



Ballot Measure E: Charter Amendment to increase Mayor/Council salaries

Position: NEUTRAL

Alameda's part-time mayor and council members have been earning a small stipend for decades. They are currently paid for at least two meetings a month. The mayor gets \$200 for each meeting. Councilmembers receive \$50 for each meeting. Both the mayor and the councilmembers also receive city benefits for healthcare insurance and other incidental costs, such as car and technology use.

A change in pay currently requires a charter amendment. Ballot Measure E, which was placed on the ballot by the mayor and members of the city council, would authorize the council to set their own salary, with future raises to be based on a formula not to exceed 30 percent of the median Bay Area annual salary. Today this would be approximately \$26,000 a year. It is unclear why this particular formula was chosen, rather than using an average of the salaries of their counterparts in other Bay Area cities or salaries of those who live in Alameda.

The ballot arguments in favor of the measure say that the current stipend is a barrier to civic engagement, pointing as evidence to a 2019 League of Women Voters' workshop on possible charter amendments. This misrepresents the opinions of most of the 55 workshop attendees who were NOT in favor of changing the salary structure, after learning for the first time that the positions were part-time under Alameda's city-manager form of government.

There are many barriers to serving in office besides compensation. The current stipend may not necessarily be a barrier for entering or staying in public office, as evidenced by those who repeatedly seek such office, or by others seeking unpaid appointments to boards and commissions. Some people do not have the time or energy required to do the job, and closed-session meetings often start at 5 p.m., which might conflict with some people's work schedules. Others do not want the burdens of running a campaign or the political mudslinging associated with campaigning or holding public office.

The ballot arguments in opposition to Measure E say the issue needs more discussion and an analysis of alternative formulas for a pay-increase before voters decide on this particular formula. They say this issue should be on the 2024 ballot, not this one.

PROS

- Replaces stipend with a meaningful salary
- Enables council salaries to increase with inflation

CONS

- Lower-cost alternatives were not thoroughly discussed or analyzed before this higher-cost alternative was placed on the ballot
- Fails to offer evidence that this pay increase will attract those of lower financial means to run for office

A pay raise for our elected officials is in order and would be a signal that we value their public service, but not necessarily one using this formula.