

23-1246 Approval of Alderperson Salaries

Common Council

Wed, Nov 15, 2023 7:00PM

Mayor Jake Woodford 15:25

Alright, moving on, under other business, we have item 23-1390 reconsideration of item 23-1246 approval of alderperson salaries. We do have a motion and a second to reconsider the item. Any discussion? Alder Fenton.

Alderperson Denise Fenton (District 6) 16:04

Thank you, chair. I would like to make a motion to amend the item that's before us to—

Mayor Jake Woodford 16:12

Alder Fenton just want to—I just want to be clear. We just we need to we need to have the motion to reconsider handled before we can then take up the item just procedurally. So, any discussion on the reconsideration? Alder Croatt?

Alderperson Chris Croatt (District 14) 16:26

Thank you, Mayor. On reconsideration if reconsideration vote was to fail, what would be the outcome of this?

Mayor Jake Woodford 16:35

So, the outcome of this would be that the vote that was taken at the last meeting would stand, and the item failed at the last meeting. So, as I noted in the memo that I sent to the Council, in that meeting it was ruled that the item had passed with a seven six vote, when in fact the Council can't take action with fewer than eight votes on an item. There's also some statutory nuance to this particular item that Attorney Behrens can get into if the item is reconsidered, just as we take up that conversation. But essentially, if the Council opts not to reconsider, then there would be no further discussion on the item. The actions at Council last time would fail, and the compensation and benefits would carry forward unchanged.

Alderperson Chris Croatt (District 14) 17:28

Per the committee recommendation.

Mayor Jake Woodford 17:30

Yes.

Alderperson Chris Croatt (District 14) 17:31

Thank you for clarifying that.

Mayor Jake Woodford 17:34

Attorney Behrens.

Attorney Christopher Behrens 17:36

It it's not because of the committee recommendation. It happens to be the same as the because the committee recommendation was to not change it. But technically, there was no—would be no change to it. So, it remains status quo.

Mayor Jake Woodford 17:53

Thank you. All right. This is on reconsideration. Any further discussion? Hearing none, we have a motion and a second to reconsider. Please cast your votes. Motion passes seven to six. So, we are reconsidering the item. That does pass.

Mayor Jake Woodford 18:32

All right. So, we're on to item 23-1246 approval of Alderperson Salaries for reconsideration. Just need a motion. We have a motion and a second to approve. All right, we'll come back to Alder Fenton.

Mayor Jake Woodford 18:56

Okay. Any discussion? Evidently not but.

Alderperson Denise Fenton (District 6) 18:56

I yield.

Mayor Jake Woodford 19:14

Okay. All right. Just try again.

Mayor Jake Woodford 19:24

Okay, all right. We got Alder Croatt and then Alder van Zeeland.

Alderperson Chris Croatt (District 14) 19:30

So just so we're clear on where we're at, is what's on the table the recommendation from the committee, which was to keep salaries unchanged with including a parking pass?

Mayor Jake Woodford 19:42

Correct.

Alderperson Chris Croatt (District 14) 19:42

Okay. So that's amendable if someone wanted to amend it.

Mayor Jake Woodford 19:46

It is

Alderperson Chris Croatt (District 14) 19:46

Thank you.

Mayor Jake Woodford 19:48

Alder Van Zeeland.

Alderperson Katie Van Zeeland (District 5) 19:50

Thank you, chair. I handed out to my colleagues a packet of information that looks a little more critically at some of this salaries of cities of our size, especially in comparison to Racine and Waukesha, which are the two cities closest to us in size. I also provided some information on inflation. And the last couple pages for everyone is just sort of documentation with links and such so you know that I didn't just pull these numbers out of the sky.

Aldersperson Katie Van Zeeland (District 5) 20:26

What I think is important here is that if you take a look at the data, and you compare just inflation between the time that the parking pass was added, and between the parking pass being added, and today, this Council actually makes \$200 less than the previous Council. So, I don't see the data supporting removal of a parking pass. In fact, it shows that we are lagging behind in salary and that we could deal with—there's two options here depending on how you went but I guess you'd say an average of \$260. I'm fine with it as is, but I think that is worth considering next year looking at getting us back to being in line, including the training budget that we upped this last budget, which would be about a difference of 2.5%. So, at this time, I'm okay with leaving everything as is but I just wanted everyone to have this information so that we're ready to have a real discussion at committee next year. Thank you.

Mayor Jake Woodford 21:43

Any further discussion? Alder Doran.

Aldersperson Chad Doran (District 15) 21:53

Thank you. I would make an amendment to increase the pay by \$20 a month and remove parking passes.

Mayor Jake Woodford 22:08

And just to be clear, that's a motion to amend?

Aldersperson Chad Doran (District 15) 22:10

Yes.

Mayor Jake Woodford 22:11

Okay. Thank you. All right. And we do have a second on that motion to amend. All right. Open the floor for discussion. We do have a motion in a second to amend. Alder Van Zeeland.

Aldersperson Katie Van Zeeland (District 5) 22:38

Thank you, chair. I'll just urge my colleagues to make this decision using data and not emotion. Thank you.

Mayor Jake Woodford 22:45

Alder Hartzheim.

Aldersperson Sheri Hartzheim (District 13) 22:48

Thank you, Chair. I see this less as an increase in salary and more as a changing of where the numbers are budgeted. The arguments have always been that a parking pass is needed in order for us to do our job and for future aldermen to do their jobs. And this will still allow for us to do that, yet, again, we'll eliminate the constant emotional discussion that comes with these things in the future. Thank you.

Mayor Jake Woodford 23:22

Alder Doran.

Aldersperson Chad Doran (District 15) 23:23

Thank you. I think the—as my colleagues probably remember, the original budget amendment I brought forward was for a \$12 a month increase, which I thought was—would cover all of the meetings that were required to attend here each month. There was some discussion about coming downtown an extra time or two perhaps per month and having that cost covered. An amendment was made to raise it to \$20, and I think that's a fair compromise because it still allows for alders to have their cost of parking completely covered for the month, and

still comes at a savings to the city, which I think is a win for everyone. And I would note, I think in that discussion, when the amend—when the item was amended to \$20, an argument I think that really stuck with me the most was I guess the argument about equity that some of our colleagues tend to make, from time to time, in that this allows someone who doesn't even own a car and certainly would not benefit from having a parking pass to be able to use those funds to take a bus or perhaps a Bird scooter or some other means of transportation that would allow them to get here to City Hall to do that job. And to me that that was a really a worthwhile argument. That makes a lot of sense and can benefit anyone. So, I think this ends up being a win for both alder—alders in the future and for the community. And so, I encourage our colleagues to approve it.

Mayor Jake Woodford 24:59
Alder Van Zeeland.

Aldersperson Katie Van Zeeland (District 5) 25:02

Thank you, chair. I'll urge my colleagues to vote against this. Although Alder Doran tries to make it sound nice and flowery and equitable, what it really is a cut in our pay. This pay has always been considered—if you take a look at the sheet from HR, it's—the information is always been included that way. If you take a look at other cities and the other benefits that they have on top of their salary, removing that is really defunding our Council budget and defunding our households. So, I urge you to vote against it. Thank you.

Mayor Jake Woodford 25:40
Alder Firkus.

Aldersperson Brad Firkus (District 3) 25:43

Thank you, Mayor. Just to clarify, anything—for anything to change tonight, we need 12 people to vote for something at the end of the night. Correct?

Aldersperson Chad Doran (District 15) 25:53
Attorney Behrens.

Attorney Christopher Behrens 25:54

Partially correct. So, a change to the compensation paid, the dollar amount paid, would require three quarters vote. So, it requires 12. A benefit just requires a majority. So right now, you have the two put together, which makes it a little bit more challenging. You may want to consider at some point, if you're going to continue debating, separating those items out and taking them up independently given that it takes two different types of votes to approve them.

Aldersperson Brad Firkus (District 3) 26:26

Alright, thank you for clarifying. With that in mind, we can do this again for another hour, two hours, five hours. Or we can just say look at the reality. We've taken a lot of split votes this last two weeks. Does anyone in this room see a way to get to 12 votes to change pay? Does anyone think there's eight or I guess tonight seven votes to get to a point where we get rid of parking passes.? If you think there is a way that let's have this conversation for as long as we need. If you do not believe there is a way for us to get to that tonight, let's just stop wasting everyone's time in this room, please. Thank you.

Mayor Jake Woodford 27:01

And just to be clear, action would take eight votes. So procedurally we can we can handle it with seven, but when it comes to actual action, it'll take eight. Right, any further discussion on the amendment? All right, we

have a motion and a second to amend. Please cast your votes. This is on the amendment. Motion fails four to nine.

Mayor Jake Woodford 27:51

We're back to the item as presented. Any further discussion? Alder Schultz.

Aldersperson Alex Schultz (District 9) 28:07

Thank you, Mayor. I appreciate the comments by my colleagues for and against. I just want to express my gratitude to the Council president for providing the information packet tonight and being able to see on paper how far we are lagging. And the number that's sticks out to me is that our salary from 2001 to today is you know, lagging by maybe as much as a third from where it should be, you know. If we were at our same pay rate adjusted for inflation, we'd be at \$9,791 today so that's kind of a stunning number to think about. And all these arguments we have about trying to catch up I think are worthwhile so you know let's have this discussion a little bit more robust the next time we go through this process and get ourselves a little bit closer to where everybody else is. Thank you.

Mayor Jake Woodford 28:59

Further discussion? Hearing none we have a motion and a second to approve. Please cast your votes. Motion passes 13 to zero the item has been approved.