

As per local law 77 Of 1986 “elected officials should receive salaries sufficient to maintain a standard of living reasonably consistent with the status of the office and the city they represent.”

In regards to “standard of living consistent with the city they represent” The city council members represent districts whose “average median income is well below the base salary of \$112,500 (\$124,000 with lulus). Even in the “wealthiest” areas of our city such as the Upper West Side, Chelsea and Upper East Side, the city council salary for a part time job exceed the average median income of their constituents. Please see chart below which was part of a report by Citizen Union on discretionary funding in 2012 ([http://www.citizensunion.org/www/cu/site/hosting/Reports/CU\\_Report\\_NYC\\_Discretionary\\_FundingFY2009-2012\\_May2012.pdf](http://www.citizensunion.org/www/cu/site/hosting/Reports/CU_Report_NYC_Discretionary_FundingFY2009-2012_May2012.pdf))

Districts with <i>Lowest</i> Median Income			
District	Current Council Member	Median Household Income	Expense Funding Rank, FY 2009-2012
17	Maria del Carmen Arroyo	\$21,100	13
16	Helen Foster	\$21,468	47
15	Joel Rivera	\$23,186	6
14	Fernando Cabrera	\$25,815	28
41	Darlene Mealy	\$29,212	38
10	Ydanis Rodriguez	\$29,816	24
36	Albert Vann	\$30,390	19
7	Robert Jackson	\$32,009	14
37	Erik Martin Dilan	\$32,170	9
42	Charles Barron	\$33,083	46

Districts with <i>Highest</i> Median Income			
District	Current Council Member	Median Household Income	Expense Funding Rank, FY 2009-2012
4	Daniel Garodnick	\$114,509	44
6	Gale Brewer	\$96,563	51
5	Jessica Lappin	\$91,436	23
3	Christine Quinn*	\$80,441	10
51	Vincent Ignizio	\$80,290	21
19	Daniel Halloran	\$66,675	49
23	Mark Weprin	\$66,505	12
50	James Oddo	\$65,223	3
2	Rosie Mendez	\$64,247	45
46	Lewis Fidler	\$62,078	2

In regards to the “status” of the Office, the city council is a “part time” job statutory and in reality. As others and I testified in front of the commission how we witnessed our council members clock into meetings, make their sound bites for the press and leave even before the public testified.

As I mentioned in an earlier testimony, the article by Seth Barron “Six-figure Schmoozers” is an accurate description of what a city council member does. The commission sent a letter to the elected officials to provide details and challenges of their jobs yet only one responded. Most companies have year-end performance review where the employee and employer discuss challenges and performance and this final review is basis for any raise. I believe since none of the other elected officials (besides BP Brewer) responded that they should not be given any raise.

No insult to any elected officials, but as a witness testified in front of the commission, the requirement for city council seat is (1) over the age of 18 and (2) Citizen. So in regards, to the commission’s question, per my experience, salary in the private sector is based on merit and qualifications. I never heard of a company going back to previous hires to “equalize” base salary of a particular job level salary range. This is why I don’t think public and private sector compensation should be comparable. Most private sector jobs don’t have the job security or the pensions that our elected official in NYC have.

In fact Los Angeles city council is not only a full time job but also they don’t have pensions. Prior quadrennial commissions did not consider these differences. What I noted in previous commission even as far back as 1979 is the recommendation “unvouchered expense payments be eliminated and amounts of these payments be added to and recognized as salary of each”. Yet these recommendations are never enacted.

Citizen Union touted 31 city council members supported eliminating lulus yet no legislation introduced by them to do so. In fact in 2006, 46 city council members voted against Avella’s bills to eliminated lulus.

What is most concerning to me is how the figure \$143,000 is the amount that was “agreed” upon by some of those who testified. It is not a figure that was arrived at by verified evidence. For instance BP Brewer suggested an additional 20,000 for city council if it’s a “required” full time job. Citizen union recommended a 20,000 bonus if city council capped their outside work income to 25%. Again the overwhelming majority of city council doesn’t have outside earned income and they claimed their job is full time. So why are they offered a 20k bonus for doing nothing “extra”. And what about merit? Look at our city.

Our city has increased poverty and homelessness. We have many elected officials including city council members who were indicted and jailed for fraud yet no reforms. Now they wag frivolous reforms on a stick for more money. Empty promises from a politician aren’t worth the ink on our printed money.

Not only should no raises be on the table but also perhaps a pay cut because a part time job that pay over \$124K (lulus included) with a pension is unheard of even in the private market.

Lastly I quickly looked at the City Charter, and under the duties of the city council, they were meant to be a “legislative” body. The constituent services fall under the description of the Borough President, Public Advocate and the community boards. They liaise with the people and the city agencies that fail to address our needs. In fact, whether I called the community board or city council, they referred me to 311. The service 311 is now our constituent liaison. The city council created their own empire with staff and budget that is essentially a campaign office funded by the public. They used their budgets to buy good will from the community and the press. This is why it is close to impossible to beat an incumbent in the primary. More money won’t attract the best and the brightest. because most people can’t afford the time and money to run a race that most likely they’ll lose.

In closing, I reiterate “No” to any raises to the city council especially since they are already overpaid as it is. And perhaps a pay cut is in order as was done in prior commission in other cities and recently in Stockton City.

Thank you Chair and Commissioners for your transparency in posting all the data collected and the public testimonies on your site. And thank you for considering other factors besides the same CPI/U process implemented by previous Quadrennial Commission. Your recommendation can be a beacon for change in our city as well as other cities in the nation.

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# Stockton City Council, mayor vote for a pay cut

Carlos Saucedo, ABC10 News 2:43 a.m. PDT May 20, 2015

The Stockton City Council approved to cut its salary and benefits Tuesday night,

The city council to voted 4 to 3 to cut Mayor Anthony Silva's and council members' salaries by 30 percent and waive their health benefits.

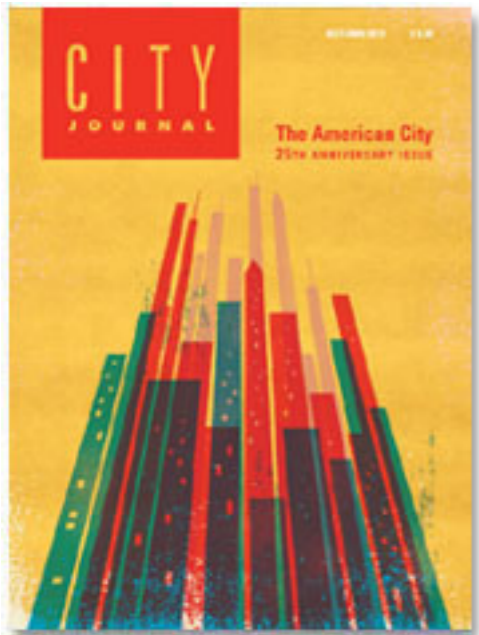
Going into the meeting, the council was set to cut just Silva's salary from \$104,970 down to \$72,384. The cut was recommended by the Salary Setting Commission. The city charter allows the commission to review and recommend a change in council members' salaries.

Silva thought it unfair that only his salary would be cut midway through his term.

"If it happens, I'd have to go and find another job," Silva said before the vote.

A majority of the council felt that the salary setting provision is bad policy and should be changed. When it was time to vote, council members voted to cut their salaries – \$23,000 – along with Silva's salary.

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## Eye on the News

SETH BARRON

### Six-figure Schmoozers

*Overpaid already, New York City lawmakers propose a big, fat raise.*

November 13, 2015

The news that six city council members are angling to give themselves a *71 percent raise* will test even New Yorkers' high tolerance for chutzpah. The pay proposal, if approved, would boost council member salaries from \$112,500 to a staggering \$192,500. The city's 51-member council would become the highest-paid legislative body in the nation—including Congress—and council members would receive a higher base pay than any state governor.



PHOTO BY NEW YORK CITY COUNCIL

Council speaker Melissa Mark-Viverito dismissed the suggestion that council members would receive such an extravagant raise, and said that she awaits the advice of a commission appointed to make recommendations about elected officials' salaries. New York's lawmakers haven't received a raise since 2006, when their \$90,000 salary was bumped up 22 percent, to its current level. (Mayor Michael Bloomberg opted not to convene the so-called Quadrennial Commission in 2010 because of the recession.) While a 71 percent raise sounds absurd, it's likely intended as a highball opening bid so that any eventual increase—say, a mere 20 or 30 percent—will be seen as a reasonable compromise.

But the proposal has raised an important question: what do city council members do to justify the six-figure salaries they already enjoy? Their jobs, after all, are meant to be part-time. By law, the city council must meet twice each month, except during July and August. At these 20 "stated meetings," votes are held and bills are introduced. After winning the speakership, Mark-Viverito promised to run the meetings efficiently, and indeed she starts them on time and typically adjourns them within 90 minutes or so. Almost every council member—except for the handful of Republicans and the speaker's political enemies—gets assigned chairmanship of a committee, which usually meets once a month.

Council members serve on a number of these committees and are expected to attend committee hearings. They routinely show up just long enough to be marked "present" or to ask a question that could get them on the



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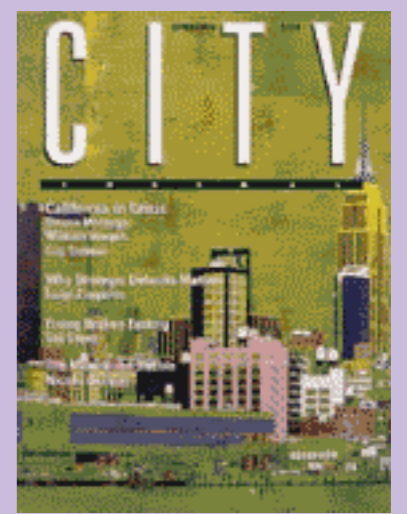
evening news. Each council member has a district office and a staff to deal with constituent services, media inquiries, and legislative matters. Council members keep themselves busy by attending events at senior centers or schools, meeting with local businesspeople, breakfasting with civic groups, and talking to other elected officials. To outsiders—whether employed in the public or private sector—it seems that council members make good money for doing what amounts to schmoozing for a living.

And the schmoozing comes with perks. Committee chairs are granted an additional “lulu” (payment in lieu of expenses) of \$8,000 to compensate for time spent overseeing one committee hearing per month. The council’s majority leader, a position with no specific duties, gets a \$15,000 lulu. The speaker gets an extra \$25,000.

Advocates for the pay raise, in what they tout as a reformist measure, pledge to forego outside income and give up their lulus for the higher salaries. Earning outside income through a professional practice or a business, they suggest, is an inherently corrupting influence on the honorable execution of the “people’s business.” But the offer to go “full-time” in exchange for more money is just a bluff. Virtually no council members are capable of earning outside income, because few of them have any nongovernmental work experience. One-third of the 51 council members have zero significant prior work experience, except as aides to elected officials—frequently the council member whose seat they now occupy. Another six council members are former public school teachers. Several, including speaker Mark-Viverito, were union staffers or community organizers. Aside from a handful of lawyers who could possibly maintain private practices and an evangelical minister who continues to preach every Sunday, it’s hard to imagine that many members of the New York city council have much earning potential in the real world.

Council member Peter Koo, an immigrant from Hong Kong, is the exception. In 1971, Koo came to New York penniless. He worked his way through pharmacy school and now owns a successful chain of drugstores in Flushing. In a sad irony, if the council votes itself this raise and foregoes outside income, the only member of the body who actually employs people and generates revenue may have to step down.

***Seth Barron blogs about the New York City Council at [City Council Watch](#).***



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