

ORDINANCE NO. 1924-19

AN ORDINANCE ESTABLISHING THE SALARIES FOR CITY COUNCILMEMBERS

WHEREAS, it is necessary to establish the salaries for city councilmembers; and

WHEREAS, the city most recently established the salary for city councilmembers at \$500.00 per month; and

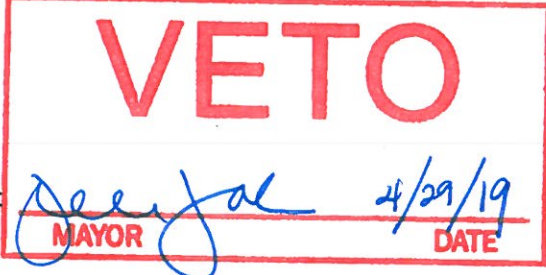
WHEREAS, the city council desires to increase the salary for city councilmembers;

NOW, THEREFORE, THE CITY COUNCIL OF THE CITY OF SEDRO-WOOLLEY, WASHINGTON, DO ORDAIN AS FOLLOWS:

Section 1. The annual salary for members of the Sedro-Woolley City Council shall be \$900 per month.

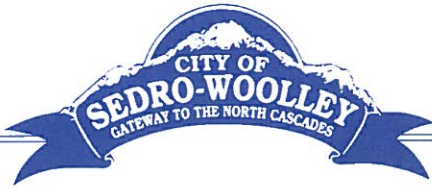
Section 2. Consistent with Article 11, section 8 of the state constitution which prohibits the increase or decrease of an elected official's salary after his or her election or during his or her term of office, the above depicted salary shall be in effect following each councilmember position's next election.

PASSED BY THE CITY COUNCIL AND APPROVED BY THE MAYOR THIS 24TH DAY OF APRIL, 2019.

ATTEST:  Julia Johnson, Mayor

Finance Director

City Attorney



CITY OF SEDRO-WOOLLEY
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Sedro-Woolley, WA 98284
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Julia Johnson
Mayor

April 29, 2019

Sedro-Woolley City Council
325 Metcalf Street
Sedro-Woolley, WA 98284

RE: Veto message, Ordinance 1924-19

Dear Councilmembers:

When faced with voting policy into law, the first question any elected official should ask: Is this in the best interest of our citizens? Based upon that question, I neither approve nor will I sign this ordinance into law; there are several reasons which I will detail in this message. Working with staff and past City Councils, we have endeavored to improve our community through the expansion of services, adoption of policies, and by providing budgets that support the delivery of high quality city services in Sedro-Woolley. This has not been an easy process trying to balance the tax burden on city residents while continuing to provide the services our community and citizens deserve. For example, at our April 3, 2019 meeting, we continued our discussion about hiring additional police officers. Much of that conversation focused on the costs and resulting tax increases to provide revenue needed to support the police department's mission. The decision to raise council pay, which had not been previously discussed, was made with little council discussion or struggle regarding the "how to pay" part of the conversation. This is disappointing, especially since we had met individually with each councilmember followed by a number of group discussions together as a council to discuss what budget items needed to be added to our 2019 Annual Budget. Any discussion of pay increase for the City Council members ought to have been brought up at that time. For me, given our long list of needs, this particular expense does not rise to the top of our priority list.

My specific concerns are:

- (1) Once fully implemented, this pay raise for city councilmembers will cost the city \$36,220.80 per year. Putting this amount into terms we recently used in discussions with the police officers, this increase is the equivalent of a property tax increase of 1.88%, or a utility tax increase of .57%.
- (2) The council, in debating and passing this ordinance, did not discuss how to pay for these costs. The 2019 Adopted Annual Budget does not include unbudgeted funds to cover these costs going into 2020 without either reductions in spending, increases in taxes, or dipping into our already tight cash reserves. Making this decision outside of the budget process sets us up for increased challenges this summer and fall as we

work to balance a 2020 Annual Budget that would spend an additional \$15,523.20 on city council pay. This additional cost is on top of the lost revenues from the recent closure of the Ford dealership, the cost of implementation of the next phase of the public works shop project, additional wastewater treatment plant projects, and the final phase of the salary market adjustments. There also needs to be consideration of the outcome of negotiations with the Sedro-Woolley Public Safety Guild and the newly forming IAFF local, assuming approval from PERC. All of this is in addition to the anticipated inflationary increases for general government operations.

- (3) The magnitude of the proposed pay raise is inconsistent with our past practices for all other positions and does not appear to be based on anything other than a councilmember's proposal. The approval of Ordinance 1924-19 appears to benefit those who made the decision and seems more self-serving than as an act of civic service, with virtually no feedback from the community. I believe serving as an elected official is a high honor and opportunity to make a significant and positive difference in our community. I choose to believe you feel the same. Based upon that, I would support a more modest pay increase which I will outline below, and hope at a minimum, will include a robust discussion at the dais.

When this ordinance returns to your agenda for reconsideration on May 8, 2019, I strongly encourage you to consider a more modest pay increase proposal. Until 2007, members of the city council were paid \$300/month for their first term and \$400/month for any subsequent terms. Beginning in 2008, council pay was increased to \$500/month. If we apply a similar cost of living adjustment that was applied to unrepresented staff and the mayor, from 2009-2019, then the council's pay would increase to \$589.73/month. This number seems to be more reasonable and in line with the comparables provided to you in the council packets on April 10th and April 24th.

I know that the job of city councilmember is changing and requiring more time as the city evolves and our city government grows more complex. I support the work you do and really want to find a path to agreement on this issue. It is important to me that you know that I do not use my veto authority lightly. For the reasons outlined above, I will not sign Ordinance 1924-19, as adopted on April 24, 2019. However, I hope the council will engage in a full and robust debate on May 8th, and if the super majority of councilmembers desire to increase their pay, I ask that you approve a more modest increase in line with the City's past practice for other positions.

If it were entirely up to me, and if I had a vote, I would stand with the minority on this issue, focusing all of our attention, instead, on achieving the City Council's 2019 Work Plan. This includes hiring more police officers and records staff, strengthening our parks department, developing a recreation division, hiring an additional engineer to support our public works projects, and addressing core functions of the city.

Sincerely,



Julia Johnson, Mayor