase their own salaries beyond a COLA? (Yes or No)**

No

**8-b) Should this only be done in 2027, to take effect for the new Council term to start 1/1/28? (or the equivalent time period in the next term) (Yes or No)**

Yes

**8-c) Should this only be done in 2026, to take effect on 1/1/27 when people decide whether or not to run for a Council seat? (or the equivalent time period in the next term) (Yes or No)**

No

**(9) Do you think elected officials' salaries should be tied to the Area Median Income? All elected officials, or just CMs?**

That might be worth some exploration.

**(10) What other considerations should go into elected officials' salary-setting, that were not considered by the Ad Hoc Committee last year?**

The city is contending with revenue loss thanks to SEA 1 and possible federal initiatives. Please don't go down that road at this moment. Yes, I was very opposed in the first place to a massive pay increase for ourselves. But anything greater than a COLA increase at this time is a tremendous disservice to the city and the residents. We need to be fiscally cautious right now; I suspect there will soon be a lot of people needing more city services, if the economy starts to suffer more, and we need to be able to provide those services. I think we are also going to want to support our residents more as state and federal services begin to dry up. I would much rather that money go toward covering needs.

## Councilmember Responses to Salary Survey – October 2025

Name: Matt Flaherty

(1) Should the Council create a values-based and repeatable method for setting salaries, departing from the recent past practice of making minor adjustments to salaries based primarily on whatever the salary was the year before plus a cost of living adjustment (COLA)? (Yes or No)

Yes

(2) Do you agree or disagree with the following Guiding Principles established by the Ad Hoc Committee on Council Salaries in Fall 2024? (Agree, Neutral, or Disagree)

a. **Accessibility of Public Service** - The level of compensation makes elected office attainable for community members of all socioeconomic statuses.

Agree

b. **Equitable Pay** - Elected officials are compensated equitably according to their respective levels of responsibility and relative to other Bloomington elected officials and departmental leadership.

Agree

c. **Quality Community Service** - Compensation enables elected officials to meaningfully engage with and serve the Bloomington community.

Agree

d. **Informed Decisions** - Council makes informed decisions about elected official compensation in alignment with these Guiding Principles and based on relevant objective data.

Agree

e. **Transparent and Documented Process** - A transparent, repeatable process guides compensation decisions for elected officials, and results are clearly communicated.

Agree

(3) If you disagree with one or more of the Guiding Principles, please indicate why, for each case, below.

(4) For each of the following, please indicate whether you agree or disagree with the basis for salary-setting as proposed by the Ad Hoc Committee last year. If you disagree, please explain why.

4-a) **Mayor:** Set salary at a level similar to compensation for Civil City senior leadership positions. The presumptive salary is the midpoint of the salary range for the highest Civil City pay grade.

Agree

4-b) **City Clerk:** Set salary at a level similar to compensation for Civil City senior leadership positions. The presumptive salary is the midpoint of the salary range for leaders of Civil City departments.

Agree

4-c) **Councilmember:** As a coequal branch of government, yet given the part-time nature of the role, salary to be set at a percentage of the mayor's salary. Percentage to be determined based on number of hours required to meet expectations.

Agree

(5) Do you think the salaries of elected officials in other Indiana cities should be considered when setting the elected officials' salaries in the City of Bloomington? If so, in what way?

Yes - If other Indiana cities apply any sort of rationale for their elected official salaries (other than (a) peer benchmarking, which is just circular, or (b) whatever-last-year-was-plus-a-little more), it could help inform our own framework and policy rationale (if we decide to have one).

**(6) Given the uncertain financial future of Indiana cities in light of SEA 1, do you think elected officials should receive, at most, a 2.7% COLA increase for 2026?**

No

**(7) If you answered yes to number 1 and yes to number 6, what do you think is a good timeline for developing a values-based and repeatable method for setting salaries for elected officials?**

N/A

**(8) The next three questions are about the concept of increasing our own salaries.**

**8-a) Do you think it is ever fair for city council members to increase their own salaries beyond a COLA? (Yes or No)**

Yes

**8-b) Should this only be done in 2027, to take effect for the new Council term to start 1/1/28? (or the equivalent time period in the next term) (Yes or No)**

No

**8-c) Should this only be done in 2026, to take effect on 1/1/27 when people decide whether or not to run for a Council seat? (or the equivalent time period in the next term) (Yes or No)**

No

**(9) Do you think elected officials' salaries should be tied to the Area Median Income? All elected officials, or just CMs?**

Maybe. It depends on what this means and how it's "tied to" AMI. Broadly, I think we should approach elected official salaries within a similar framework as all compensation at the city. There are unique elements and differences of course (e.g., prior experience or specific degrees/professional certifications are not directly relevant), but a lot of the same basic rationale applied to the city's recent compensation system updates should also apply to elected official salary considerations.

**(10) What other considerations should go into elected officials' salary-setting, that were not considered by the Ad Hoc Committee last year?**

I think last year's process was thorough and informed by consultant experts, as strongly urged by the mayor (though subsequently abandoned when she didn't like the proposal). That said, there are certainly other ways to think about or approach elected official salary considerations (and other values one might bring into consideration), which is what we designated a specific committee to do. I look forward to hearing what the committee comes up with, and I can say that for me question (1) is really the heart of the issue. I likely cannot support a proposal that isn't grounded in a well-articulated policy rationale.

## Councilmember Responses to Salary Survey – October 2025

Name: Kate

(1) Should the Council create a values-based and repeatable method for setting salaries, departing from the recent past practice of making minor adjustments to salaries based primarily on whatever the salary was the year before plus a cost of living adjustment (COLA)? (Yes or No)

Yes

(2) Do you agree or disagree with the following Guiding Principles established by the Ad Hoc Committee on Council Salaries in Fall 2024? (Agree, Neutral, or Disagree)

a. **Accessibility of Public Service** - The level of compensation makes elected office attainable for community members of all socioeconomic statuses.

Agree

b. **Equitable Pay** - Elected officials are compensated equitably according to their respective levels of responsibility and relative to other Bloomington elected officials and departmental leadership.

Agree

c. **Quality Community Service** - Compensation enables elected officials to meaningfully engage with and serve the Bloomington community.

Agree

d. **Informed Decisions** - Council makes informed decisions about elected official compensation in alignment with these Guiding Principles and based on relevant objective data.

Agree

e. **Transparent and Documented Process** - A transparent, repeatable process guides compensation decisions for elected officials, and results are clearly communicated.

Agree

(3) If you disagree with one or more of the Guiding Principles, please indicate why, for each case, below.

(4) For each of the following, please indicate whether you agree or disagree with the basis for salary-setting as proposed by the Ad Hoc Committee last year. If you disagree, please explain why.

4-a) **Mayor:** Set salary at a level similar to compensation for Civil City senior leadership positions. The presumptive salary is the midpoint of the salary range for the highest Civil City pay grade.

Agree

4-b) **City Clerk:** Set salary at a level similar to compensation for Civil City senior leadership positions. The presumptive salary is the midpoint of the salary range for leaders of Civil City departments.

Agree

4-c) **Councilmember:** As a coequal branch of government, yet given the part-time nature of the role, salary to be set at a percentage of the mayor's salary. Percentage to be determined based on number of hours required to meet expectations.

Agree

(5) Do you think the salaries of elected officials in other Indiana cities should be considered when setting the elected officials' salaries in the City of Bloomington? If so, in what way?

No. We do not know how other salaries are set, so we do not know if we agree with other cities' process or rationale. Also, doing things as they have been done tend to perpetuate inequities.

**(6) Given the uncertain financial future of Indiana cities in light of SEA 1, do you think elected officials should receive, at most, a 2.7% COLA increase for 2026?**

Yes

**(7) If you answered yes to number 1 and yes to number 6, what do you think is a good timeline for developing a values-based and repeatable method for setting salaries for elected officials?**

This is tough because delay perpetuates the status quo, which I find to be unfair. I would like it to be developed this year for a vote this year. I think there is good groundwork in existence - the work done with the consultant. And I think many CMs last year said 1) they were up for yearly increases or stair-stepping an increase, which would mean another increase for 2026 and 2) we could discuss again in 2025.

**(8) The next three questions are about the concept of increasing our own salaries.**

**8-a) Do you think it is ever fair for city council members to increase their own salaries beyond a COLA? (Yes or No)**

Yes

**8-b) Should this only be done in 2027, to take effect for the new Council term to start 1/1/28? (or the equivalent time period in the next term) (Yes or No)**

No

**8-c) Should this only be done in 2026, to take effect on 1/1/27 when people decide whether or not to run for a Council seat? (or the equivalent time period in the next term) (Yes or No)**

No

**(9) Do you think elected officials' salaries should be tied to the Area Median Income? All elected officials, or just CMs?**

No. With the consultant last year, we found this measure to not be a good basis. Our economy is not super local when it comes to jobs - you are competing with remote jobs worldwide.

**(10) What other considerations should go into elected officials' salary-setting, that were not considered by the Ad Hoc Committee last year?**

I don't remember if we talked about - what should council look like? Should it be 8 or 9 homeowners every term? Should it be people with different experiences, ambitions, skills, degrees?

## Councilmember Responses to Salary Survey – October 2025

Name: Dave

(1) Should the Council create a values-based and repeatable method for setting salaries, departing from the recent past practice of making minor adjustments to salaries based primarily on whatever the salary was the year before plus a cost of living adjustment (COLA)? (Yes or No)

No

(2) Do you agree or disagree with the following Guiding Principles established by the Ad Hoc Committee on Council Salaries in Fall 2024? (Agree, Neutral, or Disagree)

a. **Accessibility of Public Service** - The level of compensation makes elected office attainable for community members of all socioeconomic statuses.

Agree

b. **Equitable Pay** - Elected officials are compensated equitably according to their respective levels of responsibility and relative to other Bloomington elected officials and departmental leadership.

Neutral

c. **Quality Community Service** - Compensation enables elected officials to meaningfully engage with and serve the Bloomington community.

Agree

d. **Informed Decisions** - Council makes informed decisions about elected official compensation in alignment with these Guiding Principles and based on relevant objective data.

Agree

e. **Transparent and Documented Process** - A transparent, repeatable process guides compensation decisions for elected officials, and results are clearly communicated.

Agree

(3) If you disagree with one or more of the Guiding Principles, please indicate why, for each case, below.

(4) For each of the following, please indicate whether you agree or disagree with the basis for salary-setting as proposed by the Ad Hoc Committee last year. If you disagree, please explain why.

4-a) **Mayor:** Set salary at a level similar to compensation for Civil City senior leadership positions. The presumptive salary is the midpoint of the salary range for the highest Civil City pay grade.

The basis of the study is lacking comparisons of electeds with similar cities in Indiana. The salary should reflect this.

4-b) **City Clerk:** Set salary at a level similar to compensation for Civil City senior leadership positions. The presumptive salary is the midpoint of the salary range for leaders of Civil City departments.

City Clerks are elected, not appointed by the mayor, therefore is not a department head. Salary should be in alignment with other Indiana cities of similar size.

4-c) **Councilmember:** As a coequal branch of government, yet given the part-time nature of the role, salary to be set at a percentage of the mayor's salary. Percentage to be determined based on number of hours required to meet expectations.

Salary should be in alignment with other Indiana cities of similar size.

(5) Do you think the salaries of elected officials in other Indiana cities should be considered when setting the elected officials' salaries in the City of Bloomington? If so, in what way?

Yes. It sets parameters of compensation.

(6) Given the uncertain financial future of Indiana cities in light of SEA 1, do you think elected officials should receive, at most, a 2.7% COLA increase for 2026?

Yes

(7) If you answered yes to number 1 and yes to number 6, what do you think is a good timeline for developing a values-based and repeatable method for setting salaries for elected officials?

IDK. I am open to more discussion.

(8) The next three questions are about the concept of increasing our own salaries.

8-a) Do you think it is ever fair for city council members to increase their own salaries beyond a COLA? (Yes or No)

Yes

8-b) Should this only be done in 2027, to take effect for the new Council term to start 1/1/28? (or the equivalent time period in the next term) (Yes or No)

8-c) Should this only be done in 2026, to take effect on 1/1/27 when people decide whether or not to run for a Council seat? (or the equivalent time period in the next term) (Yes or No)

(9) Do you think elected officials' salaries should be tied to the Area Median Income? All elected officials, or just CMs?

Yes.

(10) What other considerations should go into elected officials' salary-setting, that were not considered by the Ad Hoc Committee last year?

# Comments from Mayor Thomson

at the request of the City Council Ad Hoc Salary Committee

November 18, 2024

Thank you for the opportunity to provide my comments as the City Council Ad Hoc Salary Committee considers options for setting salaries for elected officials, including the Mayor of the City of Bloomington.

## Considerations for Mayor's Salary

The Mayor's salary should reflect the level of responsibility required to lead and make decisions for the human and real resources of the entire city, the complexity of the job, the requirement to be on call 24 hours, 7 days a week, 365 days a year, and also the impact of decisions on the community and the region. While elected officials do not fall within the standard salary grade structure, as the chief executive of the city, the mayor's salary ought to be set at the highest level of grade-related salaries, in keeping with the city's principle of meeting the market for similar positions. The philosophy used to determine salaries for elected officials should align, generally, with the philosophy for other employees.

The philosophy for determining staff salaries was based on 1) rubric factors for the position itself (not the current individual holding it) and 2) market value for similar positions. While elected officials do not "shop" for jobs in different locations, similar positions in the community and in Indiana should still be considered relevant, and cost of living incorporated into pay.

The rubric factors, to review, were:

- **Complexity**, with the highest level "Multifaceted - Work is broad in scope covering several departments within the Organization. Policy, procedure, and precedent are created and/or approved by this job. Independent judgment is required to review and approve major recommendations, establish organizational policy, and coordinate technical and administrative recommendations with organization-wide policies and procedures."
- **Experience required**
- **Education required**
- **Direction of Others/Direction of Resources**
- **Environmental Strain**: This could be physical strain or mental strain: "This fatigue is normally produced by the need to concentrate on the task being performed, to pay attention to detail, to perform a high volume of work, and/or to work under time constraints or to perform physically unpleasant or hazardous work."
- **Independent Judgment**
- **Consequence of Errors**: "Consider the extent to which an error in judgment on the employee's part is likely to be detrimental to the organization's financial, customer, or employee relations posture in the long term."
- **Frequency of External Work Relationships/External Communication**: "Consider the types and frequency of work relationships the job has responsibility for outside of the City of Bloomington organizational structure. This work might be with individuals or with entire organizations or entities."

The rubric and market benchmarks fed into the creation of the new 14 grade levels and guide how non-union, non-elected officials at the highest grade levels are compensated.

While the grade levels themselves do not apply to elected officials per the study parameters, as data on elected officials was not included in the study or in calculating those salary ranges, it may be helpful to know that for 2025, grade 14 salaries have been capped for tenure at Step 3 (\$151,410), regardless of actual tenure, to ensure that all employees at other levels will receive full benefit of the implementation in year one.

## Comments from Clerk Bolden

at the request of the City Council Ad Hoc Salary Committee

November 18, 2024

Thank you for the opportunity to provide my comments as the City Council Ad Hoc Salary Committee considers options for setting salaries for elected officials, including the elected City Clerk. Below I provide my comments on several of the approaches the Committee has discussed during the recent sessions that I attended in the course of my duties documenting the proceedings.

### Comments on Approaches Considered by the Committee

#### 1. Clerk Salary as a Percentage of Mayoral Salary

- An advantage is that this is an easy-to-understand approach.
- The percentage may be somewhat arbitrary. An 85% level would have the effect of aligning the City Clerk salary with most other department heads, which serves as recognition of the role as both department head and an elected official.

#### 2. Benchmarking Salaries to other Indiana Second Class Cities

- An advantage is that this is an easy-to-understand approach.
- A disadvantage is that this approach is rooted in the historic and systematic devaluation of a role predominantly filled by women.

#### 3. Salary Commensurate with Department Heads

- The preferred method would be to align the City Clerk salary with the salary range established for Civil City grade 13 department heads.
- An advantage is that this is an easy-to-understand approach and is consistent with other City employers, making it easier to defend and explain.
- It should be communicated that there is a reference to the City's salary schedule, while also indicating that this salary is for an Elected Official Role, which has distinct considerations from other City staff.
- It will be important to communicate that the City Clerk and Clerk staff are a separate branch of government, though part of the same City organization.
- Setting the Clerk salary at the midpoint of the pay range is not equitable with other City Department Heads. Some Department Heads with long tenure at the City may earn the same salary as the City Clerk, who has been with the City longer overall and in the current role.
- I suggest providing a similar longevity-based pay structure, which may enable keeping the base salary lower than a midpoint. While there may be political or perception concerns about a longevity-based approach encouraging people to continue to run for office, this may be offset by the advantage that every four years, there is an opportunity for new individuals to run for and be elected to office.

### Salary Implications Related to Clerk Staff

It is important to me that the impact on salaries for my staff be considered. I note the following:

- Clerk staff roles and job descriptions will be reviewed in the WERC process early next year.
- I remain interested in certification pay for Clerk staff. I am not in favor of providing certification pay for the City Clerk when this same form of compensation is not available to Clerk staff.

## CITY OF BLOOMINGTON

**Cross Fund Report**

From Date: 1/1/2025 - To Date: 10/07/2025

Summary Listing, Report By Fund - Account

Fund	Fund Description	Beginning Balance	Total Debits	Total Credits	Ending Balance
1101	General	\$55,348,428.07	\$82,265,423.76	\$98,303,822.80	\$39,310,029.03
2201	Motor Vehicle Highway	\$653,514.20	\$2,845,091.83	\$3,580,099.84	(\$81,493.81)
2202	Local Road and Street	\$1,329,050.94	\$861,877.21	\$1,013,352.60	\$1,177,575.55
2203	MVH Restricted (subfund of Motor Vehicle Highway)	\$1,539,464.61	\$1,256,339.53	\$1,189,810.95	\$1,605,993.19
2204	Park and Recreation - Operating	\$3,805,105.52	\$7,396,731.11	\$8,465,250.87	\$2,736,585.76
2207	Parking Meter	\$6,973,117.19	\$2,158,657.97	\$1,407,057.68	\$7,724,717.48
2209	LIT – Economic Development	\$6,257,809.46	\$14,686,800.00	\$10,876,674.72	\$10,067,934.74
2236	Rainy Day	\$3,213,800.33	\$66,899.48	\$0.00	\$3,280,699.81
2240	LIT – Public Safety	\$9,918,212.94	\$5,630,409.65	\$7,236,368.21	\$8,312,254.38
2248	LOIT Special Distribution	\$1,337,428.21	\$32,583.55	\$446,551.86	\$923,459.90
2256	Opioid Settlement Unrestricted	\$130,343.97	\$6,338.35	\$45,946.00	\$90,736.32
2257	Opioid Settlement Restricted	\$876,319.76	\$39,202.54	\$198,149.00	\$717,373.30
2505	CC Jack Hopkins NR17-42 (S0011)	\$115,632.71	\$504,675.00	\$279,118.87	\$341,188.84
2507	Police Education (S1151)	\$83,232.63	\$42,631.72	\$51,460.87	\$74,403.48
2509	Dispatch Training (S9501)	\$47,456.84	\$671.36	\$15,363.99	\$32,764.21
2519	Redevelopment Commission	\$2,124,408.62	\$793,397.51	\$1,420,274.53	\$1,497,531.60
2535	Digital Opportunity Fund	\$167,823.29	\$0.00	\$43,786.15	\$124,037.14
2536	Fiber Connectivity	\$0.00	\$250,000.00	\$41,229.36	\$208,770.64
4401	Cumulative Capital Improvement - Cigarette Tax	\$4,680.77	\$58,235.17	\$65,297.15	(\$2,381.21)
4402	Cumulative Capital Development	\$3,012,474.22	\$1,726,405.43	\$1,913,728.55	\$2,825,151.10
4439	Food and Beverage Tax	\$20,738,037.47	\$3,239,411.53	\$5,469,710.83	\$18,507,738.17
4445	Consolidated TIF	\$17,199,194.64	\$15,176,352.86	\$9,713,300.79	\$22,662,246.71
4451	TIF - Prow	\$648,891.64	\$60,326.07	\$2,095.55	\$707,122.16
4455	Bloomington Meridiam TIF	\$0.00	\$0.00	\$0.00	\$0.00
4653	City 2016 GO Bond Proceeds	\$709,340.70	\$21,966.84	\$14,282.39	\$717,025.15
4655	2018 BicentennialBnd Prcd900030	\$2,691,849.19	\$66,626.36	\$131,840.61	\$2,626,634.94
4657	2019 4th St Bnd Proceeds Taxable	\$505,628.71	\$11,983.50	\$1,458.17	\$516,154.04
4665	Parks GO Bonds 2022	\$4,420,602.62	\$103,969.35	\$1,837,535.19	\$2,687,036.78
4666	GO Bonds 2022	\$5,321,401.34	\$425,489.09	\$446,246.95	\$5,300,643.48
4667	Econ Dev LIT Bonds of 2022	\$13,254,640.73	\$328,516.33	\$5,238,328.28	\$8,344,828.78
4671	Vehicle Replacement Fund(S0012)	\$503,723.45	\$206,200.00	\$390,074.19	\$319,849.26

## CITY OF BLOOMINGTON

**Cross Fund Report**

From Date: 1/1/2025 - To Date: 10/07/2025

**Summary Listing, Report By Fund - Account**

4674	2024 GO Bonds Proceeds	\$4,217,612.12	\$135,246.86	\$518,071.46	\$3,834,787.52
6604	Sanitation	(\$216,297.12)	\$2,687,608.53	\$2,441,943.71	\$29,367.70
7702	Fleet Maintenance	\$2,810,194.96	\$2,551,737.78	\$2,738,304.65	\$2,623,628.09
7704	Self-Insurance	\$252,049.11	\$578,652.00	\$628,748.87	\$201,952.24
8801	Fire Pension	\$1,697,938.30	\$1,690,542.61	\$1,515,386.51	\$1,873,094.40
8802	Police Pension	\$1,196,393.58	\$1,217,675.14	\$1,033,496.88	\$1,380,571.84
Grand Total: 37 Funds		\$172,889,505.72	\$149,124,676.02	\$168,714,169.03	\$153,300,012.71

Cart Sizes	Average # of Carts (YTD 2025)	Monthly Rate (2024 thru Oct. 2025)	New 2026 Rate Structure (as of Oct 2025)	2025 Approximate Revenue	2026 Approximate Revenue
35 gal.	6,012	\$ 8.75	\$ 9.80	\$ 650,197.80	\$ 707,011.20
64 gal.	6,268	\$ 16.00	\$ 17.92	\$ 1,239,559.68	\$ 1,347,870.72
96 Gal	935	\$ 24.00	\$ 26.88	\$ 277,358.40	\$ 301,593.60
Recycle	13,700	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -
Large Item	1,850	\$ 25.00	\$ 25.00	\$ 46,250.00	\$ 46,250.00
Appliance	145	\$ 35.00	\$ 35.00	\$ 5,075.00	\$ 5,075.00
Yard Waste	36,500	\$ 1.00	\$ 1.00	\$ 36,500.00	\$ 36,500.00
		2024 Actual		2025	2026
Total Fee Revenue		<u>\$ 2,401,260.00</u>		<u>\$ 2,254,941</u>	<u>\$ 2,444,301</u>
Total Expenses		\$ 3,264,195.00		\$ 3,842,455	\$ 4,014,399
Net Gain/(Loss)		\$ (862,935.00)		\$ (1,587,514)	\$ (1,570,098)

#### Capital Assets

20 Total Collection Trucks	?	Cart Inventory
16 Trash Trucks	?	Heavy Equip.
4 Recycle Trucks		

Comparable Private Services	Additional Information
Rates	Buildings with 5 units and up: Served privately
Frequency	All businesses & restaurants: Served privately
Additional Service Rates	Carts must be 4' apart at curb and lid closed.