



BLUE RIBBON COMMISSION

Report (REVISED)

Wednesday, April 24, 2019

Present: Co-Chair Claudia Dumond-Henderson, Co-Chair James Simons, Karen Carroll Bennett, Carolyn Gabbay, Doug Cornelius, Sue Flicop, Greg Reibman, Timothy Moran, Donald Siegel, Sharon Chan, John Stewart and Committee Clerk, Danielle Delaney

Absent: Kathy Sun and Andrea Steenstrup

Co-Chair Dumond Henderson opened the discussion to members of the public who were present. There was no public comment.

Commission members were provided with the final survey results of the general public and elected officials including comment, attached to this report.

Co-Chair Jim Simons provided Commission members with survey results from the Peer Group Sub-Committee explaining in detail the survey summary, list of cities and towns requested to participate, survey questions and responses. Commission members suggested the following revisions, a revised report is attached to this report.

The revisions include the following:

Mayor's pay compared to peers: The overall percent of Mayor's salary to peer community average salary has been adjusted to from 92% to 89% for summary purposes on slides 2 and 3, omitting Lowell (outlier); this figure now appears along with other percentages at the bottom of slide 8.

City Council ratios: The overall percentage of peer city council stipend to mayor has been adjusted from 15% to 14% upon omitting Lowell; other ratios are still noted on slide 9.

City Council ratios and cost: Slide 4 table has been adjusted to show the ratio change to 14%.

Mayor and City Council pay comparison summary of same communities in the 2005 and 2019 studies. The table on slide 3 has been expanded accordingly.

School Committee ratios and cost. Slide 4 table was adjusted to reflect cost of 8 members and ratio change noted above.

Retiree health care eligibility. On re-review of emails from the city council the right to retiree health benefits is allowed per state law. Council writes " Health Insurance benefits for municipal employees and retirees is governed by MGL c. 32B. Under this law, persons receiving a pension from the City are eligible to continue group health insurance

benefits. Under MGL c. 32B a municipality that has accepted certain sections of the statute (which Newton has) must contribute a percentage of the premium (as is done for active employees)."

Co-Chair Dumond-Henderson provided Commission members with retiree health and retirement benefits explaining in detail questions presented and answers from the City's Law Department.

Commission members asked of the 24 City Councilors, 8 School Committee members and Mayor capitalize on the health insurance? Co-Chair Simons answered that he received information from the former City Comptroller that 9 City Councilors, 5 School Committee members and the Mayor capitalize on this benefit. Nine out of 21 retired City Councilors who are vested capitalize on this benefit. Three members of the School Committee are eligible for retiree health benefits.

Co-Chair Jim Simons provided Commission members explaining in detail the report template, attached to this report. He explained the sections, descriptions and comments. He then stated that sections of the final report shall include, an introduction, background, current state, commission process, input to commission, discussion, vote, recommendation and appendices.

Doug Cornelius provided Commission members explaining in detail the process to create and adopt recommendations for the City Council's consideration. Included were the deliberation rules, questions and the process. The 4/25/19 version is attached to this report.

Commission members suggested the following for consideration when voting takes place.

- Voting to begin with the Mayor, followed by the City Council then the School Committee members.
- Vote with a straw vote.
- The tally of Commission votes, yea or nay, will be summarized along with member narratives.
- The vote shall include whether a compensation review should be regularly scheduled.
- Other recommendations or perks for to vote on will be suggested by Commission members prior to voting.

The Commission discussed in length whether the draft or final report should be provided to the public for feedback, clarity, errors, etc. At this time, Commission members took a straw vote of **4-6-1 (Cornelius, Reibman, Gabbay, Flicop in favor; Siegel, Chan, Simons, Stewart, Carroll Bennett and Moran opposed; and Dumond-Henderson abstaining)** that the public would not be provided a draft or final report before the Commission disbands. They then discussed whether it would be appropriate for the Law Department or other knowledgeable city sources to review the final report before the Commission issues the final report to the City Council.

The next meeting of the Commission is scheduled for April 30, 2019 in City Hall.

The Commission adjourned at 9:25 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Claudia Dumond-Henderson, Co-Chair

James Simons, Co-Chair