

To: Charter Commission

From: Nate Burkett, City Manager

Cc: Pam Whitmore, City Attorney  
Dan Nowicki, Assistant City Manager

Date: February 19, 2026

Subject: Mayor and Council Salaries – Analysis and Options for 2027–2028

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The purpose of this memo is to provide context and analysis regarding mayor and council salaries for the upcoming 2027–2028 term. The Charter requires that the Commission recommend salaries to the City Council, and that the Council must adopt those recommendations unanimously for them to take effect. If unanimous adoption does not occur, the current salaries remain in place.

Currently, the Mayor’s salary is \$14,500 and Council members receive \$12,500. These figures place West St. Paul slightly above the median for mayor compensation and significantly above the median for council compensation among our comparable cities. The official comparison group includes Apple Valley, Brooklyn Park, Brooklyn Center, Burnsville, Columbia Heights, New Brighton, Inver Grove Heights, Maplewood, Roseville, Richfield, South St. Paul, and St. Louis Park. Within this group, the average mayor salary is about \$15,000 and the median is \$14,857. For council members, the average is about \$10,500 and the median is \$10,493. It is important to note that several cities in this group provide health insurance to elected officials, which adds an estimated \$6,000 to \$12,000 annually to total compensation.

Staff received a 3 percent cost-of-living adjustment (COLA) in 2026, and similar adjustments are anticipated for 2027 and 2028. Based on that trend, the Commission may wish to consider options such as maintaining current salaries, applying COLA-based increases, or making a market adjustment for the mayor while applying COLA for council members. For example, applying a 3 percent increase in 2027 and 2.5 percent in 2028 would bring the mayor’s salary to approximately \$15,308 and council salaries to about \$13,197 by 2028. A market adjustment for the mayor to the median in 2027, followed by a 2.5 percent increase in 2028, would result in a salary of about \$15,228 for the mayor, while council salaries would follow the COLA path.

The decision involves balancing fairness, consistency, and public perception. This memo is intended to provide the data and context needed for discussion. The Commission’s recommendation will guide the Council’s action, and unanimous adoption will be required for any change to take effect.

## CHARTER REQUIREMENT

Under the City Charter:

- The Charter Commission recommends salaries for the Mayor and Council.
- The City Council must adopt the recommendation unanimously for it to take effect.
- If unanimous adoption does not occur, current salaries carry forward unchanged.

## CURRENT SALARIES

- Mayor: \$14,500
- Council: \$12,500

## COMPARISON GROUPS

**Official Comparable Cities** (Cities used as comparison for WSP Staff):

Apple Valley, Brooklyn Park, Brooklyn Center, Burnsville, Columbia Heights, New Brighton, Inver Grove Heights, Maplewood, Roseville, Richfield, South St. Paul, St. Louis Park.

**Background Cities (for context only):**

Farmington, Hastings, Lakeville, Northfield, Rosemount.

## SALARY COMPARISON TABLE

Municipality	Mayor	Council	Notes
Apple Valley	\$16,632	\$11,904	Health insurance provided
Brooklyn Park	\$21,996	\$12,576	Health insurance provided
Brooklyn Center	\$14,857	\$11,158	Health insurance provided
Burnsville	\$24,000	\$18,000	Health insurance provided
Columbia Heights	\$15,000	\$10,800	—
New Brighton	\$8,640	\$7,020	—
Inver Grove Heights	\$11,400	\$8,200	—
Maplewood	\$7,200	\$6,000	—
Roseville	\$10,620	\$8,220	—
Richfield	\$13,125	\$10,187	—
South St. Paul	\$12,500	\$8,700	—
St. Louis Park	\$20,842	\$14,413	Health insurance provided
<b>Average</b>	\$15,000	\$10,500	—
<b>Median</b>	\$14,857	\$10,493	—
<b>West St. Paul</b>	\$14,500	\$12,500	No health insurance

**Note:** Cities that provide health insurance effectively increase total compensation by \$6,000–\$12,000 annually.

## OPTIONS AND PROJECTED SALARIES

### Option 1: Maintain Current Salaries

- Mayor: \$14,500
- Council: \$12,500

**Option 2: Apply COLA (3% in 2027, 2.5% in 2028)**

- Mayor: 2027: \$14,935 | 2028: \$15,308
- Council: 2027: \$12,875 | 2028: \$13,197

**Option 3: Market Adjustment for Mayor + COLA**

- Mayor: Adjust to median (\$14,857) in 2027, then apply 2.5% in 2028 → \$15,228
- Council: Apply COLA only → \$12,875 (2027), \$13,197 (2028)

**Option 4: Hybrid (COLA + periodic review)**

- Same as Option 2, with review in 2029.

**Option 5: Adjustments as deemed appropriate by the Commission**

**NEXT STEPS**

- Charter Commission discussion and recommendation.
- Council action requiring unanimous adoption for any change to take effect.
- If unanimous adoption does not occur, current salaries remain in place at 2026 levels through 2028