

# ULSTER COUNTY PERIODIC COMPENSATION REVIEW COMMITTEE

244 Fair St., P.O. Box 1800, Kingston, New York 12402

Telephone: 845-340-3800

Fax: 845-334-5724



## PERIODIC COMPENSATION REVIEW COMMITTEE RECOMMENDATION ON THE COMPENSATION OF ELECTED OFFICIALS

### **I. Introduction**

The Ulster County Charter created the Periodic Compensation Review Committee (hereafter known as the “Committee”) to review salaries for elected offices of the County of Ulster. Those elected officials are the County Executive, County Clerk, Comptroller, Sheriff, Legislators, and Chairperson of the Legislature. Over the course of the last four months, the Committee conducted a thorough analysis of the elected officials’ salaries by applying objective and comparative components. For comparative analysis the Committee compared Ulster County salaries to the salaries of elected officials of neighboring counties and New York State counties with comparable populations and budgets.

### **II. The Committee’s Purpose**

The Committee’s purpose is to review the salaries of Ulster County’s elected officials and recommend whether the salaries should increase, decrease, or stay the same. The Committee has not made any recommendations concerning compensation of elected officials for whom, by law or judicial determination, the County Legislature does not have the power to fix compensation, such as Judges and the District Attorney.

### **III. Public Participation**

The County Charter requires that “the Committee shall hold at least one public hearing and shall otherwise provide ample opportunity for public comment.” County Charter, Article XXXIV, §C-110. A public hearing was held on September 29, 2015. The Committee also accepted comments via email at PCRC@co.ulster.ny.us. [At this time, no emails were received from members of the public / Several emails were received from members of the public. Those emails are included in **Appendix A.**] As this recommendation may generate further public discussion, the Committee urges additional public input for future recommendations and to assist us in evaluation of elected officials’ salaries. The public may email us at PCRC@co.ulster.ny.us. The Committee met seven times. Meetings were held on June 2, 2015; June 22, 2015; July 20, 2015; August 17, 2015; September 2, 2015; September 17, 2015; and \_\_\_\_\_, 2015. All meetings were open to the public.

### **IV. Analysis**

#### **A. The Comparative Factor**

The Committee reviewed the comparative analysis of the Ulster County salaries for elected officials to those of neighboring counties and counties with comparable populations and budgets.<sup>1</sup> The first of the three factors that the Committee looked at was an objective standard. In constructing the analysis, the Committee utilized several key metrics as a basis of comparison in their attempt to unify the data as reported. Some key metrics reviewed:

- Salaries per capital
- Departmental budgets
- Number of full time employees in their department

These metrics, as well as the populations and departmental budgets for the comparable counties, are average with equal weighting. The comparable Ulster County statistics are juxtaposed against the

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<sup>1</sup> The Committee gathered information on Ulster County and other counties from information contained in their budgets and the 2010 U.S. Census.

average, and a median is developed as a frame of reference to identify skewed or outlying points. The median for the data sets positively correlates to the averages as expressed and therefore provides a consistent basis for comparison.

In so far as the comparative review is concerned, the Committee has reached the following conclusions:

- The salary for the County Executive is within the average and median salary ranges for the comparable counties reviewed.
- The Sheriff's salary is higher than the average and median ranges for the sampled counties. However, as stated in the previous Committee's reports dated September 30, 2010 and October 1, 2012, attached hereto as **Appendix B** and **Appendix C** respectively, our analysis still reveals that Ulster County lacks the salary differentiation between the offices of the County Clerk, Comptroller, and the Sheriff as evidenced by all the counties in the study. In the other counties, the Sheriff's salary is higher than both the Clerk and Comptroller.
- The Comptroller's salary is higher than the average and median ranges for the sampled counties. With a sample size of four counties it is difficult to arrive at any meaningful comparative analysis, however, within that sample the Ulster County Comptroller's salary ranks at the high end of the range for per capita. In addition, the Ulster County Comptroller addressed the Committee regarding other salaries other than his own.
- The County Clerk's salary is at a level consistent with the average and median ranges for the sampled counties and is higher than both the median and average in salary per capita. The County Clerk is among the highest in departmental budget responsibility and number of supervised employees.
- The salary of the Chair of the Legislature is below the average and median salaries of the sampled counties with part-time Chair positions.

- Ulster County's Legislators' rank is at the low end of the average and median salary, although they rank higher than eleven (11) other upstate counties.

#### **B. The Subjective Factor**

The Committee conducted a subjective review and evaluated whether any changes to salaries would be appropriate based on various subjective factors. This was not a performance evaluation. The Committee considered the financial health of the taxpayers, Ulster County, and New York State.

The reduction in revenue from a variety of sources and the mandated State Property Tax Cap are further compounding the uncertainty surrounding the County budgets. Some of the Committee members acknowledge that residents are struggling and failing to meet basic needs and are in no way able to afford consumptive purchases that might spur revenue growth. However, the Committee also recognized that legislators have not received a salary increase in sixteen (16) years and that the legislature has certain responsibilities to fulfill pursuant to the County's Charter.

#### **V. The Committee's Recommendation**

Currently, the County Executive receives a salary of One Hundred Thirty Three Thousand Five Hundred Seventy Two Dollars (\$133,572), while the Clerk and Comptroller receive a salary of One Hundred One Thousand Seven Hundred Nine Dollars (\$101,709). The Sheriff's salary is One Hundred Thousand even Hundred Six Dollars (\$101,706). The Chairperson of the Legislature receives Nineteen Thousand Five Hundred Dollars (\$19,500), the Majority and Minority Leader each receive Twelve Thousand Dollars (\$12,000), and each Legislator receives a salary of Ten Thousand (\$10,000).

Based on the Committee's review and the consideration of the comparative and subjective factors we recommend the following:

The County Executive's salary should remain the same. The Committee recommends that the Sheriff's, Comptroller's and County Clerk's salaries remain the same.

After months of debate and discussion, the one common factor the Committee found was trying to create equity among the legislators. In order to accomplish this, the Committee needed to take a

serious look at the cost of the health benefits which varied tremendously from legislator to legislator. By studying this, the Committee has come up with four (4) plans it would like to submit in its periodic review.

### **C. Total Compensation**

Four Recommended Plans for Compensation for Legislators are as follows:

1) Removing Health Benefit options entirely; while increasing their base salary by \$10,000 equaling a total compensation base salary of \$20,000. With the Majority and Minority Leaders salary being increased to \$24,000 each; and the Chairman's salary being set at \$40,000. The Committee determined that the increase of salaries is reflective of the loss of health benefits with consideration of a nominal budgetary increase. This would result in a total budgetary impact of \$81,469 increase.

2) A salary increase of \$3,000 per legislator, including Majority, Minority and Chairman; with an increase contribution to health insurance benefits which would raise their contribution to 30% of total health insurance cost. This would result in a total budgetary impact of \$42,032 increase.

3) A salary increase of \$4,000 per legislator, including Majority, Minority and Chairman; with an increase contribution to health insurance benefits which would raise their contribution to 40% of total health insurance cost. This would result in a total budgetary impact of \$48,322 increase.

4) A salary increase of \$5,000 per legislator, including Majority, Minority and Chairman; with an increase contribution to health insurance benefits which would raise their contribution to 50% of total health insurance cost. This would result in a total budgetary impact of \$54,612 increase.

### **D. Conclusion**

The above recommendations are presented individually and the legislature has the option to do nothing. The Legislature as a whole may choose one of the above options, and cannot mix and match plans due to IRS and ERISA regulations. The Periodic Compensation Review Committee worked diligently on the above proposals and the Committee believes it has submitted options to bring closer

equity between the legislators. The four proposals are submitted respectfully to the County Executive and the Chairman of the Ulster County Legislature.

[SIGNATURES ON FOLLOWING PAGE]

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