

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

Glenn Noonan, Chair
Gerald Benjamin
Brian Cahill
Wayne Gutmann
Michael Shaughnessy



PERIODIC COMPENSATION REVIEW COMMITTEE RECOMMENDATION ON THE COMPENSATION OF ELECTED OFFICIALS

I. Introduction

The Ulster County Periodic Compensation Review Committee (hereafter “the Committee”) was appointed in accordance with the requirements of Article XXIV of the Ulster County Charter to biannually “review the salaries of all elected officials of the County of Ulster.” Those elected officials are the County Executive, County Clerk, Comptroller, Sheriff, Legislators, and Chairperson of the Legislature. The Committee makes no 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.

The Committee was chaired by Glenn Noonan. Other members were Gerald Benjamin, Brian Cahill, Wayne Gutmann and Michael Shaughnessy. The Committee met six times. Meetings were held on June 2, 2015; June 22, 2015; July 20, 2015; August 17, 2015; September 2, 2015; and September 17, 2015. All were open to the public. The committee’s work had no predetermined outcome. Over the course of its study period, the Committee conducted a thorough analysis of the elected officials’ total compensation packages, considering compensation in other comparable counties, elapsed time since previous salary increases, raises negotiated by labor unions representing county employees and the effects of inflation. Data was provided by the Office of the County Executive, the Clerk of the

County Legislature and the New York State Association of Counties. Testimony was sought from elected officials. Comptroller Elliott Auerbach, Sherriff Paul J. VanBlarcum and Legislative Minority Leader Kenneth J. Ronk, Jr. appeared before the Committee. The Committee is grateful for the staff support provided it by Ms. Judy Riley Assistant Deputy County Executive.

II. Public Participation

As noted, all committee meetings were public. Some resulted in published accounts in the press (see attached). 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. As this recommendation may generate further public discussion, the Committee urges additional public input for future recommendations and to assist it in evaluation of elected officials’ compensation. The public may email us at PCRC@co.ulster.ny.us.

III. Analysis

A. The Comparative Factor

The Committee compared Ulster County salaries for elected officials to those of neighboring counties and other New York counties with comparable populations, budgets and degree of responsibility for governmental operations.¹

The Committee determined:

- A 2014 survey of nine counties by the Ulster County Comptroller showed the salary for the Ulster County Executive to rank fifth, with salary just below the average. A twelve county comparison done in 2015 by the County Legislature staff showed that the salary of the Ulster County Executive ranked sixth. Note that these comparisons for this and following county-

¹ Demographic data was obtained from the 2010 U.S. Census. County-based data was obtained from the NYS Association of Counties and county budgets. Counties used for comparison were: Lewis, St. Lawrence, Schuyler, Tioga, Allegany, Chatauqua, Cortland, Fulton, Herkimer, Montgomery and Wyoming.

wide offices are of salary only; they do not consider the total compensation package for these positions.²

- The Sheriff's salary in 2014 also ranked fifth of the nine Counties examined in the Comptroller's study.
- Seven counties in the Comptroller's study had elected County Comptrollers. The Ulster Comptroller's salary ranked second in these seven.
- The County Clerk's salary ranked fourth of nine in the Ulster County Comptroller's study.
- The salary of the Chair of the County Legislature ranked ninth of the nine counties in the Ulster County Comptroller's survey, and more than \$17,361 below the mean for this office.
- Ulster County's Legislators' salaries ranked 45th among the 57 New York counties with independently operating county governments. All counties with lower salaries are rural with very low populations. With regard to the total compensation package, Ulster County legislators are eligible for health insurance coverage. Choice of this coverage significantly elevates the compensation of some but not all members, and creates inequality in member compensation.

B. The Subjective Factor

This study was conducted in improved fiscal environment compared to that at the time of immediately preceding studies. The Committee made its analysis mindful of the economic difficulties facing citizens and taxpayers and the effects of the state imposed property tax cap.

IV. 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

² Comptroller study: Albany, Dutchess, Erie, Oneida, Onondaga, Orange, Rockland, Sullivan and Ulster. Legislative data: Chautauqua, Schenectady, Rensselaer, Ulster, Broome, Niagara, Saratoga, Oneida, Rockland, Dutchess, Albany, Orange.

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 Dollars (\$10,000).

Based on our review the Committee recommends the following:

- The County Executive's salary should remain the same. A careful study should be made by a following committee of this type of his total compensation compared to that of county executives of other counties in New York State, with consideration given to the possibility of salary compression.
- The Sheriff's, Comptroller's and County Clerk's salaries should remain the same. Similar studies of total compensation should be made for these offices.
- Legislators should receive a salary increase within their total compensation package, but insofar as possible, with nominal financial impact on the county budget.

In making this recommendation the committee was interested in particular in equality in legislator's compensation. As noted, members who choose health insurance coverage are compensated at a higher rate than those who do not. Insurance chosen by some members is valued at \$31,632. When added to salary, and without consideration of the value of pension, social security and other benefits which are beyond the reach of county policy, the compensation of these members totals \$41,632, while those who opt for no insurance are compensated through salary only. Moreover, because there are a number of insurance packages available for choice, there is considerable difference in compensate even among members who opt for coverage. Finally, research demonstrated that there is great variety in county policy across the State in making insurance coverage available to part-time legislators.

The committee determined that the county in 2015 budgeted \$317,000 for health insurance costs for legislators. It determined that a justified salary increase for legislators, and increased stipends for legislative leaders, could be achieved by redistributing all or a portion of this sum to legislative

salaries. This would achieve a salary increase and greater equity in compensation with little or no net increase in county cost. It would also remove a portion of legislative compensation from an area of rapid growth in cost to one in which cost was fixed, except if increased as a matter of policy.

An analysis by the county's budget office suggests that the financial impact of the Committee's recommendation is greater than the Committee's estimate. This is because the Budget office uses the current level of insurance premium paid (into the county's self-insurance pool) as the cost basis of its analysis, and the committee uses the County Executive budget estimate of cost of insurance for legislators and its base of analysis. Using the committee's base for estimation, costs for the proposed legislative salary increases are fully covered by elimination of the budget line for legislative health-insurance coverage. The Committee proposes four alternative compensation plans for legislators for consideration.

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. The committee calculated net effect to be a reduction of overall legislative compensation costs to the county of \$10,875. The county finance office calculates the impact to be an increase of \$81,469. This eliminates annual increases in legislative cost due to growing unpredictable health insurance liabilities.

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. The committee calculates the calculated net effect to be a reduction of

overall legislative compensation costs to the county of \$58,514. The county finance office calculates the impact to be an increased cost to the county of \$42,032.

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. The committee calculates the calculated net effect to be a reduction of overall legislative compensation costs to the county of \$54,369. The county finance office calculates the impact to be an increased cost to the county of \$48,322.

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. The committee calculates the calculated net effect to be a reduction of overall legislative compensation costs to the county of \$50,224. The county finance office calculates the impact to be an increased cost to the county of \$54,612.

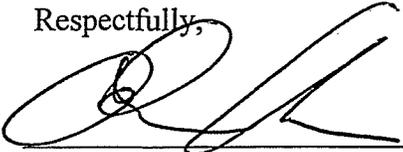
D. Conclusion

The above recommendations are presented as four complete packages in addition to the status quo, designed to present options to county policy makers. Attempting to combine selected elements of each is not recommended by the Committee, and may have unanticipated and negative effects on the calculation of financial impacts. Members of the Periodic Compensation Review Committee are honored and pleased to have been given the opportunity to work on a matter of importance to the people and the Government of Ulster County, and are available to further inform the County Executive and the Legislature as they deliberate on these recommendations. They are respectfully submitted.

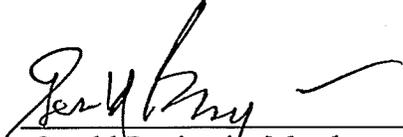
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Dated: October 7, 2015

Respectfully,



Glenn Noonan Chairperson



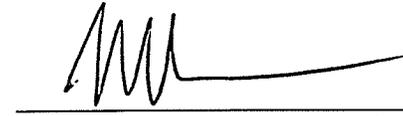
Gerald Benjamin, Member



Brian Cahill, Member



Wayne Gutmann, Member



Michael Shaughnessy, Member

Ulster County pay committee debates proposed raises for elected leaders

By Mid-Hudson News Network and Freeman staff

Tuesday, July 21, 2015



KINGSTON >> A former chairman of the Ulster County Legislature has recommended paying county lawmakers an extra \$2,500 per year that could be used to defer their health insurance costs or simply be pocketed.

Gerald Benjamin made the suggestions at Monday night's meeting of the county's Periodic Compensation Review Committee, to which he was recently appointed.

The meeting included a sometimes-intense discussion of whether county lawmakers should be given raises amid a sluggish economy. Their last raise was in 2001.

No action was taken Monday due to the absence of a fifth member of the committee, but a final decision may be hammered out by the next meeting. Their deadline for a recommendation is the end of September.

Rank-and-file Ulster County legislators are paid \$10,000 annually. The majority and minority leader each receive \$12,000 annually, and the chairman is paid \$19,500. All of the positions are considered part-time jobs.

Legislators David Donaldson, D-Kingston, and Ken Ronk, R-Walkill, last month proposed raising the salaries of all lawmakers by \$4,000 per year, bringing the total base salary to \$14,000. In addition to that increase, the two proposed adding an additional \$1,000 to pay of majority and minority leaders, which would bring the annual salary to \$17,000. The chairman's salary would increase by \$1,500 to \$25,000.

Compensation committee member Brian Cahill noted the value of the base \$10,000 salary has decreased by 33 percent since 2001.

Benjamin, who led the Legislature 25 years ago and now heads a think tank at SUNY New Paltz, said of his \$2,500 plan: "I invented it out of my head in 10 seconds. It's a way of being a little more fair."

The health insurance plan available to legislators costs a maximum of \$2,500 and is worth up to \$28,000 in medical services. About 20 percent of legislators opt out of the plan.

Wayne Gutmann, a member of the compensation committee and a former Shandaken town supervisor, said the current economic climate runs counter to proposed raises for legislators.

"I'm a great guy for the sniff test. How do things smell out there?" Gutmann said. "When you get out

there, go to restaurants, shopping aisle, things are not good.”

Possible raises for the county executive, sheriff, clerk and comptroller were tabled until the committee’s next meeting, but the members appeared to be leaning toward not raising those salaries.

“Am I going to go out there and ask that guy working his ass off in a garage, doesn’t have medical insurance or anything, I need a few more bucks from you this year because my county executive, he needs some more money?” Gutmann said. “Someone’s got to pay for it. People are desperate.”

In Dutchess County, rank-and-file legislators are paid \$15,400, the majority and minority leaders are paid \$23,690 each, assistant leaders are paid \$19,570, and the chairman is paid \$32,960.

In Greene County, rank-and-file legislators are paid \$15,000, the majority and minority leaders receive \$16,000 each, and the chairman is paid \$21,750.

URL: <http://www.dailyfreeman.com/general-news/20150721/ulster-county-pay-committee-debates-proposed-raises-for-elected-leaders>

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Ulster County legislators' salaries could double

Raises would be contingent on lawmakers dropping or paying more for health insurance

By Patricia Doxsey, Daily Freeman

Friday, September 18, 2015



KINGSTON >> Ulster County legislators could see their salaries double next year, but only if they're willing to either give up or pay for their county health insurance plans.

The county's Periodic Compensation Review Committee has proposed four plans for pay raises for legislators. Each plan calls for the lawmakers to pay more toward the cost of their health insurance than the 10 percent they currently contribute.

County residents will have the opportunity to comment on the possible pay hikes, which would increase the cost to the county by between about \$42,000 and \$55,000 a year, depending on which plan ultimately is chosen, at a public hearing to be held at 7 p.m. Sept. 29.

The Periodic Compensation Review Committee has been meeting for the past several months to consider what, if any, pay raises the county's officials should receive in 2016. The committee is required under the county charter to review the salaries of the county's elected officials and recommend any changes to the Legislature.

Committee Chairman Glenn Noonan, a Republican former county legislator from Gardiner, said the committee will not recommend any changes to the salaries of the county executive, comptroller, sheriff or clerk.

"We decided to leave them where they were," Noonan said. "Based on an analysis statewide, they are right in line with where they should be and where everybody else is in the state."

The salary of the district attorney is tied to judicial salaries set by the state.

The committee is offering four options for pay raises for county legislators, who haven't had a salary increase since 2001.

The first proposal would double the annual salary of the county's rank-and-file legislators, to \$20,000 from the current \$10,000; and the Legislature's majority and minority leaders, to \$24,000 from the current \$12,000. The chairman salary would rise from \$19,500 to \$40,000.

The plan also would eliminate health insurance benefits for legislators, which currently cost the county about \$246,000 per year, Noonan said. Currently, all but five of the county's 23 lawmakers get health insurance through the county.

That proposal would cost the county roughly \$50,000 more per year, Noonan said, because the county would see its contribution to the state retirement system rise as a result of the pay hikes. All but six legislators participate in the state retirement system through the county.

The other plans are call for lesser pay raises and greater contributions to the health insurance costs. One would give all legislators a \$3,000 bump in their current salaries in exchange for a 30 percent contribution toward their health insurance, at an additional cost to the county of about \$42,032. Another would provide a \$4,000 pay hike in return for a 40 percent health insurance contribution, at an additional county cost of about \$48,322.

The third would raise salaries by \$5,000 if legislators kick in 50 percent of their health costs. That plan would cost the county an additional \$54,612, Noonan said.

Noonan said tying legislative pay raises to health insurance costs was important to the committee in order to bring equity to the Legislature.

“There’s a handful of legislators that don’t pay into the pension system and don’t take benefits at all,” he said. “Then there are others who take the Cadillac of health benefits and take the pension plan and everything else, so you could have a legislator earning \$10,000 sitting next to one whose making \$43,000 with the benefits.

“We can’t see two people doing the same job sitting next to each other with that much discrepancy in their salaries,” Noonan said.

Legislator Minority Leader Ken Ronk, R-Wallkill, and former Legislature Chairman David Donaldson, D-Kingston, have proposed increasing all legislative salaries by \$4,000, giving an additional \$1,000 to the majority and minority leaders and \$1,500 more to the chairman and establishing \$1,500 stipends for the assistant leaders, or whips.

URL: <http://www.dailyfreeman.com/general-news/20150918/ulster-county-legislators-salaries-could-double>

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Report on Ulster County legislators' salaries draws fire from members of committee that drafted it



By Patricia Doxsey, Daily Freeman

POSTED: 09/25/15, 5:18 PM EDT UPDATED: 1 WEEK, 1 DAY AGO

KINGSTON >> The Ulster County Periodic Compensation Review Committee has released its draft report outlining proposed pay raises for county legislators.

But the plan, which contains four proposals, is drawing criticism from two committee members who issued a statement Friday “disassociating” themselves from the report.

The report suggests compensation plans for the county’s 23 elected lawmakers, ranging from one that would double their current salaries but strip legislators of county health benefits to others that would provide smaller pay raises and greater contributions to health insurance costs.

In a prepared statement, committee members Brian Cahill and Gerald Benjamin, both former county legislators, said the report does not accurately reflect the committee’s work.

“Because the chairman of the Ulster County Periodic Compensation Review Committee failed to consider amendments and additions to this draft report and to bring them to the committee for its review, and because we think that the current draft report as written does not accurately reflect the record of the committee’s work, we disassociate ourselves from this draft of our committee report,” the statement read.

Committee member Wayne Gutman, a former Shandaken town supervisor, called the report “hastily released.”

The committee is required by the county charter to issue a recommendation to the county Legislature for consideration by Sept. 30.

The Legislature makes the final decision about whether to increase the salaries for incoming legislators and other elected officials. The compensation committee recommended no pay raises for the county executive, clerk and sheriff. The salary of the district attorney is tied to state-set judicial salaries.

The Periodic Compensation Review Committee will hold a public hearing on its draft proposal at 7 p.m. Tuesday in the Legislature chamber on the sixth floor of the Ulster County Office Building, 244 Fair St., Kingston.

September 28, 2015 6:30PM

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Compensation Review Committee to hold public meeting Tuesday

KINGSTON — Think your Ulster County legislator needs a raise?

Tuesday is your chance to weigh in. The Ulster County Periodic Compensation Review Committee will host a public hearing on elected officials salaries.

While the five-member Committee found that Ulster County's comptroller, sheriff, clerk and executive make enough money, they've recommended that members of the 23-member Legislature should get a pay bump. But only if they're willing to contribute more to their health insurance.

The proposal has already met with criticism from its own members. Members Gerald Benjamin and Brian Cahill both distanced themselves from the draft report Friday, saying chair Glenn Noonan didn't consider their amendments to the report and it doesn't reflect what they agreed upon over months of meetings.

The hearing begins at 7 p.m. on Sept. 29 at 7 p.m. on the sixth floor of the Ulster County Office Building on Fair Street, Kingston. You can also submit your comments to PCRC@co.ulster.ny.us.

<http://www.recordonline.com/article/20150928/NEWS/150929342>

Print Page

Ulster County committee receives no comments on pay plan for lawmakers

By William J. Kemble, news@freemanonline.com

Tuesday, September 29, 2015

KINGSTON >> The Ulster County Periodic Compensation Review Committee finished work on recommendations for legislator salaries even before conducting a public hearing that failed to draw any members of the public.

The final document was adopted during a committee session Tuesday and only awaited any comments that might have changed the proposal for lawmakers to choose between higher salaries or keeping health insurance.

“We’ll walk out of here tonight knowing that we’re unified on one final draft,” committee Chairman Glenn Noonan said.

Revisions in the document were adopted after the five-member committee looked at language that provided explanations for why each elected position is paid specific amounts.

“The rationale has been changed to some significant degree and there is now a draft that we all agree to,” committee member Gerald Benjamin said.

“There are two ideas about the financial impact,” he said. “The one that was on the web makes the financial impact higher. The one that we assumed when we were doing our work makes the financial lower, and there’s rationales for both approaches.”

Under the recommendations annual pay would remain the same for county executive at \$133,572; the county clerk and comptroller at \$101,709 each; and the sheriff at \$101,706.

Committee members proposed that without insurance coverage salaries for county legislators, who currently receive \$10,000 per year, could be doubled as would the majority and minority leaders current pay of \$12,000 each. The legislature chairman salary would rise from \$19,500 to \$40,000.

Among options for smaller increases was to have lawmakers contribute to health insurance costs. Raises would be \$3,000 if the contribution is 30 percent of insurance, \$4,000 under a 40 percent contribution, or \$5,000 with a 50 percent increase.

The amounts were based on figures provided by county departments, though committee members said there were some differences in how the budget is calculated.

“We took the budget number in county executive’s budget for health insurance costs and said we’re going to stay under that number, which we did,” Benjamin said. “The county financial office had a different way of calculating the financial impact and showed that we have some additional costs..”



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Wednesday, September 30, 2015



Nobody commented at Ulster County Periodic Compensation Review Committee hearing

KINGSTON – Every few years, an independent committee meets to reconsider pay raises for county legislators and certain other elected positions in Ulster County Government. Usually nobody bothers to pay attention, and the public hearing held Tuesday night was no different.

The hearing was closed after 15 minutes, and conversation quickly turned to baseball.

Barely anyone braved the rainstorm to witness the proceedings of the Ulster County Periodic Compensation Review Committee, except a handful of reporters and the committee members themselves. Several different versions of the final draft were floating around the meeting, and the finished product was described as "chicken scrawl," with last-minute tweaks to the language.

Committee member Gerald Benjamin said the language in the document was fine tuned over the last few days.

"The policy recommendations were the same tonight as what was posted online," Benjamin said. "The rationale has been changed to some significant degree."

"It's really a matter of language on the rationale," agreed committee member Wayne Gutman. "There's been no changes whatsoever to any data, any empirical number, anything."

Chairman Glenn Noonan said the legislature will have several options for increased compensation this year. The full legislature must decide which option to choose together as a collective body. One is to drop the benefits package and get an extra \$10,000. The other choices are pay 30 percent benefits and get \$3,000; or pay 40 percent benefits, get \$4,000; or pay 50 percent benefits and get \$5,000.

The district attorney's salary is set by statute and is excluded from review. County executive and sheriff will not be getting raises this year.



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Monday, October 5, 2015



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Ulster County Cultural Heritage Week set

KINGSTON – Ulster County’s fifth annual Cultural Heritage Week will be held from October 9 through October 18. Several events are scheduled to be held throughout the county to commemorate its history and tradition.

“This is a great opportunity to appreciate and experience some of the wonderful historical and cultural events right here in Ulster County,” said County Executive Michael Hein.

“Cultural Heritage Week is a great way to bring our region’s remarkable history alive for our citizens and visitors to Ulster County,” said Peter Roberts, president of the Friends of Historic Kingston.

The National Register of Historic Places lists more than 160 sites in Ulster County alone. A calendar of the events during Cultural Heritage Week is available at <http://ulstercountyny.gov/cultural-heritage-week> .



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