

LETTER FROM THE COMMISSION

We have been honored to represent the citizens of the City of Columbus on the 2022 Citizens' Commission on Elected Official Compensation (EOCC). The EOCC was established in 2015 as a result of changes to the Columbus City Charter to ensure the process of reviewing and establishing elected official compensation is done in a transparent process and to remove the perception of politics in the setting of elected official compensation. We are the third Citizens' Commission on Elected Official Compensation. The prior two commissions were seated in 2015 and 2018.

The Commission's charge is outlined in Section 15 of the Charter which instructs us to review the salaries for like positions in the public sector and discuss whether current salaries are appropriate to the duties and responsibilities of each elected officer of the city. At the end of our review and based on our findings we present our recommendations in a report submitted to the Columbus City Clerk for consideration by Columbus City Council. What follows is the culmination of our work. After significant deliberation and discussion, and these recommendations were unanimously adopted by the Commission.

We believe our recommendations are fair, reasonable, and represent levels of compensation for Columbus' elected officials that reflect the work that they do on behalf of the citizens of this City. We also recognize the bounds of our charge as a Commission, as set by the Charter. Thus, our recommendations are based entirely within the scope of our charge. We encourage Columbus City Council to adopt these recommendations in their entirety.

In addition to salary recommendations, the Commission urges the City to consider creating job descriptions for elected official positions better outlining the current responsibilities of each office. The Commission found it difficult to ascertain the responsibilities of each office based on the brief descriptions in the City Charter. The Commission also recommends that the public be surveyed as to their opinion on whether or not Council is a full-time or part-time position.

We appreciate Mayor Andrew Ginther and Council President Shannon G. Hardin providing us the opportunity to serve our City in this capacity and we are grateful to the staff of the Mayor's administration, City Council, City Auditor, and City Attorney for all their support.

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The Citizens' Commission on Elected Official Compensation (EOCC) was created in 2015 as a result of changes to Section 15 of the City Charter approved by voters in November 2014. The EOCC was created to produce a more transparent and participatory process and remove the influence of politics in setting elected official compensation.

Section 15-3 of the Columbus City Charter requires the Commission to "conduct a review of salaries for like positions in the public sector. The review shall be made for the purpose of recommending salaries appropriate to the duties and responsibilities of each elective officer of the city." In compliance with the Charter, the Commission reviewed current salaries of Columbus elected officials, as well as those of comparable cities throughout the United States. The Commission discussed, in coordination with individuals from the elected officials' offices, the duties and responsibilities of each elected official. The Commission also discussed Charter limitations on outside employment and whether it specified that each elected position is considered full-time or part-time employment.

Section 15-4 of the Charter directs the Commission to “submit to the city clerk a report of recommendations for the salary of each elective officer of the city, including an annual cost of living adjustment which shall not exceed the average increase in the consumer price index, or successor thereto, during the preceding four years.” The Commission identified and discussed the requirement under the Charter that an annual cost of living adjustment be provided. The Commission understood this to be in addition to any salary increase.

In January 2022, in accordance with Section 15-2 of the Charter, the Mayor and Council appointed a five-member EOCC. The members of the EOCC are:

Michael Kasler, Chair

Dr. Keisha Hunley-Jenkins, Esq.

Sarah Ingles, Esq.

Qiana Williams, ACC, SPHR, SHRM-SCP

Fred Ransier, Esq.

The Commissioners are all resident taxpayers of the City of Columbus and possess an understanding of and experience in employment law, human resources, and municipal governance. They are representative of a cross-section of Columbus residents, representing the public and private sector, younger residents and retirees, and the diversity of our city.

Because elected officials cannot benefit from any increase in salary during their current term in office, the Commission was tasked with making recommendations for salaries effective January 1, 2026 through December 31, 2029. In addition, the City Attorney’s office has interpreted the Columbus City Charter as prohibiting the staggering of any base salary increases, meaning that a base salary increase can only occur in the first year of the aforementioned time period.

The Commission has considered the fact that it must utilize data from 2022 to recommend salaries that will not be implemented until January 1, 2026. This presented a challenge unique to this EOCC, in that inflation –measured by the Bureau of Labor Statistics Consumer Price Index– has seen increases well above and beyond those in prior years. Complicating matters further, it is unclear how long or to what extent these inflationary pressures will persist, and therefore difficult to reconcile for the purposes of recommending compensation levels that will be effective four years from now.

To account for the gap between this data and implementation of its recommendations, the Commission made informed assumptions and estimations. The Commission assumed that the Columbus population will continue to grow, and with it the local economy. The resulting cost-of-living adjustment (COLA) will be added to the base salary that was established for each elected official by the 2018 Commission beginning in 2026. The COLA is set by the Consumer Price Index, from which there are many to choose. This Commission decided that it would utilize the CPI-U, All Items in U.S. City Average, All Urban Consumers, Not Seasonally Adjusted. The COLA will increase the prior year’s compensation level by that rate on January 1 of 2026, 2027, 2028, and 2029. The COLA cannot exceed the average of the previous four years of the Consumer Price Index, as mandated by the Charter. Because the COLA is set annually, the 2025 base salary is unable to be determined.

The Commission focused intently on the per capita salary compared to the median per capita salary. This was the anchor for the Commission's recommendations, and then the commission layered on additional factors including job duties and responsibilities as well as elected official pay for like positions in peer cities.

The work of the 2022 EOCC was informed by the work completed by the 2018 Commission. That Commission was charged with recommending compensation for elective officials for the years 2022 through the end of 2025. Following the 2018 Commission's report, Ordinance 3300-2018 was adopted by Columbus City Council on December 6, 2018 establishing compensation schedules for all city elected officials through the end of 2025.

The public had manifold opportunities to ensure that their voices were heard by the Commission. The 2022 EOCC held nine meetings, including one specifically intended to garner public comment and feedback, though public comment was accepted at any of the EOCC meetings. Following past practice, the Commission recorded its meetings, created a dedicated page on the City's website, and a dedicated email address where comments could be submitted. Considering that one of the reasons for creating the Commission was to increase transparency and accountability in the process of setting future compensation levels for elected officials, the participation and viewpoints of a variety of taxpayers and residents regarding the issues before the Commission are important.

On April 6, 2022, the five member Commission unanimously voted on its recommendations.

The Commission's unanimous recommendations are as follows:

Mayor:

Effective 1/1/2026 – 14% increase in 2025 Base salary + COLA

Effective 1/1/2027 – 2026 Base salary[†] + COLA

Effective 1/1/2028 – 2027 Base salary + COLA

Effective 1/1/2029 – 2028 Base salary + COLA

City Council President:

Effective 1/1/2026 – 40% increase in 2025 Base salary + COLA

Effective 1/1/2027 – 2026 Base salary + COLA

Effective 1/1/2028 – 2027 Base salary + COLA

Effective 1/1/2029 – 2028 Base salary + COLA

City Council Member:

Effective 1/1/2026 – 13% increase in 2025 Base salary + COLA

Effective 1/1/2027 – 2026 Base salary + COLA

Effective 1/1/2028 – 2027 Base salary + COLA

[†] Base salaries for 2026, 2027, and 2028 are equal to the prior year's base salary plus the prior year's COLA

Effective 1/1/2029 – 2028 Base salary + COLA

City Attorney:

Effective 1/1/2026 – 10% increase in 2025 Base salary + COLA

Effective 1/1/2027 – 2026 Base salary + COLA

Effective 1/1/2028 – 2027 Base salary + COLA

Effective 1/1/2029 – 2028 Base salary + COLA

City Auditor:

Effective 1/1/2026 – 5% increase in 2025 Base salary + COLA

Effective 1/1/2027 – 2026 Base salary + COLA

Effective 1/1/2028 – 2027 Base salary + COLA

Effective 1/1/2029 – 2028 Base salary + COLA

The Commission also unanimously recommends that the annual cost of living adjustment provided to all city elected officials shall be equal to, but not exceed, the average increase in the CPI-U, All Items in U.S. City Average, All Urban Consumers, Not Seasonally Adjusted, for the four years preceding the year in which the cost of living increase will be realized.

The EOCC received the support of the following City of Columbus staff throughout the process:

- Greg Beaverson, Compensation Manager, Columbus Department of Human Resources
- Richard S. Blunt II, Policy Analyst, Mayor's Office
- Michael S. Brown, Chief of Staff to the City Council President, Columbus City Council
- Matt Erickson, Legislative Research Office Director, Columbus City Council
- David Miller, Deputy Director of Communications, Columbus City Council
- Jason Jenkins, Director of Community Affairs, Mayor's Office
- Andrew Stout, Columbus Television, CTV, Columbus Department of Technology
- Robert S. Tobias, Columbus City Attorney's Office
- Niyah Walters, Legal Analyst and In-house Counsel, Columbus City Council
- Darlene Wildes, Columbus City Auditor's Office

MAYOR COMPENSATION 2026-2029
RECOMMENDATIONS AND DATA ANALYSIS

RECOMMENDATION:

Effective 1/1/2026 – 14% increase in 2025 Base salary + COLA

Effective 1/1/2027 – 2026 Base salary + COLA

Effective 1/1/2028 – 2027 Base salary + COLA

Effective 1/1/2029 – 2028 Base salary + COLA

On April 6, 2022, the Citizens' Commission on Elected Official Compensation unanimously voted to recommend, beginning January 1, 2026, a 14% increase to the base salary then in effect as the Mayor's base salary plus a cost of living adjustment (COLA), then a COLA for each of the years 2027-2029. The Commission believes that the 14% increase in 2026 to the Mayor's base salary was justified given the responsibilities of the Mayor in Columbus' strong mayor-council form of government.

Per Section 15 of the Charter, the Mayor will receive a COLA that is based on the average Consumer Price Index of the previous four years. The Commission recommends the COLA be calculated based upon the CPI-U, All Items in U.S. City Average, All Urban Consumers, Not Seasonally Adjusted. The recommendation is based upon the presentation Dr. Bill LaFayette provided to the Commission in February 2022, as well as the Commission's independent determination that Columbus' size and projected growth merit it being considered within this scope of cities.

As these recommendations are proffered in 2022, particularly during a period of national economic volatility, it is impossible to state with specificity what the Mayor's salary will be in 2025. This is a manifestation of the previous EOCC's recommendations to set a base salary for the year 2022, and then add a COLA to that base salary in each year until 2025. Under ordinance 3300-2018, the previous Commission set the Mayor's salary at approximately \$205,571 beginning January 1, 2022 and "\$205,571 + COLA" beginning January 1, 2023. Because the Commission cannot determine the COLA that will be added to the Mayor's salary in January 2025, it is impossible to determine the exact amount of the Mayor's salary as of December 31, 2025.

The Mayor's office shared information and asked the Commission to consider increasing the Mayor's salary such that it would create a larger differential in salary between the Mayor and the City Attorney and City Auditor. Those three positions are currently within a three percent range. The Commission discussed whether the Mayor's role did in fact merit a greater differential in salary from the City Attorney and City Auditor. The Commission analyzed the duties and responsibilities of all three, as well as the professional qualifications, skillsets, supporting staff and likeness to similar positions in peer cities, and limitations on things like outside employment and full-time and part-time requirements. The Commission also acknowledged that there used to be a greater differential between the Mayor and the City Attorney and City Auditor and the gap had been shrinking over time due to the refusal of legislated pay increases for the years 2012-2015 by former Mayor Michael Coleman following the economic recession. Though the Commission received this information from the Mayor's office, it was not germane to their decision-making, and all decisions were based on the foundation of the data they received.

Analysis of Peer Cities

Section 15-3 of the Columbus City Charter states, “The Commission shall conduct a review of salaries for like positions in the public sector. This review shall be made for the purpose of recommending salaries appropriate to the duties and responsibilities of each elective officer of the city.” The Commission analyzed data from peer cities in accordance with this mandate. The Commission sent out a survey and received data from peer cities and additionally collected data through publicly accessible information.

Columbus is the fifth most populous out of the 16 cities surveyed and prohibits the Mayor from holding outside employment. The base salary of the Mayor ranks second out of peer cities. Eight of the peer cities also employ a city manager who exercises substantial executive authority in the cities where they exist. In contrast, in Columbus, those duties are either the responsibility of the Mayor or the Mayor’s Chief of Staff. Columbus’ Mayor is delegated a substantial amount of responsibility in the governance of the city including direct impact over the administrative structure of the city’s government and oversight of the daily operations through the city’s departments.

Table 1: Peer Cities and Compensation of Mayors

City	Mayor’s Salary	Population	City Manager Y/N	Salary Per Capita
Charlotte/Mecklenburg Co.	\$39,646	940,144	Yes	\$.04
San Antonio	\$61,725	1,547,250	No	\$.04
El Paso	\$78,750	691,610	Yes	\$.11
Indianapolis/Marion Co.	\$95,000	876,384	No	\$.11
Austin	\$97,656	1,006,727	Yes	\$.10
Cincinnati	\$121,291	303,940	Yes	\$.40
Pittsburgh	\$124,658	300,286	No	\$.42
St. Louis	\$131,820	301,578	No	\$.44
Kansas City	\$141,455	503,443	Yes	\$.28
Milwaukee	\$147,336	587,072	No	\$.25
Lexington	\$154,785	322,570	Yes	\$.48
Cleveland	\$155,552	396,815	No	\$.39
Memphis	\$170,817	633,104	Yes	\$.27
Nashville/Davidson Co.	\$180,000	715,491	No	\$.25
Denver/Denver Co.	\$184,165	749,103	No	\$.25
Detroit, MI	\$189,300	670,031	No	\$.28
Columbus	\$204,683	914,449	No	\$.22
Jacksonville/Duval Co.	\$208,393	982,080	Yes	\$.21

The Commission believes that the salary of the Mayor should reflect the city’s size and the breadth of the responsibilities of the office. When looking at the Mayor’s per capita base salary, the Mayor currently earns \$.22. The median per capita salary for mayors of the peer cities surveyed is \$.25. The Commission thought it was important that the Mayor’s salary be increased to the median per capita salary of the peer cities so that the compensation did not lag behind. Additionally, the Commission, taking into account the information from the Mayor’s staff, created a larger differential between the Mayor’s salary and that of the City Attorney and City Auditor.

Conclusion

Based upon the foregoing factors, the Commission recommends a 14% increase in the Mayor's base salary then in effect plus COLA beginning January 1, 2026. The Commission recommends that the salary for each subsequent year (2027-2029) be calculated by adding the COLA to the previous year's salary.

CITY COUNCIL PRESIDENT COMPENSATION 2026-2029
RECOMMENDATIONS AND DATA ANALYSIS

RECOMMENDATION:

Effective 1/1/2026 – 40% increase in 2025 Base salary + COLA

Effective 1/1/2027 – 2026 Base salary + COLA

Effective 1/1/2028 – 2027 Base salary + COLA

Effective 1/1/2029 – 2028 Base salary + COLA

On April 6, 2022, the Citizens’ Commission on Elected Official Compensation unanimously voted to recommend, beginning January 1, 2026, a 40% increase to the base salary then in effect as the Council President’s base salary plus a cost of living adjustment (COLA), then a COLA for each of the years 2027-2029. The Commission believes the 40% increase in 2026 to the Council President’s salary was justified given the responsibilities the Council President will have with two additional members beginning in 2024. Additionally, the Commission considered the time commitment which sometimes includes being available on evenings and weekends.

Per Section 15 of the Charter, the Council President will receive a COLA that is based on the average Consumer Price Index of the previous four years. The Commission recommends the COLA be calculated based upon the CPI-U, All Items in U.S. City Average, All Urban Consumers, Not Seasonally Adjusted. The recommendation is based upon the presentation Dr. Bill LaFayette provided to the Commission in February 2022 as well as the Commission’s independent determination that Columbus’ size and projected growth merit it being considered within this scope of cities.

As these recommendations are proffered in 2022, particularly during a period of national economic volatility, it is impossible to state with specificity what the Council President’s salary will be in 2025. This is a manifestation of the previous EOCC’s recommendations to set a base salary for the year 2022 and then add COLA to that base salary in each subsequent year after that until 2025. Under ordinance 3300-2018, the previous Commission set the Council President’s salary at approximately \$73,687 beginning January 1, 2022 and \$73,687 + COLA beginning January 1, 2023. Because the Commission cannot determine the COLA that will be added to the Council President’s salary in January 2025, it is impossible to determine the exact amount of the Council President’s salary as of December 31, 2025.

Analysis of Peer Cities

Section 15-3 of the Columbus City Charter states, “The Commission shall conduct a review of salaries for like positions in the public sector. This review shall be made for the purpose of recommending salaries appropriate to the duties and responsibilities of each elective officer of the city.” The Commission analyzed data from peer cities in accordance with this mandate. The Commission sent out a survey and received data from peer cities and additionally collected data through publicly accessible information.

The Commission noted that Columbus is the fifth most populous out of 16 cities and the base salary of the City Council President ranks fifth out of peer cities. The Council President’s salary is higher than that of a member of Council, reflecting the additional administrative and supervisory responsibilities of the position. The base salary was 5% above the median for the peer cities; however, the per capita base salary of \$.10 is 40% below the median. This number was startling to the Commission and they expressed concern about the salary of the Council President lagging this far behind the median per capita for peer cities.

Table 2: Peer Cities and Compensation of Council Presidents

City	Council President	Designation	Salary Per Capita
Indianapolis/Marion Co.	\$13,382	Part-Time	\$.02
Memphis	\$30,970	Part-Time	\$.05
Lexington	\$37,148	Part-Time	\$.12
Cincinnati	\$60,646	Full-Time	\$.20
Jacksonville/Duval Co.	\$70,502	Full-Time	\$.07
Pittsburgh	\$82,386	Full-Time	\$.27
Milwaukee	\$82,749	Full-Time	\$.14
Columbus	\$86,977	Undefined	\$.10
St. Louis	\$90,766	Undefined	\$.30
Cleveland	\$93,371	Undefined	\$.24
Detroit	\$94,111	Full-Time	\$.14
Denver/Denver Co.	\$110,725	Full-Time	\$.15

The Commission, in considering the Council President’s salary, considered the same issues that were considered in analyzing a Councilmember’s salary (see below). Currently, there are approximately 130,636 residents per Councilmember in Columbus, and the population is projected to keep growing. Section 4 of the Columbus City Charter was amended by the voters in 2018 to increase the size of Council to nine members beginning in January 2024 with members elected from districts. It is important to note that, even though there will be districts, all Councilmembers will be elected by all Columbus voters, not just the voters in their district. Despite the larger size of Council and the creation of districts for residency, Councilmembers will still maintain the responsibility of representing all of the residents of Columbus. Once there are nine Councilmembers, there will be approximately 100,639 residents per Councilmember based on the 2020 Census data, a number which will surely increase based on growth patterns. Commission members do not believe that the work involved in representing all of the residents of the city will diminish with the changes taking place in 2023.

The peer cities studied by the Commission have a variety of governmental structures, including some that utilize city managers and have more of a ceremonial mayor, or others that, like Columbus, have a strong mayor-council or a mayor-council structure where the offices have some equity or parity in their authority over city government. In addition, restrictions for councilmembers on whether or not they can hold outside employment vary from city to city. In a majority of the studied peer cities, the position of Councilmember is designated as full-time, and in some of those cities councilmembers are prohibited from holding outside employment. Other cities specifically designate Councilmembers as part-time and allow for outside employment. Finally, there are cities like Columbus that do not specify an employment status for Council; however, outside employment by Councilmembers is allowed.

The Commission discussed the duties of Council President, specifically the need to be present during daytime hours, evening hours, and weekends in order to fulfill the requirements and expectations of the job. The Commission discussed the increased responsibility and time commitment that the Council President will be assigned with the upcoming addition of two new Councilmembers and their staff.

While there is no requirement that the Council President refrain from holding outside employment, the Commission discussed how much work goes into the position and how difficult it might be to hold the position and do it well and hold outside employment – whether that be part-time or full-time status.

The Commission had extensive discussion regarding whether or not designating an employment status for Council would better reflect the responsibilities of the office, but found it did not have the power to change the City Charter to reflect such determination. Any changes to whether or not the Council President or Councilmembers should be deemed full-time or part-time must be made by the Charter Review Commission or otherwise changed under the City Charter.

Additionally, the Commission discussed the potential ethical conflicts that could arise with the ability to retain outside employment. The Commission expressed concern about the Council President and Councilmembers' need to recuse themselves from important City matters due to conflicts between the City business and the Councilmembers' outside employment. The Commission's salary recommendation recognizes the breadth and depth of the responsibilities of the office as a full-time job, but it does not suggest a prohibition on outside employment. However, the Commission invites the Charter Review Commission to consider these issues in its subsequent review.

The Charter Review Commission is running simultaneously with the EOCC's work. It should also be noted that some Commission members believed that adequately compensating the Council President will minimize the need for outside employment to supplement income.

Lastly, the Commission discussed that the 2018 Commission recommended and Council approved a 20% increase for Council President in 2018 that took effect on January 1 of this year. The 2018 Commission when determining what the Council President's salary would be, recognized the need to catch the salary up to a rate that was more closely aligned with the surveyed peer cities. However, even with that increase when this Commission looked at median per capita in comparison with other peer cities, the Council President's salary still lagged behind by 40%.

Conclusion

Based upon the foregoing factors, the Commission recommends a 40% increase in the Council President's base salary then in effect plus COLA on January 1, 2026. The Commission recommends that the salary for each subsequent year (2027-2029) be calculated by adding the COLA to the previous year's salary.

CITY COUNCILMEMBERS COMPENSATION 2026-2029

RECOMMENDATIONS AND DATA ANALYSIS

RECOMMENDATION:

Effective 1/1/2026 – 13% increase in 2025 Base salary + COLA

Effective 1/1/2027 – 2026 Base salary + COLA

Effective 1/1/2028 – 2027 Base salary + COLA

Effective 1/1/2029 – 2028 Base salary + COLA

On April 6, 2022, the Citizens' Commission on Elected Official Compensation unanimously voted to recommend, beginning January 1, 2026, a 13% increase to the base salary then in effect as the Councilmembers' base salary plus a cost of living adjustment (COLA), then a COLA for each of the years 2027-2029. The Commissioners believe that increase will reflect the increase in responsibility that Councilmembers will have as the city continues to grow and the complexity of the office responsibilities becomes more time-consuming.

Per Section 15 of the Charter, the Councilmembers will receive a COLA that is based on the average Consumer Price Index of the previous four years. The Commission recommends the COLA be calculated based upon the CPI-U, All Items in U.S. City Average, All Urban Consumers, Not Seasonally Adjusted. The recommendation is based upon the presentation Dr. Bill LaFayette provided to the Commission in February 2022, as well as the Commission's independent determination that Columbus' size and projected growth merit it being considered within this scope of cities.

As these recommendations are proffered in 2022, particularly during a period of national economic volatility, it is impossible to state with specificity what the Councilmembers' salary will be in 2025. This is a manifestation of the previous EOCC's recommendations to set a base salary for the year 2022 and then add COLA to that base salary in each coming year after that until 2025. Under Ordinance 3300-2018, the previous Commission set the salary for Councilmembers beginning January 1, 2022 at approximately \$61,257 and \$61,257 + COLA/year beginning January 1, 2023. Because the Commission cannot determine the COLA that will be added to the Councilmembers' salary in January of 2025, it is impossible to determine the exact amount of the Councilmembers' salary as of December 31, 2025.

Analysis of Peer Cities

Section 15-3 of the Columbus City Charter states, "The Commission shall conduct a review of salaries for like positions in the public sector. This review shall be made for the purpose of recommending salaries appropriate to the duties and responsibilities of each elective officer of the city." Following this mandate, the Commission analyzed data from 16 peer cities. The Commission sent out a survey and received data from peer cities and additionally collected data through publicly accessible information.

The Commission noted that Columbus is the fifth most populous out of 16 cities and the base salary of the Councilmembers ranks seventh out of peer cities. The base salary was 28% above the median for the peer cities; however the per capita base salary of \$.08 is 13% below the median. The Commission believes that it is important for Councilmembers to be in line with the median per capita salary of peer cities to ensure attraction of the most qualified candidates and to make sure that the compensation does not fall behind.

Table 3: Peer Cities and Compensation of Councilmembers

City	Councilmember	Designation	Salary Per Capita
Indianapolis/Marion Co.	\$11,400	Part-Time	\$.01
Nashville/Davidson Co.	\$23,100	Part-Time	\$.03
Memphis	\$29,070	Part-Time	\$.05
Charlotte/Mecklenburg Co.	\$32,638	Part-Time	\$.03
Lexington	\$33,033	Part-Time	\$.10
St. Louis	\$37,299	Undefined	\$.12
San Antonio	\$45,722	Full-Time	\$.03
Jacksonville/Duval Co.	\$52,277	Full-Time	\$.05
El Paso	\$52,500	Full-Time	\$.08
Cincinnati	\$60,646	Full-Time	\$.20
Kansas City	\$70,718	Full-Time	\$.14
Columbus	\$72,301	Undefined	\$.08
Milwaukee	\$73,222	Full-Time	\$.12
Pittsburgh	\$82,386	Full-Time	\$.27
Austin	\$83,150	Full-Time	\$.08
Cleveland	\$88,474	Undefined	\$.22
Detroit	\$89,546	Full-Time	\$.13
Denver/Denver Co.	\$98,878	Full-Time	\$.13

Currently, there are approximately 130,636 residents per Councilmember in Columbus and the population is projected to keep growing. Section 4 of the Columbus City Charter was amended by the voters in 2018 to increase the size of Council to nine members beginning in January 2024 with members elected from districts. It is important to note that, even though Councilmembers will represent specific districts with corresponding boundaries, all Councilmembers will be elected by all Columbus voters not just the voters in their district. Despite the larger size of Council and the creation of districts for residency, Councilmembers will still maintain the responsibility of representing all of the residents of Columbus. Once there are nine Councilmembers, there will be approximately 100,639 residents per Councilmember based on the 2020 Census data. However, the number of residents per Councilmember is likely to increase by the time these recommendations go into effect based on Columbus growth patterns. Commission members do not believe that the work involved in representing all of the residents of the city will diminish with the changes taking place in 2023.

The peer cities studied by the Commission have a variety of governmental structures including some of which utilize city managers and have more of a ceremonial mayor or others like Columbus that have a strong mayor-council or mayor-council structure where the offices have some equity or parity in their authority over city government. In addition, restrictions for councilmembers on their ability to hold outside employment vary from city to city. In a majority of the studied peer cities, the position of Councilmember is designated as full-time and in some of those cities councilmembers are prohibited from holding outside employment. Other cities specifically designate Councilmembers as part-time and allow for outside employment. Finally, there are cities like Columbus that do not specify an employment status for Council; however, outside employment by Councilmembers is allowed.

As noted above, neither the current Columbus City Charter nor the City Code address the employment status of Columbus City Council. The Commission had extensive discussion regarding whether or not

designating an employment status for Council would better reflect the responsibilities of the office. The Commission discussed the need for Councilmembers to make themselves available to the public and to other City administrators and elected officials in order to fulfill the obligations of their duties as designated by the City Charter.

Additionally, the Commission discussed the potential ethical conflicts that could, and do, arise with the ability of Councilmembers to retain outside employment. The Commission acknowledged that, even in designating Councilmembers as full-time or part-time, at this time nothing currently in the City Charter or City Code prohibits Councilmembers from holding outside employment. Recognizing that the required Charter amendment to effect such change is outside of their purview, the Commission focused its discussion on a suitable salary for a Councilmember on the premise that Council constitutes a full-time responsibility. The Commission's salary recommendation recognizes the breadth and depth of the responsibilities of the office as a full-time job but it does not suggest a prohibition on outside employment. However, the Commission invites the Charter Review Commission to explore and discuss any further changes or guidance provided by the City Charter on the issue.

The Commission also discussed the change from a seven-member Council to a nine-member Council where each Councilmember must come from the district in which they reside. The Commission contemplated how that could change the potential workload of each Councilmember, though it was difficult to anticipate in light of uncertain but anticipated population growth in the City. The Commission also contemplated additional staff support that would be needed due to the addition of the two new Councilmembers. With additional staff, the City budget would likely need to reflect the additional personnel and programmatic costs.

Lastly, the Commission discussed that the 2018 Commission recommended and Council approved a 20% increase for Councilmembers in 2018 that took effect on January 1 of this year. The 2018 Commission when determining what the Councilmembers' salary would be, recognized the need to catch the salary up to a rate that was more closely aligned with the surveyed peer cities. However, even with that increase when this Commission looked at median per capita in comparison with other peer cities, the Councilmembers' salary still lagged behind by 13%.

Conclusion

Based upon the foregoing factors, the Commission recommends a 13% increase in the Councilmembers' base salary then in effect plus COLA on January 1, 2026. The Commission recommends that the salary for each subsequent year (2027-2029) be calculated by adding the COLA to the previous year's salary.

CITY ATTORNEY COMPENSATION 2026-2029
RECOMMENDATIONS AND DATA ANALYSIS

RECOMMENDATION:

Effective 1/1/2026 – 10% increase in 2025 Base salary + COLA

Effective 1/1/2027 – 2026 Base salary + COLA

Effective 1/1/2028 – 2027 Base salary + COLA

Effective 1/1/2029 – 2028 Base salary + COLA

On April 6, 2022 the Citizens' Commission on Elected Official Compensation unanimously voted to recommend, beginning January 1, 2026, a 10% increase to the base salary then in effect as the City Attorney's base salary plus a cost of living adjustment (COLA), then a COLA for each of the years 2027-2029.

Per Section 15 of the Charter, the City Attorney will receive a COLA in 2027-2029 based on the average Consumer Price Index of the previous four years. The Commission recommends the COLA be calculated based upon the CPI-U, All Items in U.S. City Average, All Urban Consumers, Not Seasonally Adjusted. The recommendation is based upon the presentation Dr. Bill LaFayette provided to the Commission in February 2022, as well as the Commission's independent determination that Columbus' size and projected growth merit it being considered within this scope of cities.

As these recommendations are being proffered in 2022, particularly during a period of national economic volatility, it is impossible to state with specificity what the City Attorney's salary will be in 2025. This is a manifestation of the previous EOCC's recommendations to set a base salary for the year 2022 and then add COLA to that base salary in each coming year after that until 2025. Under Ordinance 3300-2018, the previous Commission set the salary for the City Attorney beginning January 1, 2022 at approximately \$195,842 and \$195,842 + COLA/year beginning January 1, 2023. Because the Commission cannot determine the COLA that will be added to the City Attorney's salary in January 2025, it is impossible to determine the exact amount of the City Attorney's salary as of December 31, 2025.

Analysis of Peer Cities

Section 15-3 of the Columbus City Charter states, "The Commission shall conduct a review of salaries for like positions in the public sector. This review shall be made for the purpose of recommending salaries appropriate to the duties and responsibilities of each elective officer of the city." Following this mandate, the Commission analyzed data from 16 peer cities. The Commission sent out a survey and received data from peer cities and additionally collected data through publicly accessible information.

Table 4: Peer Cities and Compensation of City Attorneys

City	City Attorney	Population	Salary Per Capita
Pittsburgh	\$118,213	300,286	\$.39
Detroit	\$133,111	670,031	\$.20
Memphis	\$141,000	633,104	\$.22
Milwaukee	\$147,336	587,072	\$.25
Lexington	\$148,420	322,570	\$.46
Kansas City	\$173,064	503,443	\$.34
St. Louis	\$174,174	301,578	\$.58
Cincinnati	\$180,249	303,940	\$.59
Denver/Denver Co.	\$196,650	749,103	\$.26
Columbus	\$200,339	914,449	\$.22
Nashville/Davidson Co.	\$202,239	715,941	\$.28
Jacksonville/Duval Co.	\$236,205	982,080	\$.24
Austin	\$244,920	1,006,727	\$.24
Charlotte/Mecklenburg Co.	\$269,462	940,144	\$.29
El Paso	\$276,054	691,610	\$.40

The Commission noted that Columbus is the fifth most populous of the 16 cities surveyed and the base salary of the City Attorney ranks sixth out of peer cities. The base salary was 11% above the median for the peer cities; however the per capita base salary of \$.22 is 27% below the median. The Commission discussed how important it was to align the City Attorney’s salary with the median per capita salary of peer cities. The Commission noted that bringing the City Attorney’s salary to the median per capita salary would result in the City Attorney being compensated more than the Mayor.

The Commission had extensive discussion on parity between the City Attorney and the City Auditor. Historically, the two offices have been compensated at the same amount. Commissioners deliberated on whether the fact that it had always been this way was enough reason to continue doing it that way. The Commission ultimately determined that to move forward moving elected officials closer to the median per capita salary and avoiding falling behind was necessary even if that meant retiring the long-standing parity between the two elected officials.

The Commission distinguished the role of City Attorney from other elected officials as it is the only office that is required by the City Charter to have a professional license in order to obtain the role. The Commission also discussed attorneys’ salary in the private sector and acknowledged that the salaries are similar, while also noting that expectations are tempered when agreeing to serve in a public sector role. The Commission also considered the request by the Mayor’s staff to create a salary differential between the Mayor and the City Attorney.

Conclusion

Based upon the foregoing factors, the Commission recommends a 10% increase in the City Attorney’s base salary then in effect plus COLA on January 1, 2026. The Commission recommends that the salary for each subsequent year (2027-2029) be calculated by adding the COLA to the previous year’s salary.

CITY AUDITOR COMPENSATION 2026-2029
RECOMMENDATIONS AND DATA ANALYSIS

RECOMMENDATION:

Effective 1/1/2026 – 5% increase in 2025 Base salary + COLA

Effective 1/1/2027 – 2026 Base salary + COLA

Effective 1/1/2028 – 2027 Base salary + COLA

Effective 1/1/2029 – 2028 Base salary + COLA

On April 6, 2022, the Citizens’ Commission on Elected Official Compensation unanimously voted to recommend, beginning January 1, 2026, a 5% increase to the base salary then in effect as the City Auditor’s base salary plus a cost of living adjustment (COLA), then a COLA for each of the years 2027-2029.

Per Section 15 of the Charter, the City Auditor will receive a COLA in 2027-2029 based on the average Consumer Price Index of the previous four years. The Commission recommends the COLA be calculated based upon the CPI-U, All Items in U.S. City Average, All Urban Consumers, Not Seasonally Adjusted. The recommendation is based upon the presentation Dr. Bill LaFayette provided to the Commission in February 2022, as well as the Commission’s independent determination that Columbus’ size and projected growth merit it being considered within this scope of cities.

As these recommendations are proffered in 2022, particularly during a period of national economic volatility, it is impossible to state with specificity what the City Auditor’s salary will be in 2025. This is a manifestation of the previous EOCC’s recommendations to set a base salary for the year 2022 and then add COLA to that base salary in each coming year after that until 2025. Under Ordinance 3300-2018, the previous Commission set the salary for the City Auditor beginning January 1, 2022 at approximately \$195,842 and \$195,842 + COLA/year beginning January 1, 2023. Because the Commission cannot determine the COLA that will be added to the City Auditor’s salary in January 2025, it is impossible to determine the exact amount of the City Auditor’s salary as of December 31, 2025.

Analysis of Peer Cities

Section 15-3 of the Columbus City Charter states, “The Commission shall conduct a review of salaries for like positions in the public sector. This review shall be made for the purpose of recommending salaries appropriate to the duties and responsibilities of each elective officer of the city.” Following this mandate, the Commission analyzed data from 16 peer cities. The Commission sent out a survey and received data from peer cities and additionally collected data through publicly accessible information.

The Commission noted that Columbus is the fifth most populous and the base salary of the City Auditor ranks fifth out of peer cities. The base salary was 26% above the median for the peer cities; however, the per capita base salary of \$.22 is 5% below the median.

Table 5: Peer Cities and Compensation of City Auditors or Comptrollers

City	City Auditor or Comptroller	Population	Salary Per Capita
Pittsburgh	\$112,084	300,286	\$.37
St. Louis	\$112,190	301,578	\$.37
Milwaukee	\$125,607	587,072	\$.21
Lexington	\$140,038	322,570	\$.43
Memphis	\$144,956	633,104	\$.23
Denver/Denver Co.	\$168,118	749,103	\$.22
Kansas City	\$182,761	503,443	\$.36
El Paso	\$196,103	691,610	\$.28
Columbus	\$200,339	914,449	\$.22
Charlotte/Mecklenburg Co	\$205,484	940,144	\$.22
Nashville/Davidson Co.	\$217,500	715,491	\$.30
San Antonio	\$233,930	1,547,250	\$.15
Austin	\$235,019	1,006,727	\$.23

The Commission considered the Auditor’s duties as compared to those of auditors in other cities. Ultimately, the Commission found that the Auditor manages additional areas, including, managing the City’s debt portfolio to fund City capital projects, maintaining bond ratings and interacting with credit rating agencies, managing the City’s investor relations with bondholders and underwriters, collecting all income tax revenue (including short-term rentals, hotel-motel, and admissions excise taxes), paying citywide payrolls, accounting for all city financial transactions, preparing the City’s annual financial statement and overseeing the required audit of those statements, maintaining citywide financial management and payroll systems, publishing relevant financial reports and managing the systems necessary to perform revenue analytics, which amount to greater responsibility and significantly affect the fiscal health of the City overall. In doing so, the Commission viewed the City Auditor as more similar to a Chief Financial Officer role at a major corporation. The Commission noted that there is no “apples-to-apples” comparison for the City Auditor role and that a job description would have been helpful when determining the salary.

The Commission again acknowledged that historically the City Auditor and the City Attorney have had equivalent pay but also recognized that they need not be constrained by that factor. Based on the median per capita, the Commission determined that the City Auditor was far closer to the median than the City Attorney and adjusted the salaries with that in mind.

Conclusion

Based upon the foregoing factors, the Commission recommends a 5% increase in the City Auditor’s base salary then in effect plus COLA on January 1, 2026. The Commission recommends that the salary for each subsequent year (2027-2029) be calculated by adding the COLA to the previous year’s salary.