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Citing 'anti-oppressive' salary model, Portland panel proposes big pay raises for future elected leaders



LC- The Oregonian

Annual pay for Portland elected officials could rise significantly in 2025 when the city switches to a new form of government and triples the size of the City Council, according to a proposal released Friday.

Portland currently pays its four City Council members, who are elected citywide and directly oversee a portfolio of city bureaus, \$127,000 a year.

When the council expands to 12 members, elected from geographic districts covering one-quarter of the city and no longer directly in charge of any bureaus, the pay would increase to \$142,000, under a proposal by the city's Independent Salary Commission.

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The five-person panel, appointed earlier this year, based its recommendations on a number of criteria, according to public documents.

Those included an “anti-oppressive” approach to setting compensation ranges, which “embrace pay concepts that depart from an over-reliance on market pay.”

They also considered what a “thriving wage” in the city of Portland would be for a single parent with one child, which documents show was calculated to be \$142,000 a year.

Commission members also said they wanted to ensure that salaries would “open opportunities for historically marginalized communities and will not be a deterrent to running and holding office.”

Portland currently pays its mayor \$152,000 and its city auditor \$125,000.

Under the commission’s recommendation, those annual salaries would increase to a minimum of \$175,000 and \$169,000 respectively.

All 14 of the city’s elected officials would be able to qualify for thousands of dollars in additional annual compensation should they possess particular cultural competency or language skills.

Abby Engers, a human resources manager at Portland-based recruiting firm Boly:Welch and a member of the salary commission, explained in a statement Friday that the panel did not set out to recommend high pay.

“When we began, the assumption was that changes to charter would result in lower salaries for most of the roles. However, after examining market data, changes to the cost-of-living and receiving insightful testimony from impacted Portlanders, our recommendation is for a higher wage than I think many initially expected,” she said.

“The totality of the data gives us confidence in our recommendation that is in alignment with the city’s values, while reflecting only a small fraction of the total budget.”

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The salary commission will host a public hearing on its proposed recommendations on June 27 and eight additional hearings between July 5 and July 16.

It is scheduled to vote on a final proposal July 20.

For more information on how to attend those hearings or submit public input visit:

<https://www.portland.gov/transition/salarycommission/salaries>. Or call 3-1-1.

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