



BLUE RIBBON COMMISSION

Report

Wednesday, April 9, 2019

Present: Co-Chair Claudia Dumond-Henderson, Co-Chair James Simons, Carolyn Gabbay, Doug Cornelius, Sue Flicop, Andrea Steenstrup, John Stewart and Committee Clerk, Danielle Delaney

Absent: Sharon Chan, Timothy Moran, Kathy Sun, Donald Siegel, Karen Carroll Bennett and Greg Reibman

Co-Chair Dumond Henderson opened the discussion to members of the public who were present. She stated that the Commission was established in order to review the compensation of Newton's elected officials (the mayor and members of the city council and the school committee) and make recommendations for possible future changes to their salaries and benefits, is collecting public comment from members of the community.

Open Comments from the Community

Marcia Tilton Johnson noted that Special Permits are a huge issue and in the Zoning redesign draft, there is a proposal by the Planning Department that did come out of the work of the Charter Commission that certain special permits would be the purview of the Council and smaller ones would go to the Planning Board or ZBA. It is an expensive proposition to come before the Council. A number of residents just go ahead and do it. The amount of work includes six meetings and there is a better way to organize. It was asked her opinion how City Councilors and School Committee members, have the opportunity to join in the health care system. Her response was that they should not have health benefits. The question is whether they are really employees of the city. Initially there is a mandatory contribution but that is taken back when leaving. Ms. Johnson does not know the practices of a peer group. Due to large projects coming on line, there are long periods between the first phase and phase two and can involve a two-year period. She wondered if it were better if just a group of people just do Zoning and Planning. Agendas are very long and there is need for improvement. It was asked about effective use of time. It is difficult to understand that there has been no streamlining of the hours of service. Ms. Johnson said it might mean that 24 people are not needed. There are docket items that go to Planning and Development and the Council does not need to discuss and maybe the meeting could be shortened. Public Facilities would be different. There are ways that could be more effective. It was asked that compensation and health benefits would allow more candidates run or a more diverse group. Ms. Johnson felt that new candidates would not be running because of money and if nothing else is done, she felt the Mayor should make at least what the Superintendent does.

Jane Franz is a teacher and commented on health benefits. In the past if I had been asked if City Councilors should receive benefits, she would have said no. Her first question is would removing health benefits limit the field of candidates? Would it limit it to people who already have excellent health benefits? Might providing health benefits be an incentive for councilors to stay on because health care costs have increased dramatically. In her opinion we do not want a Councilor that is here for health benefits and that is her concern. She was aware of a City Councilor that served only for the health benefits. Her concerns are in opposition to one another. By removing health benefits, the field of candidates might be limited. She is equally concerned that some might stay on the Council for that reason. She also believes the playing field should be level for all city employees. Everyone who receives compensation from the city and is qualified in a position to receive benefits, deserves to have access to that job that would provide the health benefits. It was noted that the School Committee does not work 20 hours but get health benefits. Ms. Franz said the School Committee and School Staff are very distinct. A member of the Blue Ribbon Commission felt that someone from the Executive Department could handle many of these issues that Council members are asked to deal with. General statement made by a Commission member was the subject of pay that has become a lightning rod for other issues.

Peter Harrington served three terms in the state legislature. He came to say that the question is difficult. In his opinion it is a question of service versus employment. Do you hold office to contribute to social or governmental welfare of the community or do you have a job where you apply your skills and get paid? It is a sacrifice in some degree to everybody that serves. He does not think that the fact is pay or not pay influences that many people that either run or don't run.

Co-Chair Dumond-Henderson and Doug Cornelius provided Commission members with survey results from the Outreach Sub-Committee.

Co-Chair Henderson stated that a questionnaire survey has gone out to the community members of Newton. The questionnaire may be anonymous if desired. She provided Commission members with the results of the online questionnaire about the compensation of Newton's elected officials and comments received from residents. Both are attached to this report. As of today, 299 responses have been received. Mr. Cornelius stated that there have been approximately 30 responses in the past two weeks. The public survey ends on April 12, 2019.

Doug Cornelius provided information on the survey of elected officials. As of today, 5 responses out of a possible 32 have been received.

The survey was sent to all school committee and city council members to give them the opportunity to provide commentary anonymously. We also noted that they could contact us directly or comment on the public survey.

As of today, we received only 5 answers out of a possible 32 including two School Committee and three City Council responses.

This is a small sample so we should be cautious of extrapolating this to the opinions of the City Council and School Committee as a whole.

Tenure:

- 1-3 years: 2
- 4-7 years: 2
- 8 or more years: 1

Compensation:

- 100% believe City Council should have a salary
- 100% believe School Committee should have a salary

Health Benefit:

- I think of the salary as an honorarium. Given where it is today, it would be difficult to ever make it compensation commensurate with work. However, for some folks, the benefits may help attract candidates. So, to the extent that compensation is any kind of motivation, or at least not a "de-motivator" the benefits may help, specifically health care. The pension isn't meaningful given the base for accumulation.
- I think there should be a stipend and health benefits or some kind of remuneration. Those of us who are self-employed and devote significant time have to take it out of the business.
- I have options at work, so I take whatever one is best that given year.
- I rely on health benefits from my employer.

Adjustments:

- 3/2 split on whether salary should be adjusted at the start of each term.

Appropriateness of compensation:

- Do you believe the current total compensation is appropriate relative to the commitment you are making?
- 3/2 split
- I am satisfied with the compensation. I only answered "NO" so I could comment. I don't think we could raise the compensation (politically and otherwise) to match the hours spent (in my case 800 - 1000 hours last year). This is also the kind of role where you are always on and can be engaged. That is, conversations with people you run into on the street, the market, schools, etc. When people know you are a councilor you get a lot of informational questions in addition to their opinions/comments, so you are always "on". This is part of the job and you know it when you sign on, but it would be hard to imagine a commensurate salary that could be accommodated that would have some relation to the market. Personally, as I wrote, I am fine with the compensation/honorarium. I don't expect my salary to match the hours worked or qualifications.
- Just an example, but if we adjust for the inflation rate on what was thought a good salary in 1997 (last increase) then we would be around \$16,000. Today, though, times have changed and due to social media and cell phones we are called upon 24/7 and attend many many

community meetings. The city has a lot going on and attending meetings that may have developed on no notice, costs time at my day job. Additionally, we don't have staff so we must do our own research on everything we do. Actual belief is that an At Large Councilor should be at \$22K, and a Ward Councilor at \$15K.

- As I wrote, to me these are honorariums. So, something similar to what we do today, maybe in line pro-rata with the Mayor's salary (5%).

- I would base their comp on an inflation adjusted rate from 1997. The SC job is completely different from the CC, and they are not at all involved in the amount of outside activities and meetings as the CC does. The SC role is more of a Board of Directors role and they do little beyond that duty.

A Commission member suggested sending the School Committee/City Council survey again to the elected officials hoping to hear additional responses.

Co-Chair Simons provided an update from the Peer Sub-Committee. As of today, three communities have responded to the School Committee or Mayor/City Council survey which is due April 15, 2019. A reminder was sent today; and follow up phone calls will be made.

The communities who have responded are: School Committee-Bedford and Weston and Mayor/City Council-Framingham.

The next meeting of the Commission is scheduled for April 24, 2019 in City Hall.

The Commission adjourned at 9:30 p.m.

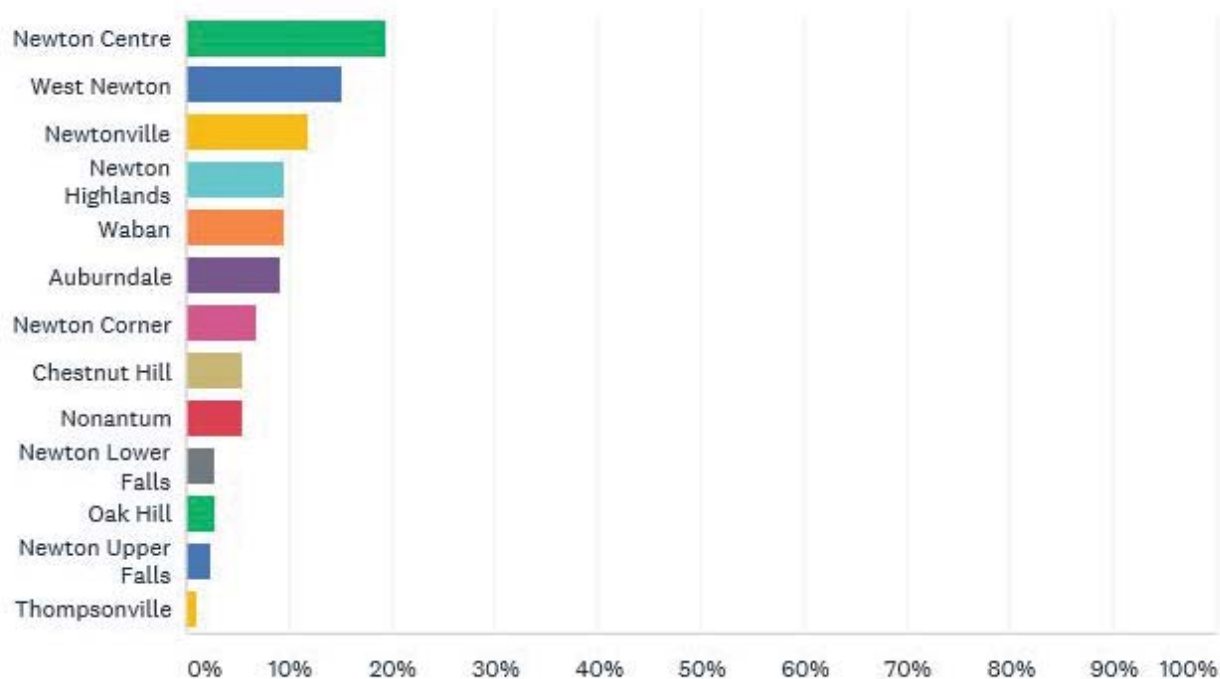
Respectfully submitted,

Claudia Dumond-Henderson, Co-Chair

James Simons, Co-Chair

In which village do you reside?

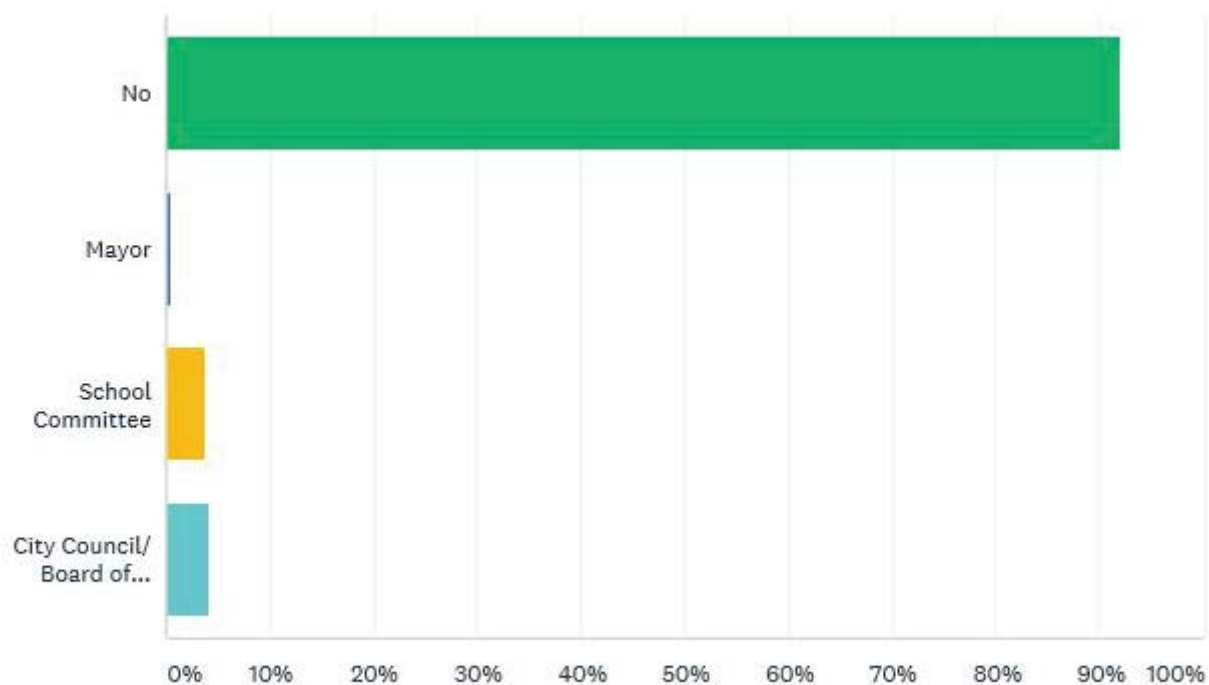
Answered: 299 Skipped: 2



Blue Ribbon Commission on Elected Officials' Compensation

Have you ever served in an elected role in the city of Newton?

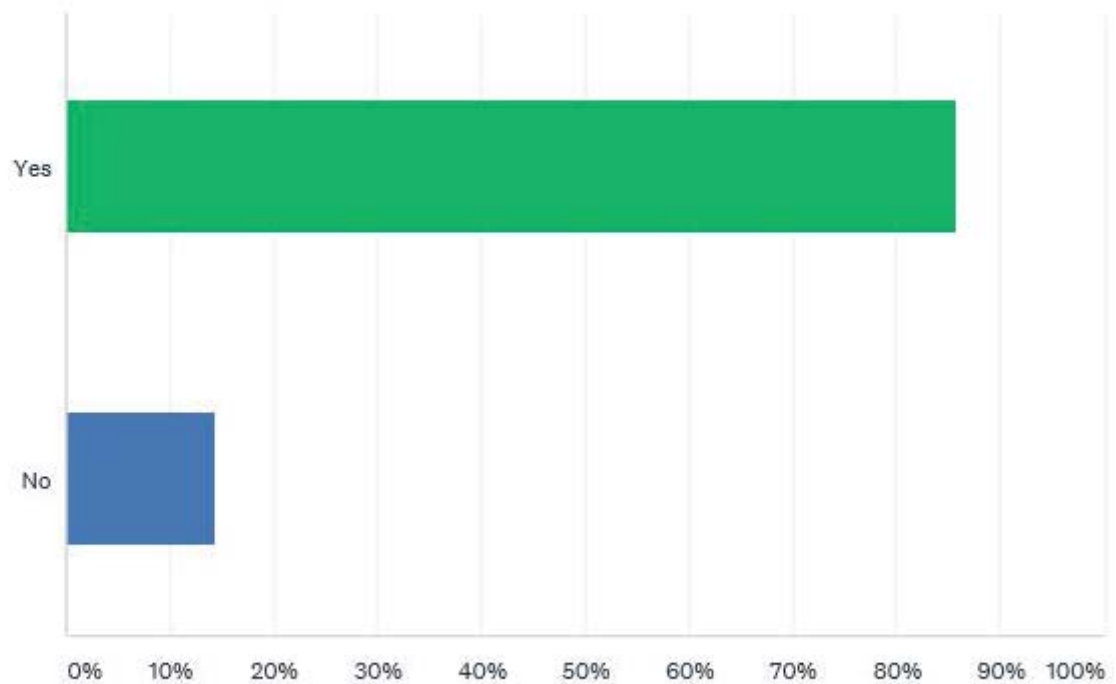
Answered: 295 Skipped: 6



Blue Ribbon Commission on Elected Officials' Compensation

Do you believe council and school committee members should receive...

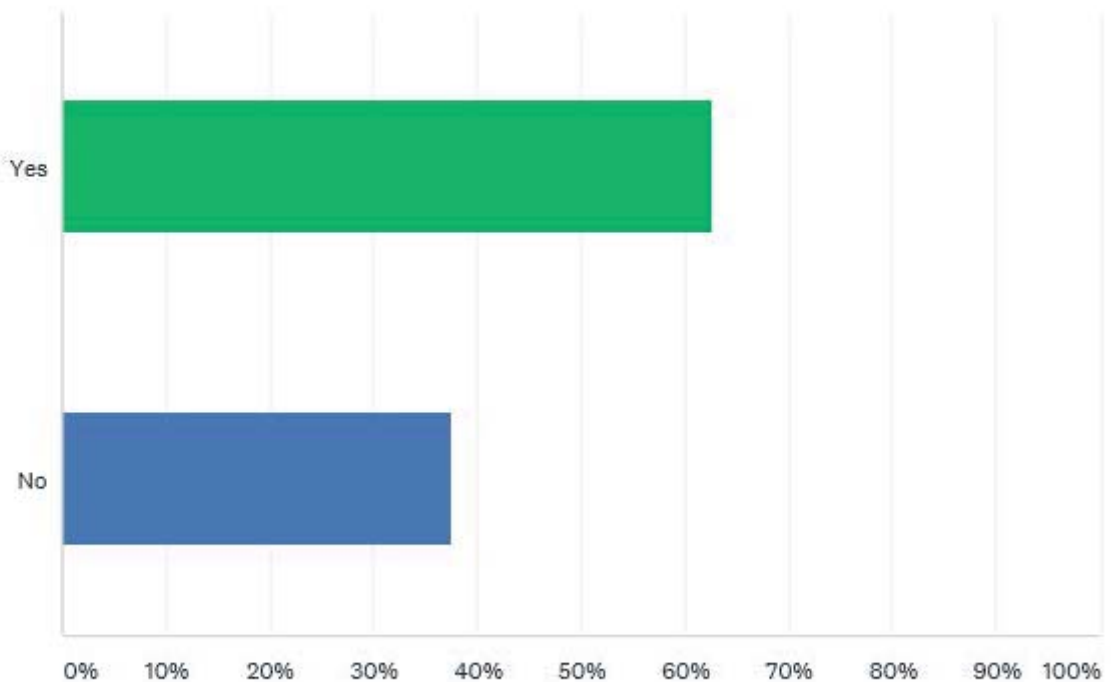
Answered: 299 Skipped: 2



Blue Ribbon Commission on Elected Officials' Compensation

Do you believe the salary should be adjusted at the start of a term to...

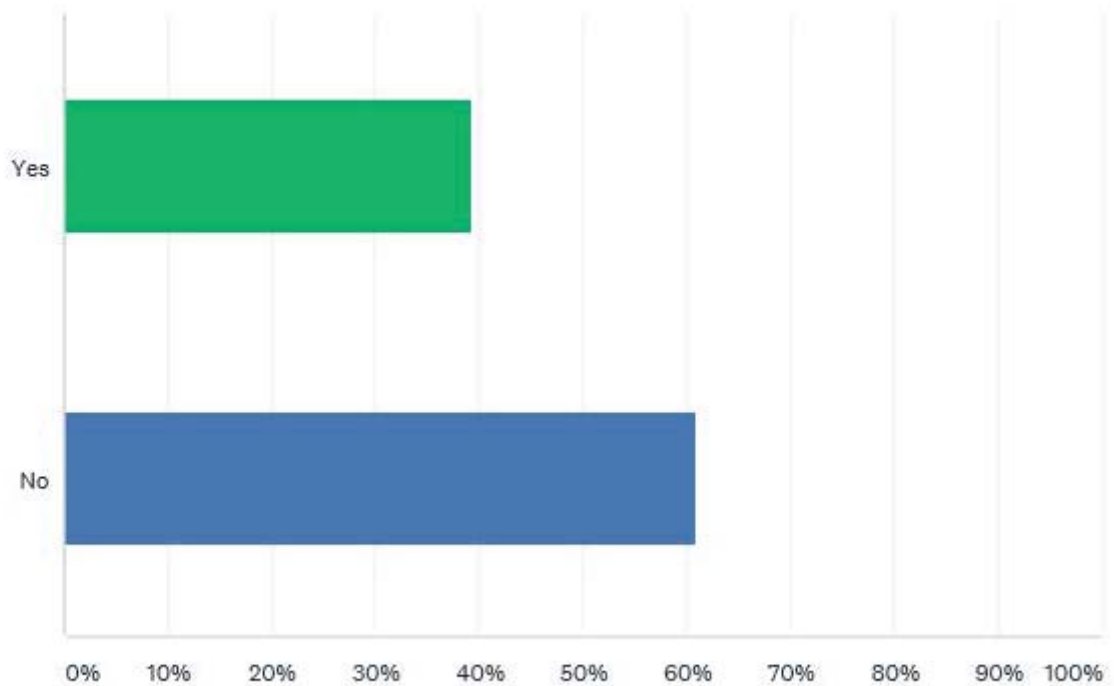
Answered: 294 Skipped: 7



Blue Ribbon Commission on Elected Officials' Compensation

Should minimum wage be a factor when considering salaries for these...

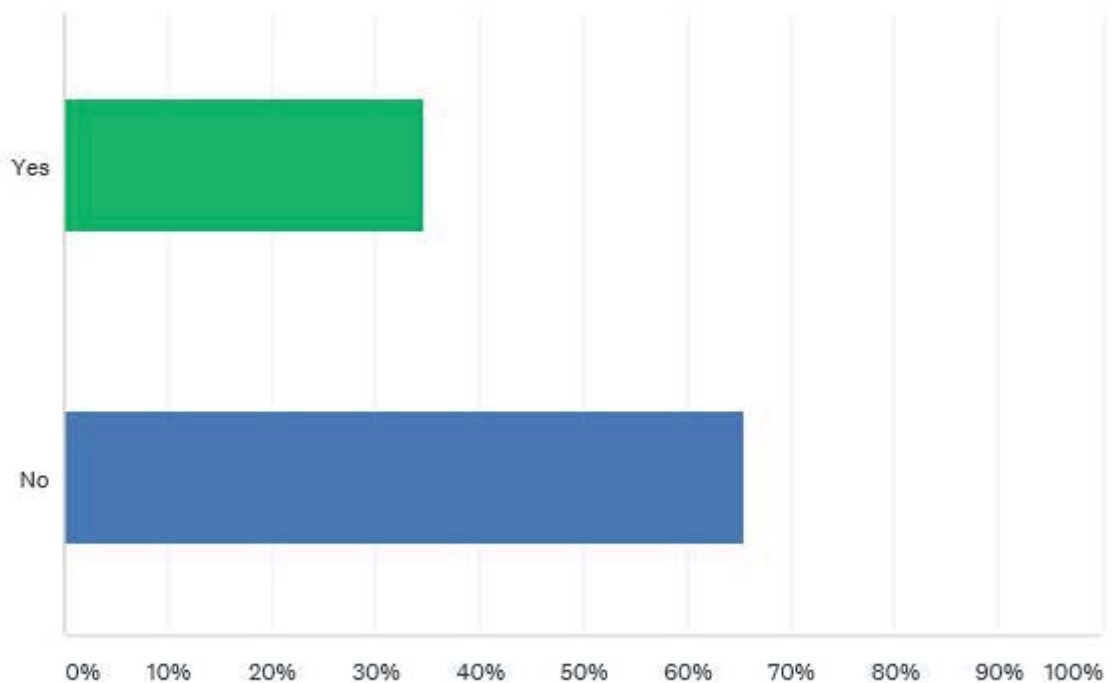
Answered: 294 Skipped: 7



Blue Ribbon Commission on Elected Officials' Compensation

Would you or have you ever considered running for one of these elect...

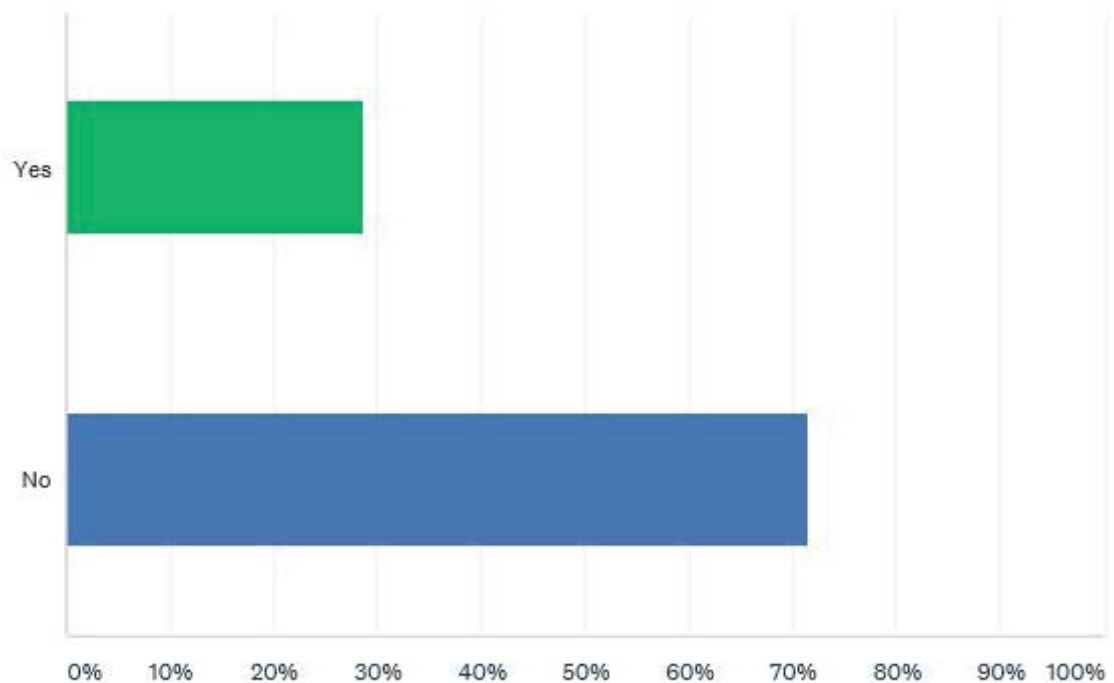
Answered: 298 Skipped: 3



Blue Ribbon Commission on Elected Officials' Compensation

Would the compensation provided be a factor in your willingness or a...

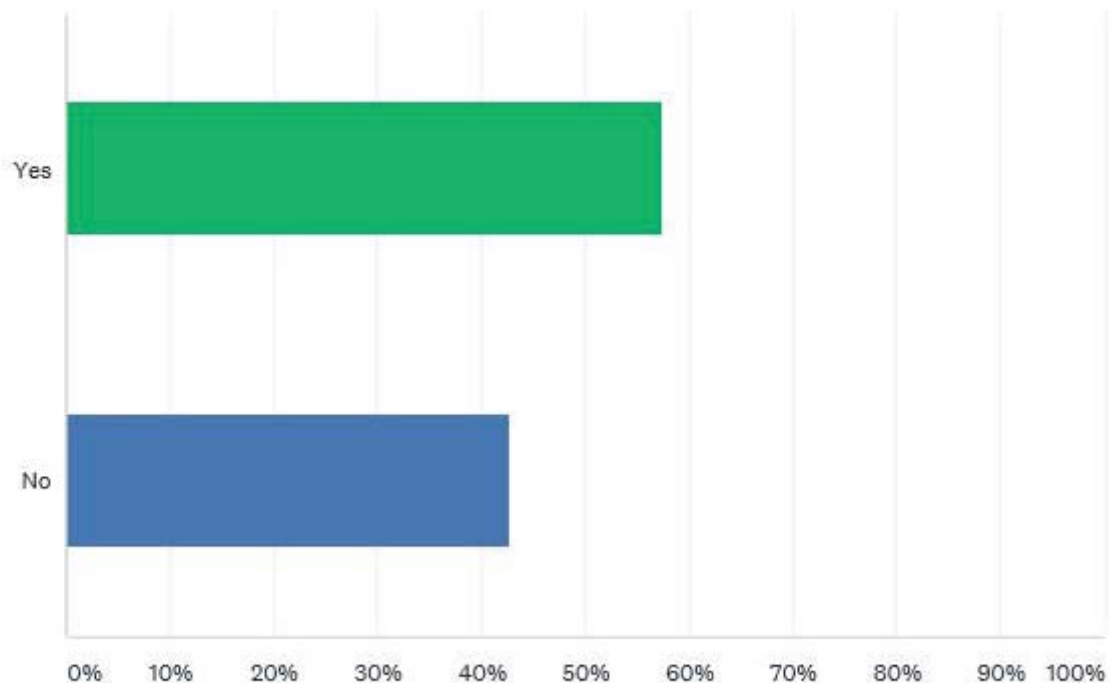
Answered: 298 Skipped: 3



Blue Ribbon Commission on Elected Officials' Compensation

Do you believe the compensation has an impact on Newton's ability t...

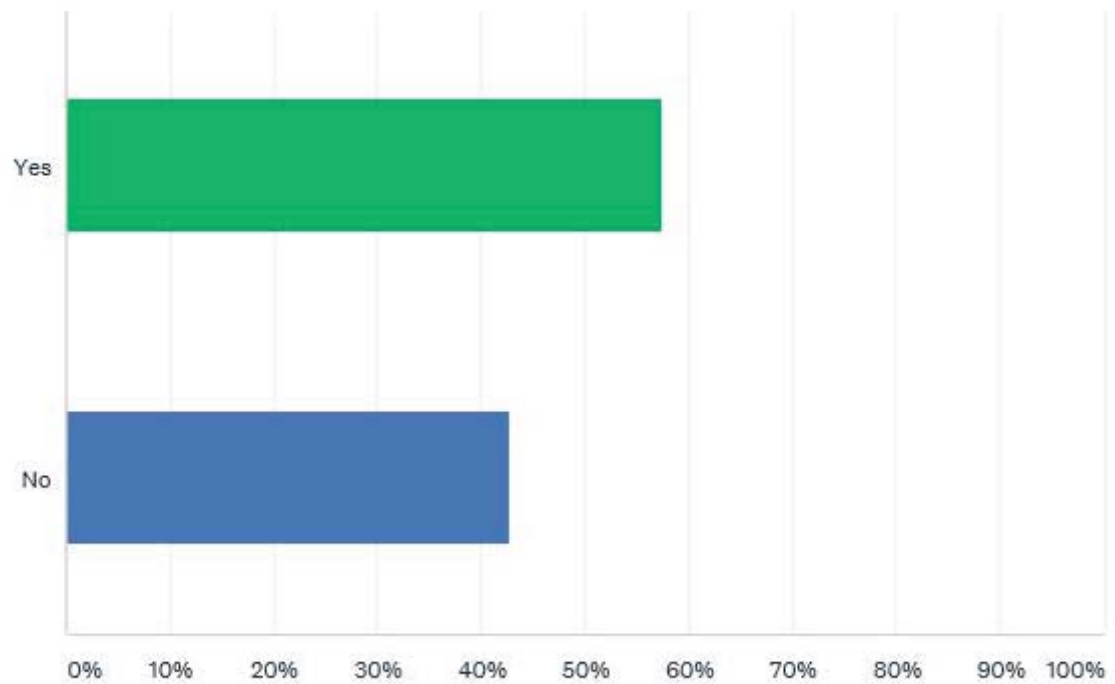
Answered: 295 Skipped: 6



Blue Ribbon Commission on Elected Officials' Compensation

Do you believe the compensation has an impact on Newton's ability t...

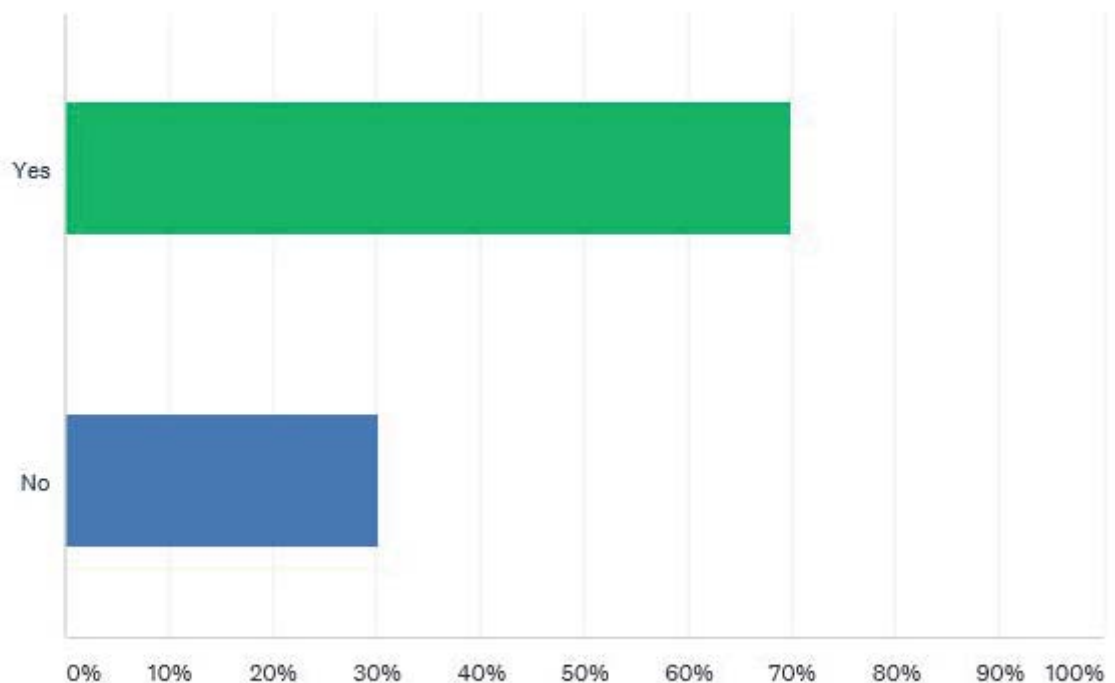
Answered: 295 Skipped: 6



Blue Ribbon Commission on Elected Officials' Compensation

Do you believe the mayor's compensation should be adjusted at the s...

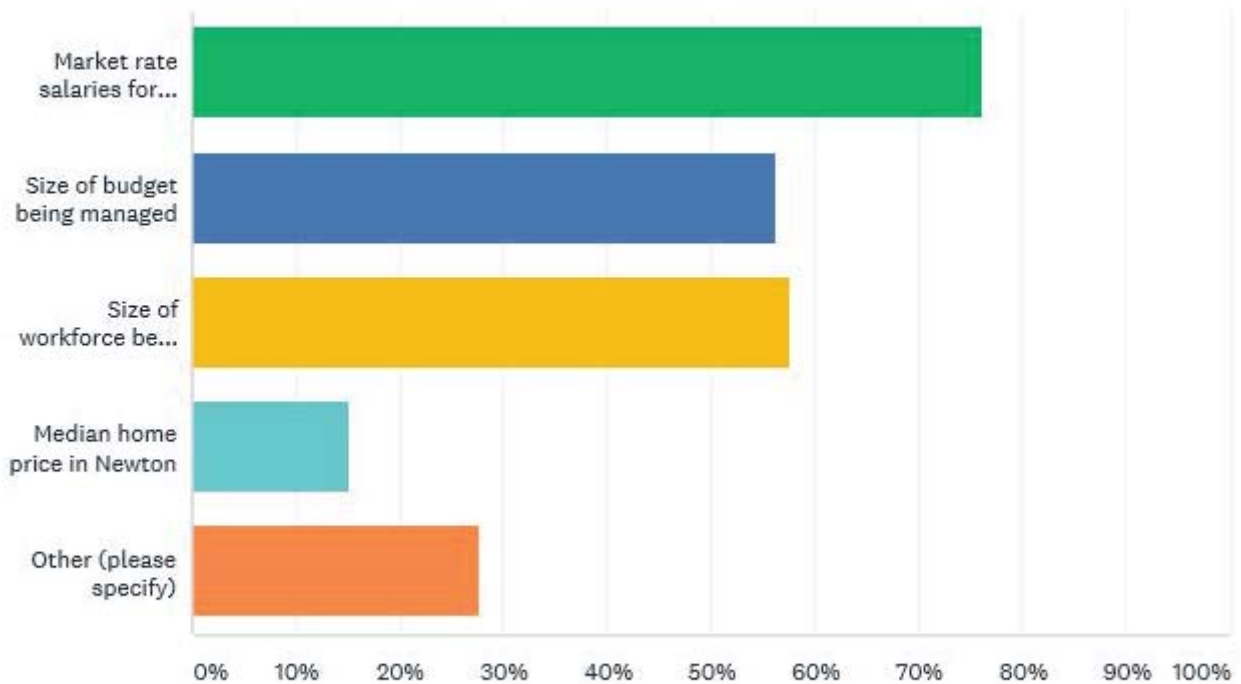
Answered: 296 Skipped: 5



Blue Ribbon Commission on Elected Officials' Compensation

What criteria should be used to determine an appropriate total comp...

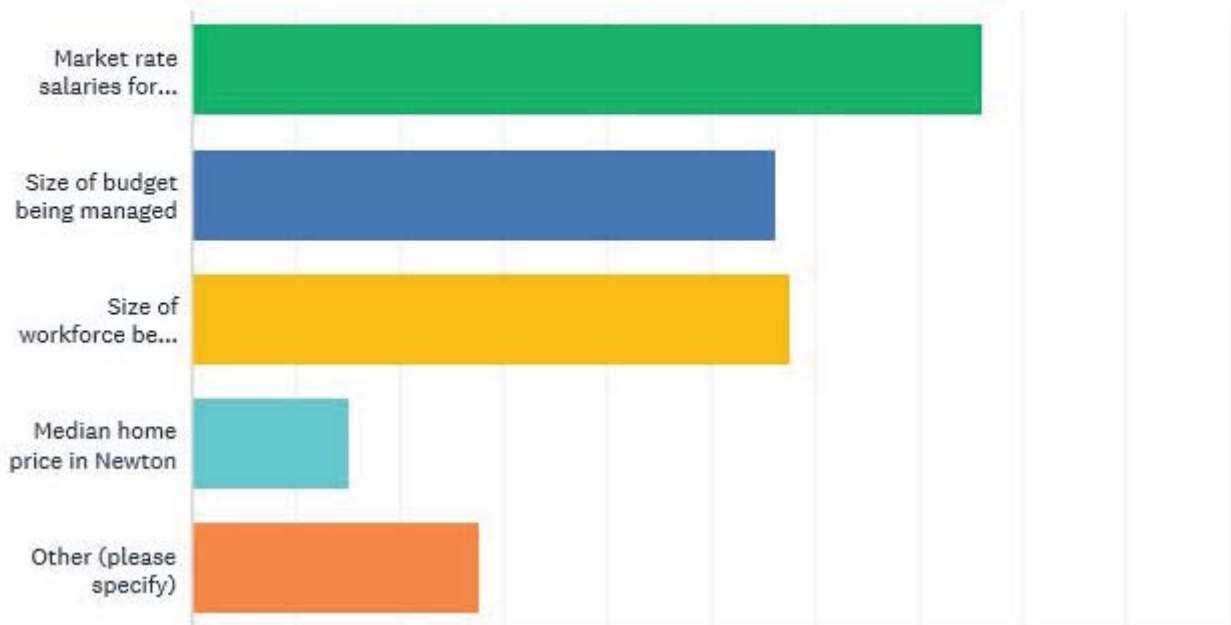
Answered: 297 Skipped: 4



Blue Ribbon Commission on Elected Officials' Compensation

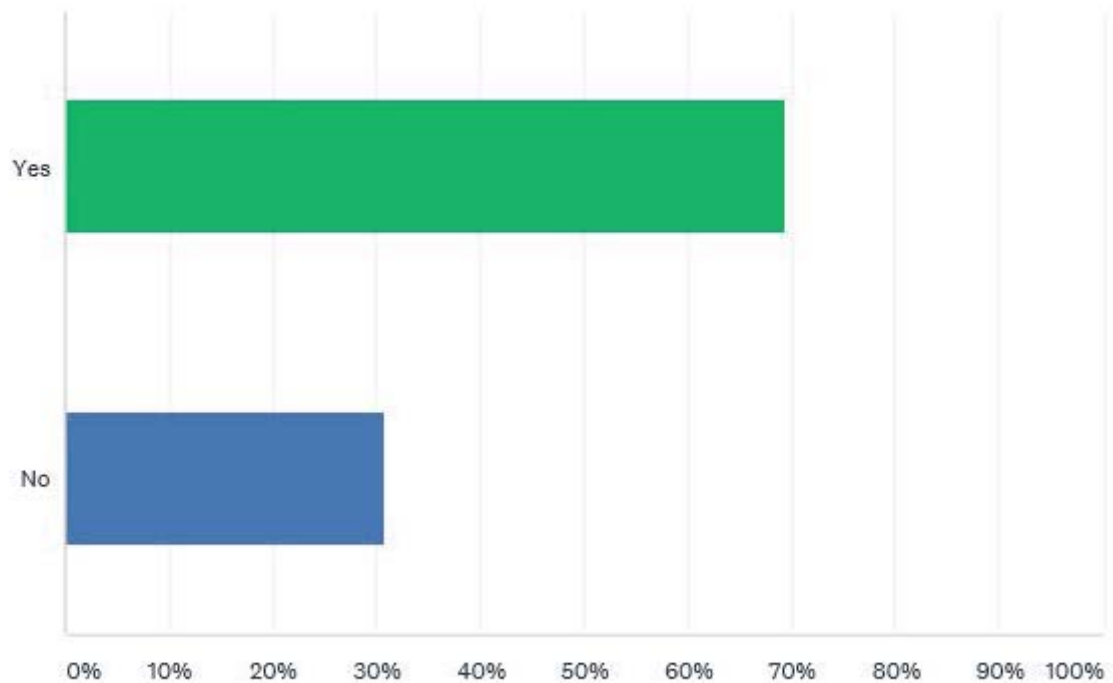
What criteria should be used to determine an appropriate total comp...

Answered: 297 Skipped: 4



In order to attract top talent, historically some city employees have e...

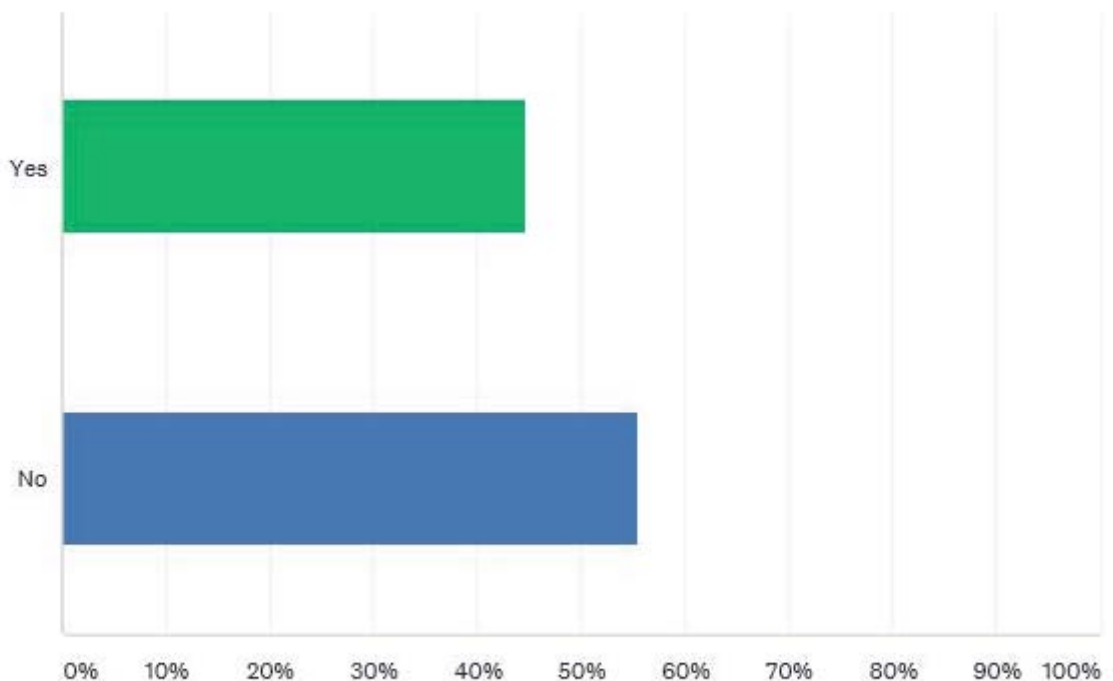
Answered: 299 Skipped: 2



Blue Ribbon Commission on Elected Officials' Compensation

Do you believe the mayor's compensation has an impact on our abilit...

Answered: 298 Skipped: 3



Blue Ribbon Commission on Elected Officials' Compensation

General comments about the elected officials' compensation:

- Answered: 162
- Skipped: 139
- I vote for downsize the number of councilors and view total package of compensation for all elected officials as a positive for the city. The lack of pay for elected severely narrows the base who might consider running.
- While no one believes anyone takes these roles to get rich, the remuneration should reflect the commitment and the commitment (for mayor and council) is significant. They are essentially the executive leadership of a large, highly complex organization. I don't have as much of an appreciation for the role of the school committee as their work seems to be essentially dictated to them by the superintendent, so I don't feel as strongly about their pay being adjusted at the start of a term.
- With fewer councilors, the City can compensate each better.
- We ask our Councilors to become experts in many areas. They must read and process numerous documents, get assistance when needed and use good judgement which takes time to formulate. Many committee meetings are required of them during the week. I fully support increase in salaries.
- The work of this commission is long overdue. However, a robust and honest evaluation of compensation for City Councilors can't take place until you grapple with the fact that the complexity, duties and time commitment of the job is proscribed by the fact that there are 24 Councilors. A rigorous job analysis would reveal that the job could and should be done by less than half that number and that those jobs should be full-time, and paid accordingly. I understand why you couldn't wait until the Council downsizes in order to do this work--because at this rate it may never downsize--but from a Human Resources and efficiency perspective, the Council needs to be reengineered in order to a) attract high caliber candidates and b) attract a diverse talent pool.
- As a Councilor and knowing at least partially the motivation of many colleagues, I think the reason we serve is to serve. This is probably the tradition in a way in Newton. That is not to say that this will always be the case, meaning, compensation may be more important in attracting candidates in the future, but that may also depend on the size and amount of time required. I think the compensation is appreciated and some of it winds up getting contributed back to the various Newton charitable organizations - I am more motivated in that direction because I have these funds available. I spent around 1000 hours in my first year and I attended to city activities in one form or another most days, including weekends. But that is how I work; my professional career was management consulting in a Tier 1 firm and you are always "kind of on". Council work is a 7x24 job in some ways with lots of gaps. But you are always cognizant of your role and responsibility. You take calls and emails (I think most of us do) at any time. This makes it tough to really value the job, which is why I think of compensation in this case as an honorarium. I think given where we are, the history etc. it would be challenging to make any significant adjustment, and I think many of us (councilors) probably don't think it's worth it, all factors

considered. The Mayor is different, that is a full time professional executive and the Mayor needs to be compensated as such and the salary needs to keep up with inflation and trends in that type of compensation. One thing I didn't mention, as up to now I haven't used the benefits, but these are fairly generous and for some a significant offset to a small salary. I think the health care benefit may be very attractive and be more important than salary as a motivator for some to run.

- Thanks for your efforts on this survey.
- The Mayor's salary has been depressed since Mayor Cohen made the mistake of turning down pay raises; it should rise to the market comparable level. As for School Committee and City Council, I don't know what those officials are actually paid in relation to the base salary, but I do know they put in a lot of time doing committee work; perhaps they are underpaid as well.
- I think the information about school committee members being able to vest after 10 years is not accurate. State law requires a stipend of at least \$5000 to be eligible to vest.
- None of the questions above asked about benefits, which was a serious omission. I would have stated that the city council and school positions absolutely should not receive benefits. Benefits should be only available as they are at most reasonable institutions, which is for people who spend at least half or 3/4 of their professional work week hours engaged in such positions. Or, alternatively, offer the benefits but make the employee's contribution (vs the employer's contribution) much higher, reflecting that they do not work even close to full time for the city. Also, the reason I am voting against cost-of-living increases is that I do not trust the political process to keep the increases reasonable. If you pegged the cost-of-living increases to the CPI, that would be acceptable.
- I don't feel qualified to answer many of these questions. I suggest investigating methods to respect the available time of school-committee members.
- We need to ensure that we attract excellent leaders and enable more socioeconomically diverse and experienced candidates to run.
- Everyone in public positions need to be paid fairly.
- I would like to know what the job descriptions are for city councilor and how this role relates to paid city employees' roles, is it supervisory, does it develop policy? What are the designated subcommittees of the council? Does this assignment increase the number of hours worked for a councilor? Should salary be adjusted accordingly? Who appoints a councilor to a committee or do they choose voluntarily? Is there a stated limit to "overtime"?
- I'm of the mind that, apart from the mayor which is a full time job, that council members are volunteers who have a public service commitment. Some compensation is appropriate but this was not intended to be a paid job in the city. Given the #'s of people who seem to run in local elections, it also doesn't appear that there is a shortage of interested citizens willing to make the commitment. Public service requires significant time and energy; it always has and it always will. The increasing tax rates for residents, though not seriously impacted by increased compensation, is a small factor. It's time to shrink the City Council. If the City took that action first and then re-surveyed residents re: compensation for service, you might see some different answers. Thanks for the opportunity to offer input.
- Mayor's salary should be significantly more.

- Officials who do the best job for the citizens spend a considerable amount of time in preparation, meetings, and outreach. That should be compensated so that the pool of potential candidates is large enough to attract the best individuals.
- City counselor job should be a volunteer job, in order to suffice public service requirements.
- I know city councilors go to many meetings. Depending on what kind of outside jobs they have, I think they may need the money and possibly the benefits to make it worth their time to take on the role.
- Eliminate Pension. Use 401k or similar retirement plans.
- They are overpaid, waste taxpayers money, work is not justified for the money they make and perks they get! Stop burdening the taxpayers !!
- It should not be the reason to serve but also not discourage service for those otherwise qualified by interest, experience, and desire to serve those they represent.
- Pl. first reduce the size of City Council, before increasing the salaries.
- If elected officials are serving the city as a part of their retirement activity, perhaps they may not require any salary. A small honorarium to appreciate their service and commitment to the community should be sufficient. Evidence shows that such activities are enormously beneficial to people in their retirement years—reduces social isolation and other benefits. But, if these are jobs that are held by young people in their preretirement years and are devoting full time, then they should be fully compensated with market based salaries and benefits.
- I'm on the Newton Highlands Neighborhood Area Council. While I don't think we should receive financial compensation, I think it should be noted that we are elected officials, elected by the registered voters in our "service area", i.e. extended villagae.
- Newton residents have reason to be grateful for the handful of city councilors we presently have who--following the example of past Newton councilors, school committee members, and mayors--understand public service and bring sound judgment to their tasks, as they strive to maintain Newton as a city that people of a broad array of backgrounds and economic levels can call home. We cannot adequately compensate those honorable officials. But elected offices are and ought to be voluntary positions, the rewards for which, besides the satisfaction of performing public service, are experience that may be useful in the officials' professional lives and the respect of their community. The financial rewards for all of the elected positions should be minimal, with only the mayor receiving a modest wage and benefits. That health benefits and quickly-vested pensions, massively expensive to taxpayers, are offered to city council and school committee members is unconscionable. These are matters between those officials and their actual employers. Newton's pension and health care expenses are already severely underfunded, with officials of successive administrations passing on debt as they move to greener pastures, while opening the city to the most pernicious of tax-promising interests. Personal financial security should not be the goal of office seekers. People of all backgrounds and incomes, and with great responsibilities at home, can and do volunteer and contribute resources to benefit others in the community: in the schools and religious institutions, in civic and charitable groups, for medical advancements, for the preservation of natural spaces. The purported goal of broadening participation in elected office by raising financial rewards is a cynical cover for the further corruption of Newton's civic life. Rewarding a mayor according to the size and scope of that official's responsibilities only encourages the already evident expansion of the reach of that office, too often for frivolous and damaging purposes, serving

mainly the end of personal ambition, selling our city to the highest, most destructive bidders, then justifying still more feel-good programs and subsidies, a truly vicious cycle. The need to bring this city under control has never been greater, and that effort has to start somewhere. The compensation committee could do a great service by holding the line.

- There should be performance benchmarks tied to salary increases, so that an elected officials' pay does not automatically increase without meeting a minimum performance standard. I think the number of hours and days that one puts into the work week for these jobs should be a factor. How often does school committee and city council meet. Is the Mayor's job 24/7? If so, 125K is a pitiful salary.
- It's hard to know if the salaries are high or low without knowing details about medical and pension benefits. Salaries described above are probably on the low side and should be adjusted very modestly for inflation. However, they aren't really too low if the medical and pension benefits are generous.
- City employees get a lot of benefits that private companies no longer offer. This is a left over from when public service needed to attract talent and compete with private companies salaries and pensions. This is no longer the case. City employees are guaranteed raises, have good healthcare, pensions--all kinds of benefits that workers today are no longer afforded. Anyone working at city hall now and our city councilors are doing better than many others in the private sector. This must all be considered when looking at compensation.
- City employees are overpaid in general. The pension and overtime benefits are amazing. The elected officials should be looking to decrease salaries, not increase them.
- 1) Over time there has been too little turnover on the City Council, and sometimes it has appeared that Councilors (and in earlier years, "aldermen") can be reluctant to give up the medical and other benefits. The large size of the elected boards, especially the City Council, makes it possible to "phone it in," i.e. serve in a listless manner, continuing to attend some meetings but making too few contributions, all the while motivated by the benefits. Removing the benefits would create a more engaged Council, with more opportunity for new councilors to be elected. 2) While it may seem that having a salary for elected boards would attract candidates who are not wealthy, the greater factor in my eyes is to get some of the incumbents to step down. 3) I favor a salary for the mayor that reflects his/her role as chief executive of a large organization, coupled with ZERO salary for the School Committee and City Council.
- Most workers receive reviews and pay raises each year. I think city leaders should be treated the same. They're executives with responsibilities for tens of millions of dollars and should be compensated as such.
- what does "vesting" mean? I think the provision (as I understand it) that people who have served in elected positions for over 10 years will receive TOTAL health benefits upon retiring is really excessive. 50% would be fairer to the taxpayers
- Elective position should not be seen as a pathway to wealth or power or as a stepping stone to higher office--in Newton or anywhere else. At one time, it was commonly accepted that public office might require sacrifice, but many of our best public officials were willing to pay that price.
- We are never going to get a socio-economically diverse pool of candidates unless there is decent compensation meeting their needs. I don't know if there is any way to pay the elected officials based on their needs with a base minimum.

- I believe that this survey is skewed to justify increases that are fiscally irresponsible and not related to what jobs Newton officials should be doing
- Councilors and school committee members should not be vested and receive benefits.
- If it is a full time job then compensation should be appropriate to the job. Less than full time should be a volunteer
- I find this survey to be designed to be a distraction from the real issue: the City Council's lack of compensation. The mayor does not need a raise. She is of the 1% and should by standards of social decency... serve for free. She is doing a fine job, but frankly, she doesn't need the money. Donate it to charity or leave it in the treasury. City Councillors ultimately set the city budget and hence the overall policy for the city. The Councillors should be paid commensurately with their impact. Somewhere in excess of \$85,000.00 (Or higher?). Their current pay prevents attracting reasonably competent people for these positions. Hence the current composition of the council, where the only Councillors worthy of being called "public servants" have either an extreme commitment to their fellow citizens (at a financial detriment to themselves) or, are self-employed or, of substantial wealth, and thus can afford to spend their time on civic affairs. The rest of the council are either using their position as an avenue for a state pension or simply have too much time on their hands and are a liability to the body politic by taking up a seat. We should radically revisit this structure, rebuild it as a council of eight ward elected Councillors who are paid the same amount as the Mayor. Quite frankly, many of us are getting tired of the absurdity of at-large so called "representation." Really, quite a political and social embarrassment.
- I think the salary is not enough and as such you tend to have candidates like mayor Fuller who are extremely wealthy — family money or from previous jobs — as it is the money to run for elected office is outrageous! — also she downsized her house — going from a mansion to a more modest yet still \$2'or \$3 million home so to appear more in line with rest of Newton!! That being said, the salary shouldn't be why you apply for the job — thus prior public service experience and especially volunteer experience in Newton is absolutely critical.
- I would rather we had a smaller city council that was better paid.
- Pensions are unmanageable long-term. Let's go the way of private industry and provide a 401k-equivalent.
- Compensation is not rocket science. Identify the most useful and effective measures and apply them to different positions in Newton city. Also, yes/no is not an appropriate way to address many issues (above). Failure to allow respondents to report "Not sure/Don't know " forced too many responses into invalid categories ("Yes/No"). Invalid statistics don't give people confidence in this effort. Next time try asking more experienced folks to review your questions. Good luck!
- Running an effective government requires people with focus and commitment; failing to pay them enough to NOT have major other obligations in order to maintain a living results in the massively incompetent, small minded and distracted people we currently have running the city (outside of the Mayor). If you pay on scale with a dog walker (less than \$100 a week), then you get the intellectual equivalent of a moderately motivated middle schooler.
- paying a pittance for elected official reduces the ability of people who do not have means to support themselves otherwise. Thus we skew towards the rich/wealthy in terms of those elected. Also, in this age of global warming it is ridiculous the mayor gets use of car from the

city. We should eliminate this benefit and encourage our mayor to bicycle/carpool/walk/use public transportation to conduct official business.

- I firmly believe that we get what we pay for. If we want “good” government, we must pay a competitive wage to attract and keep good candidates. All of these elected positions require very significant time commitments from the holders of these positions. We should compensate them for their time away from their families and their businesses or jobs. So much of our lives depend on continued good schools, efficient and fair government and a well run city. We need to invest in the people holding these offices. We get repaid not only by quality of life benefits but also by increases in home and property values. If we don’t pay now, we’ll pay later...
- I think that whensomeonerunsfor office
- City councilors should get \$20,000 per year, but only if they change the charter: 1. to make every seat unique and individually contestable - ie, At-Large A and At-Large B from each ward, so someone can run against the one person they want to oppose, not two incumbents at once, Or go to the 8 + 8 model; 2. abolish the anti-democratic, oppressive and regressive Planning Dept; and 3. give the City Council its own Law Dept. Time for tyrants Albright, Crossley and Lipsett to retire... Mayor and administration have far too much power. Stop Korffification. End the developer-driven corruption. School Committee needs no raise. They need to end the groupthink and become completely transparent. Fire the superintendent, and get one at a lower salary who doesn't plagiarize.
- It has been far too long since it has been updated. as a result, there is now little socio-economic, ethnic or racial diversity on the City Council.
- Public Service is a factor absent in most employment and represents a substantial (untaxed) benefit. Accordingly while being fairly compensated is important it should not overwhelm the traditional motive of "giving back".
- The compensation appears to be in line with the amount of work performed
- These are responsible positions whose base salaries seem generally low when compared to private sector occupations with similar levels of responsibility and time commitment, which may affect the supply of qualified candidates. Since low salaries in top government positions often affects the salary structure for other city employees, the recruitment and retention of other key city employees may be adversely affected.
- The Mayor's salary is too low for the demands and responsibilities of the position. I don't think the elected officials need a raise. They get amazing health benefits and pension that extend well past the time of their service. Who among us gets to keep those benefits if we leave our day job? Also, the Mayor is full time and that's her/his only job. Most of the Councilors have day jobs that provide other compensation and benefits to them.
- The candidates know the compensation prior to running. It is disingenuous to be in office for a year an half and vote yourself a raise.
- I oppose the idea of a full-time city council.
- I believe the Voting Poll Workers should make minimal wage at least.
- Everyone but the Mayor is NOT a full time job. This is a service to your city/community that they chose. They should not be getting benefits, pensions of any sort. A stipend is understandable but benefits and pension for life? Unsustainable!!
- While minimum wage and COLA should absolutely be considered for city employees, elected officials serving on the City Council or the School Committee agree to run for the office knowing

the salary & benefits for the positions. If elected, they are free to vote for and increases (or in the case of school committee request an increase) during their term of public service if they feel it is warranted.

- our councilors are wonderful! Every time I came to a hearing I went home feeling good about our city government.
- In the beginning of the USA, people served without compensation and out of duty. Government service has become more of a business rather than a public service or obligation as citizen.
- They are elected officials. For the most part they all have full time jobs and are not in it for the money . With that said it is a huge time commitment. Offering them health and dental and life insurance is a benefit .. those that waive that and get benefits from their real day job should get some sort of benefit. I am not sure the money being paid now can even be considered as "salary" Perhaps a study needs to look hard at the time they work for the city in meetings and on boards. If you look at it as an hourly think I bet the city is getting a great deal. I bet they all work many more hours a week / month than. Many think Rather than increasing salary perhaps it you should explore a matching system of sorts to help them set aside more money for retirement in lieu of a salary now.
- The fact that they get benefits such as pensions, health care as well as all those company cars we have to pay for means that they should be earning less salary than similar positions in other organizations.
- I don't believe the City Council or School Committee members should receive the benefits package: Health, Dental, Vision, or Pension. This is an expense to the City of Newton. Most of these people have other full time positions.
- \$125K is rather meager.
- I'm all for improving the pay of public servants. However, I would not support improved pay or benefits for elected officials until the size of the city council is reduced.
- If, on the other hand, the goal is to obliterate what diversity exists in Newton now, by all means, increase the salaries of civil servants: people who should not be entering public service with an eye to improving their financial situation - ESPECIALLY when their status is already extremely wealthy. It just looks rapacious, misses the supposed point of public service, and guarantees an even greater and speedier separation in the income inequality problem.
- You have not factored in the value of the health benefits when asking about elected officials' compensation, which, in my opinion is worth much more than the salaries of the council and school committee members. Most part-time jobs don't come with such comprehensive (and valuable) benefits, so to talk about "salaries" for these positions isn't really what the discussion entails. Also, we should determine the size of the council before discussing compensation.
- I think the salaries have to be adjusted from time to time, but I don't think the salary should be the incentive to run for office. In theory, those serving the city have had and may still have jobs that also come with salaries, and the benefits are worth quite a bit as well.
- City Councilors and School Committee members should receive a stipend to cover out of pocket costs. The Mayor needs a salary that is within competitive ranges, allows one to live in the community and relates to performance.
- If a position requires a full time commitment between constituent services, public meetings, and other duties it should be compensated such that it can be the office holder's full time job.

Otherwise we risk an applicant pool that is biased towards the needs of their day-jobs (particularly legal and real estate).

- I would like to see all city officials compensated for the amount of time required to perform these jobs well. Otherwise the jobs will not attract candidates who represent the majority of residents: those who need a reasonable income to support living in Newton. Instead the jobs would likely attract interest only from those with another source of income - either a full-time job (and therefore limited time for their city role) or private wealth (which would likely affect their perspective on issues of concern to many residents).
- In general, I would argue for a professional executive level salary for a job like mayor. You want it to be a factor when attracting top talent to run for the job. Elected board compensation is different. I would describe it as a stipend earned for public service. Once that stipend has been set, it is only right for it to vary with inflation. If there is a consensus that city councilor is a full-time job then I would revisit the idea of a bigger salary. I am not aware that it's a full-time job in Newton.
- Councilors do an enormous amount of work. They should be compensated for that. Perhaps committee chairs should be compensated extra...
- Our elected officials chose to run for the positions they hold knowing what the compensation will be. In the past, Alderman received no compensation. The fact that they receive health benefits while being allowed to hold jobs (Councilors), is quite a plus considering the cost of Health Insurance premiums.
- it would be good to know who is making more money than the mayor per annum; what about salaries for police, firemen/firewomen, and other public employees?
- Did I read that city council members receive healthcare for life? That seems crazy. If true, I strongly feel that practice should end. It is an unreasonable burden on taxpayers.
- I think the School Committee members salary should be increased.
- I think anyone earning a 6-figure salary who is an elected official meant to serve the community should willingly take a pay-cut. If you are a public servant, a 6-figure salary is outrageous, especially given that it's becoming nearly impossible for anyone from the lower to middle class to afford to live in Newton anymore (I certainly wouldn't be able to live here if my parents hadn't purchased the home I live in in 1963). And I have a PhD! That's just wrong.
- Mayor. 250000 Council. 25000 School. 20000
- Civic duty, particularly part-time positions like council and schoolboard, is a labor of love. Anyone who does it for the money already is automatically conflicted.
- Without knowing what the city pays for benefits and what benefits are available to retirees it is impossible to judge. We have a \$1.3B liability for unfunded obligations already.
- City council/school committee absolutely should not receive health/dental/vision benefits. Figure out how to reclassify council members to non-employees; pension eligibility is ridiculous.
- 1.) Please check out this interesting Oct 2018 article about Mayoral salaries.
<https://www.bizjournals.com/bizjournals/news/2018/10/05/public-paychecks-what-does-a-city-mayor-earn-heres.html> 2) I am unable to answer Question 3 since I serve in an elected position in the City of Newton that is not listed in the choices. I have been an elected Waban Area Councilor for 4 years!
- Like the mayor, I believe high level officials, superintendent, chief of police, fire, staff, CFO, etc, should also be required to be residents.

- While I support increasing the salary of city councilors, I do not believe they should receive health benefits unless their official number of hours per week is in keeping with the standard used for other city employees (20 hrs/week). If the city council is downsized, then I think the compensation issue should be revisited.
- The City Council position and duties has changed radically in the past 20 years since the last City Council pay raise. Just on the face of it, if the current comp was fair in 1997, then it cannot possibly be today? The Councilor trying to work a fulltime job is addressing calls/emails/and drop-in residents all day, and usually 7 days a week. In this age of social media we are on call 24/7 and impromptu meetings can occur in a neighborhood in 2 days requiring our attendance. Also, not all Councilors use the medical/dental and if they don't participate they are not receiving an offsetting amount; and additionally, once an employee hits 65 they go on Medicare and are no longer costing the city. This makes medical and dental a semi-non issue in the discussion. Many elected officials serve only a few terms and would not receive a pension so that should also not be a consideration. I believe that the current system works for those that do not need to work (at many ages), retirees, and the very wealthy. Each time I run we have to evaluate the realities of lost work time, so I imagine with cost of about \$10K to win a seat, that many with tight incomes and rigid work schedules cannot consider running for office. Very frankly on School Committee comp, and with their role as more of a Board of Directors, and not addressing resident concerns and attend meetings like a City Councilor makes their role completely different. Having the SC comp at 50% of the City Council seems more than fair. I will submit a more detailed letter to the Comp Committee. Thank you. Jim
- If you want to increase the elected officials compensation, you must reduce the number of elected officials, to many at present!
- We are in a deficit with the pension for the city. With taxes going up every. I can't afford to live here. We are going to build a new senior center. A park over the mass pike. New everything from Newton corner to West Newton square. I don't know who is going to pay for this. If my taxes go up any more, I have to move. I live on Social Security.
- Every one of the City Councilors is motivated by public service, not monetary compensation. I do not support any increase. The size of the Council should be addressed before compensation changes are even considered.
- I think that as a rule the compensation offered for the position of mayor is not a major factor to the people running for that position.
- Compensation is important, but it is not the reason that people seek elected office.
- I think the mayor's salary and the base stipends for city council are too low. I don't know what is involved in being on the school committee so while the stipend there seems low, I can't comment on whether it really is. Superintendent David Fleishman's salary is too high, there is no need to pay folks > \$200K to get them to take that job.
- Do think Mayor's salary is low compared to job responsibilities/amount of time dedicated to residents & public events. Some hard-working employee do not seem to be receiving pay commensurate with their work load & performance. In my opinion, there are employees both over AND under paid
- The amount of compensation, in part, depends on whether the officials have outside employment

- A market analysis should be done looking at comparable cities. Market rates for school superintendents may often exceed rates for mayors. Again, look at market data and see if that is true for cities that have a comparable high school ranking.
- I think that alderman and school committee members should NOT receive health insurance benefits or pensions. I believe that they should have other employment outside of these positions. These are part time positions. I am good with a 403B and an employer contribution but NOT a pension. AND NOT health insurance.
- The reason I'm supportive of more pay is my sense that the city council comprises too many people who make a living serving real estate development interests in Newton (e.g. architects and lawyers) who have other incentives to run for city council.
- Questions 5 and 6 assume that salaries for these roles are the sole salaries for the individuals serving. To what extent is this the case? For example, if an individual has another FT role, wouldn't that role consider factors such as housing increase and minimum wage? Are the majority of committee members serving in a PT capacity? Is committee involvement a secondary role for them? I need more information and data to fairly and adequately respond to these specific questions as currently posed.
- Newton elected officials shouldn't be trying to manipulate the public into giving them lavish pay raises when they and their predecessors are collectively responsible for saddling Newton taxpayers with \$1.35 billion in debt and retirement benefit liabilities.
- I believe it is low. I'm also not clear why City Council gets paid twice school committee. Do they really commit twice as much time to the job? That is not what I have witnessed.
- While I don't think councilor or school committee salaries should be tied to the minimum wage, it's striking to me that the councilor's weekly salary is \$187.50 -- assuming a councilor works 15 hours per week, that's \$12.50/hour -- less than a teenage babysitter makes.
- There are so many critical issues to be managed and regulated in a town of any size, let alone ours, much time, study and commitment is required- if the job is done well. Don't know how councilors with other major occupations manage it if they perform well.
- There are too many city council members
- people run for office in order to move to higher elected positions (congress, senate,etc) not for the salary as mayor,councilman etc.
- It seems to me that Newton is well governed.
- Have always believed that 'elected' officials should not be compensated like 'non-elected' jobs. One should not run for elected office solely for the salary. They should not be life-time positions either. I hope the commission remembers that when trying to determine a fair salary for the office of Mayor of Newton
- It is important that other benefits, especially health insurance, be offered to all elected officials as they are to other employees. Elected officials are willing to serve at below-market salaries but should not be penalized by also withholding other benefits.
- I don't think City Council members or School Committee members should receive health benefits, dental benefits or vision benefits. Nor do I think they should receive a pension.
- Paid elected officials should be required to devote full time to the position to which they have been elected.
- Want people dedicated enough to make financial sacrifices not those looking for a job

- The benefits of Health, Dental and vision for our city councilors, school committee and Mayor should weigh in heavily as part of their compensation.
- Newton is a BILLION \$ in debt to appease the union-friendly candidates !!! Stop taxing everyone and spending to appease the unions!
- this survey is flawed because of lack of information on the dollar value of benefits. It is benefits, not the salary that probably encourages people to run for reelection!
- I think market information should be reviewed for the council and school committee positions as well. I'm interested in understanding whether it is required by Massachusetts law/federal law that council and school committee members be employees. Particularly given what I understand to be the issues related to pension liabilities. Can these positions be made non pension eligible - they are not full time roles.
- Mayor should be the only one who receives compensation
- I am a member of Newton Citizens Commission on Energy. We collect no compensation and have no budget even for the most basic support. And yet, we work very hard on behalf of the City. I view the role of City Council the same way. They receive dental, health, etc insurance a symbolic compensation, and retirement benefits. That is MORE than enough. As to the mayor and top executives: I do not believe that increasing these salary will attract more talent that we already have (which is superior). And that includes socioeconomically diverse candidates for these positions.
- Elected officials are hard working-dedicated group of citizens and should be compensated for their long hours in chamber and their contribution to make Newton a better place for it's residents-
- Overtime manipulation by police and fire to increase salaries should be reduced. The mayor should be higher
- I believe our officials should be fairly compensated to ensure that government service is an attractive line of work for worthy and determined candidates — not a hobby for the richest
- In addition to serving as an elected official I must work an additional full time job to support myself/family. I recognize that I was aware of the circumstances of city council compensation before I ran for public office, but am struck by how difficult it has been to maintain the two roles in practice. I often think how much more effective I could be as a city councilor if I only had one job. I think my voice on the council is important, as a working mother, but can completely understand why more working mothers are not able to do this role because the balance is too challenging. An increase in compensation would take pressure off of my full-time day job, (maybe I would only need to work part-time) and help pay for childcare expenses put in place because I am out of the home so many nights. I don't take the city offered insurance package, that is not a carrot for me, nor am I interested in the pension plan, as I think pension plans are challenging for the long-term health of the city and not a big enough benefit to CC for the amount of fiscal pressure it puts on the city. Thank you for considering this important issue.
- I wouldn't change compensation every year for Councilors and SC, but I would increase SC compensation. This took an enormous amount of time and resources. Compensation could be revisited every 4 years or so, whatever's best with the functioning of the city's overall budget and plans, not necessarily every year. Good luck.

- I don't think the Mayor's salary will can ever be "competitive" with the private sector or even some Town Managers but it does need to reflect how hard the role is and be attractive to someone who may need to leave a job that supports a family in Newton.
- These salaries should enable people to give up their time to act as public servants, they shouldn't be the reason people give up their time act as public servants.
- More governmental work should be handed over to professionals. The City Council and School Committee should not be full time jobs, just oversight committees.
- Fewer council people
- Because of Newton's demographics, I believe that people would run for the vision they have of the City and the things that are important way to effectuate their vision. The Mayor's salary, as it may be adjusted for COLA, is plenty adequate. If someone wants to make a lot of money, they shouldn't run for mayor. The job is about leadership and direction, not financial gain....I'd like to be asked about the NPS Superintendent's salary sometime...
- I think that review and adjustments, from time to time, should be done in Newton. We were not asked about City Council and School Committee, but both of these amounts seemed low to me, especially for the City Council, which seems to require many hours of work.
- our elected officials compensation ought to be somewhat comparable to those of other communities with comparable job responsibilities
- I don't think salaries should be a main consideration for people when considering running for an elected position.
- It seems that outside of the mayor only those who have significant additional outside income can serve on the city council or school committee. These roles are vitally important for our city and while it's great that people basically volunteer for the positions, I think it would be good to at least consider what the minimum wage would provide.
- Thank you to all the elected officials who work so hard for our city!
- For the responsibility, time commitment, and stress involved in a City Councilor's job, the current salary is ridiculously low. I would favor a significantly higher compensation (perhaps 1/2 to 3/4ths of the Mayor's salary, depending on the size of the Council), but with no pension. Most Councilors have other means of support or can use their post-office reputation to support themselves.
- Benefits package sufficient to offset lower salary for councils and committees where workload is shared. Mayor's salary has already attracted a very good mayor at the current level. No evidence that compensation level is commensurate to performance that I am aware of. In fact, highly paid urban mayors seem statistically just as prone to good/poor performance as lower paid mayors.
- Having no adjustments for so many years is poor fiscal management regardless of budget pressures. Candidates have, in fact, "lost relative value". A performance and inflation based review / compensation process seems more realistic.
- Elected officials need to be able to afford to live in Newton. Without adequate compensation, the field will be narrowed to only the wealthiest candidates. Our elected officials are dedicated to quality of life in Newton and surrounds, work diligently and thoughtfully and respectfully. They should be well compensated.

- Although I do not believe in regular "cost of living" adjustments, I do believe in regular review and re-setting of appropriate levels of compensation. These decisions should reside with the elected officials and the accountability for those decisions comes during municipal elections.
- I think the mayor's compensation is about right. The council and school committee's seems a bit low.
- Question 4 did not allow differentiation between councillors and school committee members; I support councillors being paid a stipend, but not school committee members. It seems other committees have similarly time-consuming responsibilities that are not recompensed. In addition, if there is any upward movement in councillor salaries, I'd like to see more accountability to residents through regular communication from them as individuals. Thank you for the opportunity to comment.
- While I appreciate that the position should not irrevocably harm one's life style, neither should one's lifestyle unduly benefit from it. This is public service and one ought not to be doing it for personal gain.
- Medium-size hospital and college presidents would be a reasonable comparable
- Given the rate, pace and strategic importance of the decision making demands on our elected officials, it is ludicrous to expect that they can do this while working full time because the current compensation structure is far below the Federal poverty level.
- In assessing the value of a compensation package, the pension should probably be more than a footnote - it is a significant part of most public employee compensation and has a net present value - and is a benefit not part of most private sector jobs. Additionally, pension obligations are a significantly overlooked liability for many municipalities.
- Consider eliminating the insurance and pension components for city councilors and school committee members. The salary is a stipend for their service, but their primary workplace should provide these other benefits vs. driving up costs for city residents.
- I am actually surprised by the low compensation for Councilors. What is the average number of hours spent by Councilors in meetings and preparation?
- I think after 200 or so years the white male has had his turn. Don't you. Give a minority a chance. Raise all boats.
- Give them a bit more if they get more fiscally conservative and slow raising taxes and fees on everything.
- city council should establish the salary scale, to be effective only at the beginning of the next term, and not effective currently. The scale should not be automatically adjusted--that is a cop out.
- Served as elected member through area council. City Council members should not need medical benefits since Mass already required insurance through their full time jobs. Seems to be an outdated practice
- Newton can and should pay elected officials competitive salaries. What the city needs to reign in are unsustainable retirement packages.
- I think the amount it costs to campaign and run is more prohibitive to a socio-economically diverse pool of candidates than compensation.
- City council and school committee members should receive pre rated benefits and higher compensation.

- I don't believe the top level people at City Hall make enough money. I have no personal interest in any of this. I just think they are woefully underpaid. On the other hand, I think the fire and police chiefs make way too much. That is why I responded no to question 12.
- Compensated just fine at the moment.
- seems that we have very qualified and capable candidates at the current salary level
- I would be more supportive of salaries for our councilors if there were fewer councilors who would be doing the job "full time"
- I think school and council positions should be volunteer positions, and I find it hard to believe that this city does not have enough good people who would not do it as part of their civic responsibility.
- I believe the Mayor of a city the size of Newton should be earning at least \$200,000 in base salary.
- Generally I think salaries should be higher but pensions have got to go. Or they should be explicitly imputed into the salary. The pension is probably going to cost us more than the salary. It is not a fringe benefit. Subject to that, city councilors and the school committee members are woefully underpaid.
- For the hours council and school committee spend, their salary should be adjusted
- Newton does not need a paid professional perpetual self-serving political class. Members of the community should serve for short periods of time. A stipend is appropriate to cover expenses incurred while serving , such as transportation, supplies, etc.
- City Counselors should get a raise. It appears they put in a huge amount of work and have a large responsibility to shape the city for years to come. Grossly underpaid
- I believe elected officials should receive reasonable compensation. For the mayor, compensation should be commensurate with the position. For school committee and city council, compensation should recognize the cost to those who serve but should not encourage members to turn these positions into "full time" jobs.