

Call for a Better Paid Mayor and Council in Orange Beach

800 words

Rauf Bolden, Orange Beach

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Council is imbued with a sense of entitlement, and does not have the passion or the desire to complete the transition to a modern-pay structure for elected officials. Orange Beach needs a 40 hour-per-week Mayor, being paid a salary of \$168,000 per year, compensating him or her for the effort required to run a \$40 Million dollar a year enterprise. Council Members should also be rewarded for their part-time work, proposing \$52,000 per year for each Council Person is realistic, being members of the Board of Directors of the same \$40 Million dollar a year company. These salaries must include family-health benefits, being paid for by the taxpayer.

Jumping into the vortex of social change requires courage, rewarding executives for time and effort spent invigorates the community. Coaxing Council into amending Ordinance No. 2016-1219, giving the 2020 group of elected officials real-world salaries is a decision that must be on the table. Actually pulling-the-trigger and compensating those in the front line for the responsibilities associated with managing a \$40 Million per year budget is another matter.

Today, the Mayor earns \$42,000 per year, the Mayor Pro-Tem gets \$16,557.36 per year, and each Council Member is paid \$13,401.18 per year, according to Public Records from the Clerk's Office at the City of Orange Beach. The Ordinance defining salaries (2016-1219) does not reflect a working wage, considering the liabilities elected officials assume as public servants.

Pay for municipal office has never balanced out the workload with the responsibilities. I propose Council finally right this wrong, changing the balance sheet, perhaps attracting more qualified candidates, and giving constituents more choice.

Planning for any wage increase requires Council to allocate funds for the next set of elected officials in 2020, being unable to give yourself a raise while still in office, per legal statute. Seeking legal opinions from the State of Alabama's Attorney General's Office is a long process. Starting now to build a case for change keeps us ahead of potential problems, providing the best chance to improve our candidate selection for the next election cycle, because the job will be worth the trouble.

The key issue is constituent mindset. In a geographic area where wages are traditionally low, commonly finding jobs at \$10 per hour is the norm, understanding the skill set the Mayor and Council have, enabling them to manage a city of 300 employees is not widely understood.

Skilled managers are needed, designing and permitting a City Bridge costing \$60 Million across Wolf Bay, breaking ground on a new Middle School and High School with city-financed Performing-Arts Center (\$4 Million), and athletic fields (\$4 Million). Taking

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this burden off of the shoulders of constituents is what government does, compensating officials by offering realistic salaries for the Mayor and Council positions is what the city needs, because our elected officials are doing the heavy lifting.

“Why should we pay the Mayor at all?” my neighbor asked. “He gets other perks with the job.”

“True,” I replied, “but free tickets to the Boat Show hardly make up for the time elected officials spend making our quality-of-life better, making our community safer, or improving the economic potential of our city.”

The Baldwin County Commission voted to increase the next group of Commissioners’ salaries from \$32K to \$65K, similarly comparing the Mobile County Commissioners get \$79K per year, according to FoxTV10, posted by Robbie Byrd.

I argue we should increase the salaries of Orange Beach’s Mayor and Council from \$42K and \$13K respectively to \$168K and \$52K for the next election cycle, attracting professional candidates with a broad-spectrum of experience from diverse-corporate backgrounds. When a Mayor and City Council stand unopposed in a general election, being the case in 2016, it is not good for democracy. So let’s pay our elected officials what the job is worth.

Jumping into the vortex of social change requires courage, rewarding executives for time and effort spent invigorates the community. Coaxing Council into amending Ordinance No. 2016-1219, giving the 2020 group of elected officials real-world salaries is a decision that must be on the table. Actually pulling-the-trigger and compensating those in the front line for the responsibilities associated with managing a \$40 Million per year budget is another matter.

ENDS.