



FITCHBURG CITY CLERK

*Jul 08 2022 8:20 am*

# City of Fitchburg Massachusetts 01420

## CITY COUNCIL

### President

Anthony M. Zarrella

### Vice President

Andrew J. Van Hazinga

### Councillors at Large

Sally Cragin

Marcus L. DiNatale

Amy Green

Samantha M. Squailia

Anthony M. Zarrella

### Ward Councillors

Ward 1 – Bernard J. Schultz III

Ward 2 – Paul R. Beauchemin

Ward 3 – Andrew J. Couture

Ward 4 – Andrew J. Van Hazinga

Ward 5 – Marisa R. Fleming

Ward 6 – Derrick Cruz

## COUNCIL AS A WHOLE COMMITTEE MEETING

Legislative Building, 700 Main Street, Fitchburg, MA

Tuesday, June 14, 2022, at 6:30 PM

This meeting will be open to the public. Persons who wish to participate remotely in the Public Forum portion of the meeting may request a remote attendance link by contacting the City Clerk at [cityclerk@fitchburgma.gov](mailto:cityclerk@fitchburgma.gov).

The Council as a Whole Committee Meeting was called to order by President Zarrella at 6:31 PM. The meeting opened with a salute to the Flag led by Councilor DiNatale. The clerk called the roll and 11 Councilors were present.

### The agenda will consist of the following:

#### I. PETITION

- 109-21 Joanna Bilotta, City Clerk, to review the Mayor's salary and the City Councilors' salary, as required by Chapter 3-43 of the Code of the City of Fitchburg.

President Zarrella recommended taking the City Councilor's salary first. Each Councilor who made a recommendation will have the opportunity to introduce their recommendation and provide a brief explanation of their reasoning, there will not be debate between presentations. Per City Council rules the council will be voting with the highest number and proceed until there is a motion that passes.

Councilor Beauchemin recommends \$18,000.00 for City Council ~ Have to start somewhere, start high and work our way down. Looking at past elections, we cannot get anyone to run for public office. If you want more people to run for city office you need to provide the income. As a city councilor if you do not want the money, you are able to go to the Treasures office at City Hall and donate your salary back to the city.

Councilor Squailia Recommends \$13,000.00 ~ Fitchburg and Leominster are similar in geographic, additionally in 2014 the salaries were similar. However Leominster took the base salary of City Council and Mayor and increased salaries yearly by the Consumer Price Index (CPI-U). Using CPI-U maintains base salary and increases annually so salaries do not stay stagnant and removes the politics from this process. Urge that whatever base salary voted we also add the CPI-U.

Councilor DiNatale recommends \$11,046 ~ which would be 1 percent for every year since the last increase in 2014. Agrees with Councilor Squailia's number and utilizing the CPI-U. Councilor DiNatale advocates councilors to vote for the \$13,000.00 with the annual CPI-U.

Councilor Green recommends \$11,000.00 ~ based her recommendation on the 11 months we work as City Councilors.

Councilor Fleming recommends no increase over current amount, an increase across the board is not fair to all councilors some work harder than others. You run for City Council to help the City.

Councilor Van Hazinga recommends no increase over current amount. This salary does not reflect the amount of time spent on this job. It is a lot of time from my current job, evening hours from my family, it does deserve to be compensated. We do need to encourage more people to run for office, it is a lot of work, you put yourself in the spot light. In favor of changing the process of salaries and submitted some language: "The salary of members of the city council shall be ten thousand dollars (\$10,000) per year, and they shall receive no other compensation from the city for any official duty. Effective January 1, 2024 and on an annual basis thereafter, a percentage adjustment of the city councilor salary will be established consistent with the annual percent change in the consumer price index (CPI-U) of the previous calendar year, with a maximum adjustment of three percent (3.0%)."

President Zarrella recommended a petition to legislative affairs for the city council to determine a percent adjustment of the city councilor salary consistent with the annual percent change in the CPI-U.

Motion: To refer the process of City Council salaries to legislative affairs for the city council to determine a percent adjustment of the city councilor salary consistent with the annual percent change in the CPI-U was unanimously approved 11/0. 11 Councilors present. Board consists of 11 members.

Council vote to increase of \$18,000.00 roll call vote. 11 No. 11 Councilors present. Board consists of 11 members.

Council vote to increase of \$15,000.00 roll call vote. 8 No 3 Yes (Beauchemin, Couture, Green) 11 Councilors present. Board consists of 11 members.

Council vote to increase of \$13,000.00 roll call vote. 9 Yes 2 No (Fleming, Schultz) Motion pass. 11 Councilors present. Board consists of 11 members.

We will now begin the Mayor's salary.

*Councilor DiNatale recused himself from the meeting at 7:23 PM.*

*Council took a 2 minute recess at 7:23 PM, Council returned at 7:27 PM.*

President Zarrella given the tenure we had on the city council salary, will council be in favor of indexing the mayor's salary as well.

Councilor Van Hazinga move to reconsider tying the Mayor's annual salary to CPI-U.

Councilor Van Hazinga made an amendment to tie the future increases to the Mayor's salary in similar format to the City Council to include a maximum adjustment of Five percent (5.0%) and periodic review. Was unanimously approved 11/0. 11 Councilors present. Board consists of 11 members.

Councilor Beauchemin recommended \$160,000.00 ~ in reviewing different communities seeing they are smaller communities and their salaries and tax rate are higher than Fitchburg.

Councilor Van Hazinga recommended \$120,000.00 ~ it is not an easy job, you have to run every two years for the position. The mayor is the Chief Executive responsible for a 150 million dollar enterprise, great amount of responsibility and we need to ensure we have competent leadership. We are substantially lower than all other cities. We are not looking at paying a particular person it is the position.

President Zarrella reminded everyone that we are not here tonight to discuss Mayor DiNatale salary, the question is, what the position is worth.

Councilor Green recommended \$120,000.00 ~ you do not vote for the person you vote for the position, you vote for the policy not politics. Any CEO who has a budget of a 150 million dollars is paid much higher. The position needs to be funded at a higher rate or our pool of candidates would be limited.

Councilor Fleming recommended \$100,000.00 ~ this is a starting point, willing to go up. Getting information from around the State was helpful. Want to make sure we keep the salary in line the cost of living.

Councilor Schultz recommended \$99,500.00 ~ thought it was a realistic proposal, \$83,000.00 is not sufficient for the position. I realize that looking at Councilor Van Hazinga's handouts showed the direct reports of the mayor are much higher than the Mayor. It is higher than what Leominster and Gardner are paying.

Councilor Squailia recommended \$93,000.00 ~ it is a representative of the CPI-U and what Leominster makes. Being the Mayor of any City is not a career, Town Administrator/Manager, Fire Chief, Police Chief, are careers, being a Mayor's is not career.

Motion to close debate.

Roll call vote to close debate: 6 No 4 Yes (Fleming, Schultz, Couture, Cragin)

Motion fails. 10 Councilors present. Board consists of 11 members.

President Zarrella shared we need a substantial increase, the Mayor's position is not a career, this is true, however it is a full time job. Keeping the position as low as it is, it is making it attractive only to people who have few expenses or an independent source of income.

The mayor is the lowest paid Department Head in the city, even at a \$100,000.00 he would be the fourth lowest paid in the City. This is one position not a group of employees, that by 2024 the budget would be able to fund the position increase. This is a job, it is not a volunteer position, and we want to attract professional candidates that have experience and education and in the private sector would be making six figures.

Councilor Schultz agrees it is not a career, a lot of people in the City would like to make \$100,000.00. The cost of living is not higher than other Cities. Thinks Councilor Fleming and his proposals are reasonable proposals at this time.

Councilor Cruz agrees an increase needs to happen, to get the best candidate for position and to entice the best candidates we can. We are discussing what the value of this position is worth. Our median income in Fitchburg is not comparable to other Cities. A 50% increase of a salary is too high.

Councilor Beauchemin stated that the public decides if this position is going to be a career or not. The mayor of this City, whoever it is deserves more than some of the current department heads provided on this list. The money is well worth the position.

Councilor Couture agrees you cannot compare with Boston, Peabody, and Danvers etc. Look at West Springfield, Salem, and Agawam. The Mayor's position needs to be funded better, it does deserve a substantial increase. I will be voting in favor of \$125,000.00

President Zarrella asked if that is formal proposal for a \$125,000.00.

Councilor Couture yes it is a formal proposal for \$125,000.00

Motion to close debate.

Roll call vote to close debate: 7 No 3 Yes (Green, Couture, Cragin).

7 No 3 Yes Motion fails. 10 Councilors present. Board consists of 11 members.

Councilor Couture reminded everyone this salary proposal will not be going into effect until January 2024.

President Zarrella this will not take effect until after the next election. The salary should have been higher when previously set, due to then financial situation of the city at that time, it was all that could be funded. I would like to focus on Department Heads. The mayor is being paid less than the Chief Librarian, the mayor is being paid less the IT Manager, should the Water and Wastewater Deputy Commissioner's be making more than the Mayor. I am not saying that their salaries are too high, those salaries are in line for the position. The mayor that manages these department heads deserves more than that. I do not see this as a raise as so much as a correction.

Councilor Schultz stated that the department heads earned these salary they moved their way up, this is their profession. The mayor's position is not a career.

Councilor Beauchemin would like to amend his proposal from \$160,000.00 to \$145,000.00. Unanimous Consent 10/0. 10 Councilors present. Board consists of 11 members.

Motion to move the question: Roll call vote to close debate: 9 Yes 1 No (Cruz).

Motion passes. 10 Councilors present. Board consists of 11 members.

Council vote to increase \$145,000.00 Roll call vote: 8 No 2 Yes (Beauchemin, Green).

Motion fails. 10 Councilors present. Board consists of 11 members.

Council vote to increase \$125,000.00 Roll call vote: Councilor Fleming No, Green Yes, Schultz No, Squailia No, Van Hazinga No, Zarrella Yes, Beauchemin Yes, Couture Yes, Cragin Yes, Cruz No. 5 No 5 Yes Motion fails. 10 Councilors present. Board consists of 11 members.

Council vote to increase \$120,000.00 Roll call vote: 7 Yes 3 No (Schultz, Squailia, Cruz).  
Motion passes. 10 Councilors present. Board consists of 11 members.

<https://videoplayer.telvue.com/player/yycCAZPb0NN3zj2o5qio-YFMNC43NjCG/videos?autostart=true&showtabssearch=true#>

The meeting adjourned at 8:24 P.M.

*Joanna Bilotta-Simeone*

Respectfully Submitted,  
Joanna Bilotta-Simeone, City Clerk