

Date December 22, 2025

**RESOLUTION ADOPTING A PREDICTABLE AND TRANSPARENT CITY COUNCIL  
COMPENSATION PROCESS FOR CONSIDERATION OF COMPENSATION  
CHANGES FOR THE POSITIONS OF MAYOR AND CITY COUNCIL MEMBERS IN  
THE FUTURE**

**WHEREAS**, the residents of Des Moines expect and deserve highly qualified candidates to serve as their elected leaders and competitive, fair, and responsibly managed compensation is essential to attracting and retaining capable public servants who reflect the full diversity and talent of the community; and

**WHEREAS**, adjustments to Council compensation have historically been sporadic and this irregularity has created inequities over time, undermined transparency, and created barriers to entry—mainly for residents who would otherwise consider public service; and

**WHEREAS**, to uphold good governance, ensure accountability, and eliminate ambiguity, the following Council Policy establishes a mandatory process for the routine review and consideration of compensation adjustments for the Mayor and City Council members, but does not require compensation adjustments other than as provided by law.

**NOW THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED** by the City Council of the City of Des Moines, Iowa, as follows:

That the attached Council Policy on Compensation is hereby adopted and City staff are directed to act in accordance with the policy and its directives going forward.

MOVED by \_\_\_\_\_ to adopt. Second by \_\_\_\_\_

FORM APPROVED:

/s/ Jeffrey D. Lester

Jeffrey D. Lester

City Attorney

COUNCIL ACTION	YEAS	NAYS	PASS	ABSENT
BOESEN				
SIMONSON				
VOSS				
COLEMAN				
WESTERGAARD				
MANDELBAUM				
GATTO				
TOTAL				
MOTION CARRIED		APPROVED		

**CERTIFICATE**

I, LAURA BAUMGARTNER, City Clerk of said City hereby certify that at a meeting of the City Council of said City of Des Moines, held on the above date, among other proceedings the above was adopted.

IN WITNESS WHEREOF, I have hereunto set my hand and affixed my seal the day and year first above written.

\_\_\_\_\_  
Mayor

\_\_\_\_\_  
City Clerk

**Proposed Council Compensation Action Policy**  
**City of Des Moines, Iowa**

Submitted by: Coleman

**Purpose and Intent**

*The residents of Des Moines expect and deserve highly qualified candidates to serve as their elected leaders. Competitive, fair, and responsibly managed compensation is essential to attracting and retaining capable public servants who reflect the full diversity and talent of our community.*

*Historically, adjustments to Council compensation have been irregular and often avoided because of the political discomfort associated with voting on one's own pay. This creates inequities over time, undermines transparency, and creates barriers to entry—particularly for residents who are navigating commitments to other jobs and would otherwise consider public service.*

*To uphold good governance, ensure accountability, and eliminate ambiguity, the following Council Policy establishes a mandatory process for the routine review and action on compensation adjustments for the Mayor and City Council members.*

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**Recitals**

**1. Fair and Competitive Compensation**

*The Mayor and City Council shall be paid fair compensation that reflects the responsibilities of their positions but shall not receive compensation increases that exceed the cumulative percentage adjustments awarded to the City's Senior Professional Management (SPM) employee group.*

**2. Mandatory Council Action**

*The Council shall **affirmatively act every two years**—either approving or denying the recommended adjustment. Failure to act is not permitted under this policy.*

**3. Predictable Timeline**

*Compensation adjustments shall be considered **in June of every even-numbered year**, prior to adoption of the new fiscal year budget, to ensure full transparency and predictable financial planning.*

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## **Council Policy: Compensation for Council and Mayor**

### **Required Administrative Actions**

To implement this policy, the following mandatory actions are directed:

#### **1. Responsibility and Role of the City Manager in this Council Policy**

1. The City Manager, or designee, shall calculate and certify the **cumulative SPM compensation percentage increase** awarded since the last approved adjustment to the Mayor and Council.
2. This certified percentage shall be transmitted to the City Clerk and the City Attorney no later than May 15 of each even-numbered year.
3. Neither the City Manager nor any City employee shall delay, remove, or otherwise obstruct placement of this Ordinance Amendment on a published agenda.

#### **2. Responsibilities and Role of the City Attorney in this Council Policy**

1. The City Attorney shall prepare the necessary Ordinance amendment and **roll call**, ensuring full compliance with Iowa Code and this Council Policy and this policy shall be considered direction from Council to prepare the Ordinance amendment every two years until this policy itself is revoked or amended.
2. The Ordinance amendment shall present two options:
  - i. **Approve** the Ordinance amendment to an adjustment equal to the cumulative SPM percentage, or
  - ii. **Deny** the Ordinance adjustment.
3. No additional options may be substituted, and the item shall not be tabled except by an affirmative vote of the Council.
4. Legal guidance shall be provided to ensure all procedural requirements are satisfied to avoid unnecessary legal risk or ambiguity.

#### **3. Responsibilities and Role of the City Clerk in this Council Policy**

1. The City Clerk shall add a **Council Action Item to Amend an Ordinance related to Council and Mayor Compensation** to the **first regular meeting agenda in June** of each even-numbered year.

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### **Benefits and Additional Provisions**

1. Benefits for the Mayor and City Council shall remain **directly tied to those provided to SPM employees**, unless otherwise modified by a separate Council action.
2. Any adjustments to non-SPM-linked benefits must be presented and voted upon **at the same June meeting** to ensure comprehensive transparency.
3. Nothing in this policy shall prevent the public from offering comment or input consistent with existing Council meeting procedures.
4. Finally, this policy ensures all residents are fully informed well before elections or candidate papers occur.

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### **Statement of Policy Significance**

This policy reaffirms the Council's commitment to transparency, fairness, and responsible governance. It eliminates the uncertainty and political hesitation that have historically hampered routine compensation reviews and ensures that all future adjustments—whether approved or denied—occur in full public view and under a predictable, equitable process.

By requiring action rather than avoidance, this policy strengthens trust, modernizes our governance practices, and ensures broad accessibility to public service for residents of all backgrounds.