

**Council Work Session Minutes  
March 11, 2024**

PRESENT: Council President Rounds, Councilmen Haase, Kolezynski, Councilwomen Palmisano, Maruschak, DeSouza, Durichko; Clerk of Council Allen.

The meeting of March 11, 2024 was called to order by Council President Rounds at 6:15 p.m.

Clerk Allen: Roll Call: Haase, Palmisano, DeSouza, Kolezynski, Maruschak, Rounds.

Council President Rounds turned the meeting over to our Finance Chairperson Councilwoman DeSouza for the update on the pay band ordinance.

Councilwoman DeSouza stated that the Finance Committee has been looking at pay rates in our city, particularly focusing on the mayor and city council. The Finance Committee has done extensive comparisons to surrounding cities with similar demographics and tax base, as well other relatable cities in the State of Ohio. We've determined that the current pay rate for the mayor's position has not kept up with the economics, position, inflation and cost-of-living. The previous mayor was technically listed as part-time in this pay range. The Finance Committee discussed having the mayor's salary increased from \$70,917 to \$92,192 annually. This would put the salary more into perspective as it relates to the administrative staff at city hall that the mayor supervises and scenarios from similar surrounding cities. In regard to council, we determined that a small increase is warranted to reflect the professionalism and dedication each of you have offered to the residents of Parma Heights. This would be in affect a cost-of-living increase, such as other employees of the city have received and would amount to \$468 annually for Council President; \$406 for each councilmember annually. Before we settled on numbers that we understood to be fair, reasonable and relevant, we worked with Finance Director Iaconis regarding different pay rates for both the mayor and council and most importantly how this will affect the budget when implemented and continuing into future budgets. This was our main concern. Elected increases cannot take affect during a current term of office, thus the total for the mayor and the 4 Ward Councilmembers increase would be \$22,898 annually and would not take effect until January 1, 2026. The 3 other Councilmembers At Large would be added in January 1, 2028, this would increase it to \$24,116. Finance Director Iaconis has assured us that the budget can with stand these increases in 2026 and 2028 and into future budgets.

Councilwoman Palmisano asked when was the last time Council had a cost-of-living increase?

Councilman Rounds responded that 2022 there was a portion of an increase. There was no discussion of a cost-of-living or comparing us to anyone else's increases. In 2022 there was a bump for the Ward members and in 2024 it was realized for the At-Large members.

Councilwoman Palmisano asked what is the percentage increase for council that you are proposing?

Councilwoman DeSouza responded 3.5%

Councilwoman Palmisano asked if there is a way to separate the two issues when we go to vote on it?

Council President Rounds added that we can separate the two issues. Councilwoman DeSouza agreed that the two issues could be voted on separately. Council President Rounds added that it was important to

us that we were looking at the positions themselves not putting names on the positions. We also wanted to be cognizant that we want to attract people that were willing to work hard for the city. We did not want to use a lot of funding in the budget because we still have a lot of things the city has to do. For example, our streets, the recreation department continues to offer events and services to the residents.

Councilwoman DeSouza added that again, Finance Director Iaconis has assured us that this increase is sustainable for years to come. In 2022 when this mayor began her term, she adjusted job titles, and duties. It was not across the board. Since then, the unions have received 4/5% increases. Before this mayor, I believe it had been a few years.

Council President Rounds added that the city hall non-union employees did receive a 2.5% increase this year. I also don't feel that City Council necessarily should be keeping up with cost-of-living or with the other city employees. I think we should be thanked for our time, but we're not trying to make a living. I would prefer to see the unions and the city employees receive increases as they continue to do their jobs.

Councilman Kolezynski asked if there were any large variables when comparing to other cities, even based on population or anything like that?

Councilwoman DeSouza responded no. The larger cities have more room to make larger size increases.

Councilman Haase added that even with these increases, we're still not where we should be, however we all felt that we had to do something for the position of mayor to bring it more inline for 2026. The reality is that everything is going up and it's about attracting talent. We have a mayor right now that works 24/7 and we all agreed that this position should be financially rewarded accordingly. Even with council's proposed increase we are well below other communities. We trying to be fair and you have to do it in increments.

Councilwoman DeSouza thanked Councilman Haase for his comments. We all felt the mayor deserved a whole lot more; the position deserves more but we have to take steps.

Councilman Haase added that hopefully in the future we'll be able to bring it forward on a regular basis. Everyone agreed there was too large a gap since the last increase for that position. There were a multitude of reasons for that. Partly to due with Covid and partly to due with financial stability of the city. I think Director Iaconis, in large part due to her hard work, has brought us stability. I think she's done a yeoman's job. I still don't believe that we should have any director making more than the mayor regardless of the population.

Councilwoman DeSouza added we'll bring this to legislation in the next meeting or two because legal needs to review and it will take a time to move it forward.

Councilwoman Palmisano stated that I still am hesitant about the council increase because I literally just started and I feel like I'd be voting to give myself an increase. Being that this doesn't go into effect for about two years gives me time to do my own research and maybe get comfortable enough to vote for the council increase.

Council President Rounds added that this will come before you in a couple meetings and nothing goes into effect until 2026, it won't have an emergency clause, it will go three readings. Let's move on to the second item on the agenda, ordinance 2024 – 19, "Beekeeping". The reason this is being brought up

tonight, is in our packets for this evening's City Council meeting we have ordinances that are being updated. This one is on the list and the administration is doing some housekeeping, changing the reference of department and who it's reported to. When councilmembers Maruschak, DeSouza and I looked over the ordinances over the summer, we flagged this because a resident came to us about specifically part b and c. Both reference 5 feet from the property line. Currently we're only aware of two residents in the city that have taken out permits to be an apiary. The resident who came forward said they felt the 5 feet from the property line was too close. By the way I wanted to make reference that Councilwoman Durichko has joined us for our work session. I did some asking around and our Animal Warden says she's fine with the 5-foot marker from the property line but if you google beekeeping property lines, right away it says a bee hive should not be less than 10 feet from a property line, another says at least 20 feet. My initial reaction was that 5 feet feels too close. I felt that if we're going to update this ordinance anyway, why not take the opportunity to not only update who this is being reported to, but also talk about the distance from the property line.

Councilwoman Maruschak added that she did the same research over the weekend, and I know there are flight patterns but I think more than 10 feet is impractical in some of the yards. Beekeeping needs to be in a well opened area anyways. I agree with the 10 feet distance from the property line. I don't think it should be an issue for the people possibly doing this in the future and we could look at the residents that are already established. As a safety issue I don't see how someone would not agree with an extra 5 feet added to the location.

Councilwoman DeSouza responded that she would prefer the farther from the property line the better. I understand that 20 feet would be in the middle of their yard if they measure 44 feet wide in total. I do however feel that 10 feet is much more reasonable, 5 feet just seems way too close.

Councilwoman Durichko added that she agrees that she doesn't want to chance getting stung or get chased by bees because the hive is located so close, however 20 feet is too far for the size of lots we have here. The resident who originally complained and then recanted, I've seen the hive personally and it's probably not closer to 10 feet from the fence line. I think 10 feet is reasonable based upon what I've seen.

Councilwoman Maruschak added that when people put pools in their backyards, we have a 10-foot property line with pools. We're talking about things that can fly out. I think 10 feet from the property line for bees is not a stretch.

Council President Rounds added that we don't vote on this during a Work Session but wanted to provide the information so that the legislation has enough support to move forward. We'll have that updated but during the Council meeting, we'll take a vote to make the amendment changing it from 5 to 10 feet for both (b) and (c).

**Meeting adjourned at 6:42 p.m.**



Barbara Allen  
Clerk of Council



Tom Rounds  
Council President

