



COUNTY OF ERIE CITIZENS SALARY REVIEW COMMISSION MINUTES

Tuesday, March 12, 2024 Meeting #10

Present: Chair Lauri Buonanno, Alex Burgos, Gary Dickson, Frederick Floss (virtual), Mark Glasgow, David Pietrowski (virtual), Gregory Rabb, William Ransom, and Christopher Stone.

Absent: None

Support Staff: Mark Cornell, Lindsay McKay and Natalie Nitsche.

Non-Members Present: Nathan Lippitt

Meeting Notes: A quorum was present, and the meeting was called to order by Chair Buonanno at 2:01pm.

Motion to approve prior meeting's minutes made by A. Burgos and seconded by G. Dickson.

M. Cornell suggested that by the end of the meeting, the Commission could vote on an amended report. Chair Buonanno expressed concern that there will be many changes and would like to schedule an additional meeting for the vote. G. Rabb also expressed apprehension on approving the report without seeing the major changes and adjustments first. M. Cornell confirmed an additional meeting would be scheduled, and this session would be treated as a working session.

Chair Buonanno then stated that Google Drive will no longer be utilized, because there is a linked table of contents. The Chair then recommended going section by section to discuss the report.

The first section, the Executive Summary, will be written by Chair Buonanno. She stated that this section should be first, because some people only want to read that portion. Next will be Acknowledgements. Those acknowledged will be Erie County staff, elected officials, and the Comptroller for use of his conference room. Duties and Composition, the process this Commission undertook for this session, and Footnotes will also be included. Everything should be in once place for readers and future commissions.

A discussion then took place regarding the use of the term "commission," "CSRC," and "commissioner" versus "committee member." It was agreed that "commission member" and "CSRC."

The Salary Review Process section was then addressed. There is a link to the website that houses meeting information, minutes, etc.

Next, the Public Comments section was discussed. G. Rabb inquired as to whether the Commission received any public comments in email or writing. M. Cornell advised there were no public comments. G. Rabb stated that he would like it noted that no official comments were made. M. Glasgow then asked when the public comment closes and suggested it closes as of the approval date of the report. G. Rabb suggested closing the comments as of March 26th. No objections.

Chair Buonanno and M. Cornell discussed the number of meetings - scheduled versus actually held. M. Cornell confirmed that 11 meetings were scheduled, only ten convened, as of the April meeting.

The Role of the County Legislature was then discussed. Chair Buonanno advised she copied the information from the Charter. Current salaries reflect the 2024 salaries.

Next, the Background to this Report was discussed. Chair Buonanno advised that Heading 2 was taken from

the 2018 report. She stated she believes this section is important and asked for everyone to weigh in. She also asked if the group has captured the sentiment of the Commission in terms of the discussion that took place. G. Rabb and Chair Buonanno discussed the votes not being unanimous like during the previous Commission's meetings.

Data Collection was the subsequent section to be reviewed. Chair Buonanno asked the group if anything was missing. G. Rabb stated there was some discussion regarding fringe benefits, but there was no comprehensive look at that. M. Cornell contributed that fringe benefits are too hard to compare with other counties. G. Rabb suggested making a note that it was discussed, but there was no way to obtain satisfactory verifiable data. Analysis 6, which shows fringe benefits, will need F. Floss to elaborate more on the figures received from the US Bureau of Statistics.

Chair Buonanno expressed a desire to memorialize the interview questions for future Commissions, so they are listed in the report.

M. Cornell advised that the final report will live in the same place as the minutes. A living document with links to the minutes can be utilized instead of a summary of each meeting. Chair Buonanno and G. Rabb proposed keeping the summaries. Chair Buonanno asked the Commission to review the summaries. This is needed as the votes were not unanimous.

Next, the Analyses section was discussed. Chair Buonanno advised that she ran out of time to complete the summary section, but the report will introduce and summarize the analyses.

Analysis 1: Comparable Counties – Chair Buonanno expressed she tried to capture the conversations that took place. Even though it wasn't ultimately used to make decisions, it was discussed, so it should be included. There was a problem with the NYSAC numbers. M. Cornell suggested a footnote that there were discrepancies. Chair Buonanno stated that the Big Four and Big Five counties are accurate.

Analysis 2: Erie County Legislature - D. Pietrowski led the charge on this. Chair Buonanno advised she removed the rankings from the table for clarity reasons. The chart needs some minor formatting – font size, spacing, etc.

Analysis 3: Earnings Considering Average Annual Economic Growth – This analysis shows \$64,354 as a dead middle salary, not an average. As a Commission, it was interpreted that this is an average salary of local employees. Chair Buonanno stated that she will ask F. Floss to write an explanation of this analysis.

Analysis 4: Internal Equity – Chair Buonanno discussed internal equity versus external equity. Internal compares salaries within the County. F. Floss took the CPI and compounded it to come up with salary information. Chair Buonanno asked L. McKay for the Word document which shows the list of employees who make more than the elected officials. G. Rabb asked for the footnote about external equity be moved to the next section.

Analysis 5: External Equity – Chair Buonanno asked D. Pietrowski to review and confirm the analysis is to his satisfaction. Compares current County salaries to the City of Buffalo counterparts. The Commission did not have the percentage difference between the Buffalo Common Council and the Erie County Legislators, so that was added by Chair Buonanno.

Analysis 6: Fringe Benefits – Chair Buonanno asked F. Floss to carefully read this and make sure nothing is missing and that he's comfortable with the information presented.

Analysis 7: Complexity of County-wide Elected Officials' duties – Chair Buonanno explained that this analysis captures how the four county-wide elected officials compare with one another. This section does not discuss the Legislature as they are referenced above. Interviews were conducted with each of the county-wide elected officials. G. Dickson asked if this was part of internal equity. Chair Buonanno interprets that this is not internal equity as the four officials are being compared to each other. G. Rabb suggested including information about the Sheriff and County Executive being more comparable, and the Clerk and Comptroller being more comparable.

Analysis 8: Consideration of Staggering Elections – This portion was authored by C. Stone. M. Cornell suggested these tables would work better in the appendices. F. Floss suggested a bar chart, and G. Dickson suggested a line chart emphasizing the increase and spread was intended but was an accidental consequence of the election dates.

M. Cornell and Chair Buonanno discussed ensuring the staggered elections be considered during future Citizen Salary Review Commissions.

F. Floss inquired as to whether Mark [Poloncarz] signs the bill if the Legislature passes it. M. Cornell explained that he believes the County Executive's only input is regarding the budget adoption process. A discussion took place around the State and Governor's veto powers.

Analysis 9: Cost of Living Adjustments – G. Dickson confirmed Cost of Living Adjustments were voted on, and Chair Buonanno confirmed the Commission did vote on it. G. Dickson inquired as to whether this mitigates the different implementation years. Chair Buonanno believes it does. There is a chart with projections on it, and it does need some formatting. Chair Buonanno advised she will ask F. Floss to work on this.

Summary of Salary Comparisons of the Analyses – this heading title will be changed. Chair Buonanno advised that this is an important table, because it gives the recommended salaries would be based on the different analyses. All charter counties is missing, but L. McKay will email the appropriate information to Chair Buonanno. M. Cornell suggested changing the Erie County employees' salaries to 2024 numbers and offered to make the adjustments.

Chair Buonanno also included the recommendations that the Commission voted on as well as the analyses used. The Chair asked F. Floss, L. McKay, and M. Cornell to provide Erie County's budget and population for Analysis 1.

Chair Buonanno then asked if the Commission members would like their names in the report or just the ayes and nays. M. Cornell suggested explaining why there are only eight votes and not the full nine members. A. Burgos and M. Glasgow recommended just having the vote score recorded in the report as the names are in the minutes.

Lastly, Chair Buonanno asked the Commission to review the Conclusion of the report and re-write or add as necessary.

Motion to adjourn the meeting made by A. Burgos, seconded by C. Stone; motion carried unanimously by all members in attendance.

Meeting adjourned at approximately 3:28 p.m.

Next Meeting: Tuesday, April 2, 2024, at 2:00 p.m.