

**CITY OF BUFFALO**  
**Citizens Salary Review**  
**Commission**



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## Summary

The charge of the Citizens Salary Review Commission (CSRC), established pursuant to Section 18-19 of the Charter of the City of Buffalo, is to review and recommend appropriate compensation for elected officials of the City of Buffalo and for elected members of the Board of Education for the Buffalo Public Schools. Pursuant to Section 18-19 of the Charter of the City of Buffalo, the members of the 2019 Commission were appointed by the Board of Review, which consists of the Mayor, the Council President, and the Comptroller of the City of Buffalo: Mayor Byron W. Brown, Council President Darius G. Pridgen, and Acting Comptroller Vanessa A. Glushefski.

The CSRC last convened in 1998 and adjusted the salaries of the Mayor, Comptroller, Council President and the Common Council Members to their current levels. Since then, the CSRC had not reconvened until this year to examine the salaries of the aforementioned elected officials, more than twenty years later

For each meeting, public notices were filed with the City Clerk's office and meeting minutes are available at [buffalony.gov/csrc](http://buffalony.gov/csrc). On March 26, 2019, the CSRC held an organizational meeting where Brian Manley and Stephanie Saunders were elected Chair and Vice Chair respectively. The Commission members established the methodology they would use to evaluate the current level of compensation.

First, the Commission identified comparable cities relative to Buffalo's population and annual budget size. Then, the members directed staff to gather the following data from these cities: the salaries of elected officials, government structure, compensation and benefits, and official duties. Additionally, the members requested information on the salaries of each City of Buffalo elected official's staff members, as well as an analysis of the buying power of the salaries established in 1998 compared to today.

After carefully reviewing the data, the CSRC held a public forum on April 9, 2019. Council President Darius G. Pridgen and President Pro Tempore of the Common Council Christopher P. Scanlon testified on the role of the Buffalo Common Council in government and the responsibilities of the Council Members to their constituents.

The CSRC's final deliberations took place on April 16, 2019, and the Commission made the following recommendations:

- The Mayor shall have an annual salary of \$158,500.00
- The Comptroller shall have an annual salary of \$119,500.00
- The Council Members shall have an annual salary of \$75,000.00
- The Board of Education Members shall have an annual stipend of \$10,000.00

As per City Charter, the Common Council has until June 15, 2019, to approve, modify or reject the recommendations in this report.

## Background

The CSRC was formed to provide the City of Buffalo with a formal mechanism to research and recommend the salaries of City elected officials. The CSRC last convened in 1998 and since then, the salaries of the City of Buffalo's elected officials have not been reviewed or adjusted. As a result, the City's compensation for its elected municipal leaders has fallen significantly behind peer colleagues in similar cities in the state and region.

### Summary of CSRC 1998 Report

On July 15, 1998, the previous Commission filed their report with the Buffalo Common Council. They made the following determinations:

1. They would not review the salaries of the members of the Board of Education at that time.
2. Common Council Member is a full-time position.

Taking into consideration the obligation to attract and retain individuals with professional experience and talent, the salaries of elected officials in peer cities, and the fact that elected officials in Buffalo had not received a raise in nearly seven years, the CSRC recommended the following increases:

*Table 1 1998 CSRC Recommendations*

<b>Position</b>	<b>Salary Prior to 1998 CSRC Recommendation</b>	<b>1998 CSRC Salary Recommendation</b>
<b>Mayor</b>	\$ 79,380.00	\$ 105,000.00
<b>Comptroller</b>	\$ 73,868.00	\$ 88,412.00
<b>*Council President</b>	\$ 52,920.00	\$ 80,000.00
<b>Council Member</b>	\$ 41,895.00	\$ 52,000.00

*\*In 1998, Council President was an elected city-wide public office.*

## Statement of Purpose

The CSRC is charged with reviewing and recommending salaries for all elected City of Buffalo officials. The CSRC must submit said recommendations to the Buffalo Common Council by May 1, 2019.

All work of the commission will be guided and constrained by this charge.

## **Position Statement**

The CSRC will fulfill the charge to review and recommend salaries for all elected city officials. All other considerations are outside the scope of this Commission.

## **Commission Members**

**Brian Manley, Chair**, President and Chief Executive Officer of Imagine Staffing Technology.

**Stephanie A. Saunders, Vice-Chair**, Attorney and Principal Law Clerk, New York State Supreme Court.

**Maurice Brown**, Western New York Political Coordinator for SEIU, Local 1199, Board Member of the Coalition of Black Trade Unionists, the Coalition for Economic Justice and the Buffalo Peacemakers.

**Brian A. Gould**, Vice President of E3 Communications, Board Member of the Allentown Association, Trocaire College and the Buffalo Citizens Commission on Reapportionment.

**JoAnn C. Hernandez**, Operations Director at the Belle Center, Board Member of Boys & Girls Clubs of Buffalo.

**Martha N. Lamparelli**, Special Education Coordinator for the Buffalo Public Schools, Board Member of Buffalo Planning Board and UNYTS.

**Dr. Constance M. Moss**, Retired Associate Superintendent and Chief Information Officer for the Buffalo Public Schools.

**Sharon D. Randaccio**, President and Chief Executive Officer of Performance Management Partners, Board Member at Kaleida Health and Buffalo Niagara Partnership.

**Arthur Robinson**, President of the Seneca-Babcock Block Club, Board Member of Buffalo's Environmental Management Commission and Board of Block Clubs.

**Gladys Herndon-Hill, Ex-Officio**, City of Buffalo Commissioner of Human Resources.

## Data Analysis

The Citizens Salary Review Commission began by reviewing the salaries of elected officials in comparable peer-cities. They used a data driven approach to calculate their final recommendations. Members of the CSRC first worked to define a group of cities that are relatively comparable to Buffalo and can act as a baseline. Then, they requested data on budget size, population, and salaries of elected officials, as well as a description of the government and Board of Education structure of the similar cities. Commission members reviewed a list of the City of Buffalo staff titles with salaries and cost of living adjustments, as well as a Consumer Price Index Inflation Conversion for each of the elected offices since the 1998 CSRC report, and subsequent adjustment.

All data was collected through websites for each municipality as well through a phone survey.

### Defining Similar Cities

Rochester, Syracuse, Albany, Yonkers, Cleveland and Pittsburgh were identified as comparable peer cities. Four (4) of these cities are located within the State of New York, while Cleveland and Pittsburgh are out of state. The cities chosen were based on population, economy, geographic location, and relatively comparable scope of governmental responsibilities. All of the cities also have unique regional challenges, as well as opportunities, that are similar to the City of Buffalo.

### City Budget

An exact side-by-side comparison of different municipal budgets is not often possible because of different financial mechanisms employed to sustain governmental operations. However, the Commission was able to discern key information through the examination of the city budgets listed below:

*Table 2 City Budget Size*

<b>City</b>	<b>City Budget</b>
<b>Buffalo</b>	\$ 513,582,874.00
<b>Rochester</b>	\$ 539,646,900.00
<b>Syracuse</b>	\$ 286,216,253.00
<b>Albany</b>	\$ 176,968,136.00
<b>Yonkers</b>	\$ 575,193,734.00
<b>Cleveland</b>	\$ 624,359,797.00
<b>Pittsburgh</b>	\$ 574,901,207.00

The CSRC determined that the pay of elected officials in these cities, where fiscal responsibilities were proportionally the same, were significantly higher.

## School Budget

Similar to the municipal budgets, the CSRC looked to analyze each city's school budget. While not all boards of education in the sample receive compensation, they are all tasked with managing large budgets. The Buffalo Public Schools are independent and responsible for managing the largest budget as shown in *Table 3*:

*Table 3 School Budget Size*

City	School Budget
Buffalo	\$ 1,032,911,464.00
Rochester	\$ 778,585,229.00
Syracuse	\$ 432,305,130.00
Albany	\$ 249,400,000.00
Yonkers	\$ 615,616,354.00
Cleveland	\$ 749,000,000.00
Pittsburgh	\$ 650,000,000.00

## Population

An important function of an elected official's duties is to respond to and attempt to resolve constituent issues. Therefore, municipal populations have a direct impact on the scope of work and responsibilities of those officials. Again, many of the elected officials in comparable cities were paid significantly more than Buffalo:

*Table 4 City Population*

City	Population
Buffalo	258,612
Rochester	208,046
Syracuse	145,170
Albany	98,251
Yonkers	200,807
Cleveland	385,525
Pittsburgh	310,000

## Elected Government Structure

While many of these cities are similar in size, budget, and population, the structure of municipal governance is widely varied. Although all of the cities in the sample have a Mayor who is Chief Executive, not all have a separately elected comptroller (or other financial officer responsible for audits). Syracuse, Albany and Pittsburgh have similar offices to Buffalo’s Comptroller but with different titles.

Additionally, the legislative bodies of the peer-cities differ in size and representation. For example, the other New York State cities have a Council President elected as an at-large seat, whereas the City of Buffalo’s Common Council President is elected by the members of the Council.

*Table 6 Elected Government Structure*

City	Mayor	Comptroller	Council
<b>Buffalo</b>	Mayor	Comptroller	9 District Council Members
<b>Rochester</b>	Mayor	N/A	5 at Large, 4 District Council Members
<b>Syracuse</b>	Mayor	Auditor	4 at Large, 5 District Council Members, 1 President
<b>Albany</b>	Mayor	Chief City Auditor	15 District Councilmembers, 1 President
<b>Yonkers</b>	Mayor	N/A	6 District Council Members, 1 President
<b>Cleveland</b>	Mayor	N/A	17 District Council Members
<b>Pittsburgh</b>	Mayor	Controller	9 District Council Members

## Board of Education Structure

The CSRC observed a similar phenomenon when it examined the governance structure for the Boards of Education. The composition, the frequency of their meetings, and the duties and responsibilities of Board members was diverse. However, there was enough similarity for the Commission to feel confident in its analysis of BPS Board member salaries to make an informed recommendation.

*Table 7 Board of Education Structure*

City	Frequency of Board Meetings per Month	Frequency of Work Sessions / Committee Meetings per Month	Board Makeup
<b>Buffalo</b>	1	2	9 Members elected by electorate
<b>Rochester</b>	2	2 to 3	7 Members elected by electorate
<b>Syracuse</b>	1	2 to 3	7 Members elected by electorate
<b>Albany</b>	2	2 to 3	7 Members elected by electorate
<b>Yonkers</b>	1	2 to 3	9 Members appointed by Mayor
<b>Cleveland</b>	1	1	9 Members appointed by Mayor
<b>Pittsburgh</b>	1	1 to 2	9 Members elected by electorate

## Salary Comparison to Similar Cities

### *Mayor*

*Table 8* displays the salaries of all of the Mayors within the sample. The Mayor of the City of Buffalo has the lowest salary of the entire group despite serving a larger population than all of the cities in New York State.

*Table 8 Mayor Salary Comparison*

<b>City</b>	<b>Mayor Salary</b>
<b>Buffalo</b>	\$ 105,000.00
<b>Rochester</b>	\$ 145,837.00
<b>Syracuse</b>	\$ 115,000.00
<b>Albany</b>	\$ 135,403.00
<b>Yonkers</b>	\$ 156,099.00
<b>Cleveland</b>	\$ 140,888.56
<b>Pittsburgh</b>	\$ 114,080.00

### *Comptroller*

The Comptroller's office features less data points than the other offices do as some of the other cities do not have an elected office similar to that of the Comptroller of the City of Buffalo. However, *Table 9* illustrates that the Buffalo Comptroller is in the middle of the sample with Albany's Chief City Auditor having a larger salary and Syracuse's Auditor and Pittsburgh's Controller having lesser salaries.

*Table 9 Comptroller Salary Comparison*

<b>City</b>	<b>Comptroller / City Auditor Salary</b>
<b>Buffalo</b>	\$ 88,412.00
<b>Rochester</b>	N/A
<b>Syracuse</b>	\$ 53,101.00
<b>Albany</b>	\$ 98,483.00
<b>Yonkers</b>	N/A
<b>Cleveland</b>	N/A
<b>Pittsburgh</b>	\$ 75,395.00

## Common Council

The major distinction in *Table 10* is between part-time and full-time Council Members. The City of Buffalo Common Council, as well as the City Councils of Cleveland and Pittsburgh, are full-time, while all other Councils Members serve part-time. Of the full-time legislatures, Buffalo has the lowest salary.

*Table 10 Common Council Salary Comparison*

City	Council Member Salary
Buffalo	\$ 52,000.00
Rochester	\$ 34,994.00
Syracuse	\$ 21,224.00
Albany	\$ 20,720.00
Yonkers	\$ 48,000.00
Cleveland	\$ 80,133.36
Pittsburgh	\$ 68,066.00
<b>Note - Part-Time Legislatures Highlighted</b>	

## Board of Education

The Board Members for Albany and Pittsburgh receive no compensation for their service while only the President of the Yonkers Board of Education receives a \$15,000 annual stipend. Of the Boards that do receive compensation, Buffalo is tied with Cleveland for the lowest at \$5,000/year as displayed in *Table 11*.

*Table 11 Board of Education Stipend Comparison*

City	Board of Education Salary / Stipend
Buffalo	\$ 5,000.00
Rochester	\$ 27,033.00
Syracuse	\$ 7,500.00
Albany	N/A
*Yonkers	\$ 15,000.00
Cleveland	\$ 5,000.00
Pittsburgh	N/A
<b>*Note - Only the School Board President receives the stipend</b>	

## Internal Salary Equity

Internal equity is a proportionally equal distribution of pay between a principal (elected official) and their staff. As demonstrated in *Table 12, Table 13, and Table 14*, a greater sense of equity is warranted to bolster the public’s confidence that their elected officials are providing adequate leadership and supervision.

### *Mayor*

As illustrated in *Table 12*, there are more than twenty (20) budget titles within the Mayor’s Executive Departments who are appointed by the Mayor and receive a greater base salary than the Mayor. Not only are there a large number of higher earners, the highest earner makes \$36,841 more than the Mayor.

*Table 12 Executive Staff Salaries*

<b>Position</b>	<b>Annual Salary</b>
<b>Commissioner of Police</b>	\$ 141,841.00
<b>Commissioner of Administration, Finance, Policy &amp; Urban Affairs</b>	\$ 141,077.00
<b>Commissioner of Fire</b>	\$ 131,757.00
<b>Corporation Counsel</b>	\$ 127,345.00
<b>Deputy Commissioner of Police</b>	\$ 123,864.00
<b>Director of Budget, Finance and Administration</b>	\$ 122,400.00
<b>Deputy Finance Officer</b>	\$ 122,400.00
<b>Executive Director of the Mayor's Office of Strategic Planning</b>	\$ 122,038.00
<b>Deputy Mayor</b>	\$ 118,856.00
<b>Commissioner of Parking</b>	\$ 118,856.00
<b>Commissioner of the Department of Public Works</b>	\$ 118,856.00
<b>Deputy Commissioner of Fire</b>	\$ 115,743.00
<b>Police Chief</b>	\$ 113,623.00
<b>Commissioner of Assessment and Taxation</b>	\$ 110,345.00
<b>Commissioner of Permit &amp; Inspection Services</b>	\$ 110,345.00
<b>Commissioner of Human Resources</b>	\$ 110,345.00
<b>Commissioner of Community Services</b>	\$ 110,345.00
<b>Police Inspector</b>	\$ 110,254.00
<b>Director of Policy &amp; Legislation</b>	\$ 108,118.00
<b>Director of Policy &amp; Administration</b>	\$ 108,118.00
<b>Director of Communications and Intergovernmental Relations</b>	\$ 108,108.00
<b>Chief Diversity Officer</b>	\$ 108,108.00
<b>Director of Treasury &amp; Collections</b>	\$ 108,108.00

## Comptroller

Similar to the Mayor's office, the Comptroller has multiple staff appointees who earn a higher salary, including the Deputy Comptroller.

*Table 13 Comptroller Staff Salaries*

<b>Position</b>	<b>Annual Salary</b>
<b>Deputy Comptroller</b>	\$ 105,252.00
<b>City Accountant</b>	\$ 104,614.00
<b>Investment Debt Manager Officer</b>	\$ 104,614.00
<b>Executive Assistant to the Comptroller</b>	\$ 90,584.00

## Common Council

An important distinction for the salaries of the Common Council staff is that each Council Member has the discretion of which staff members are designated with each title. Currently, there are seven (7) people serving in the Senior Legislative Assistant position, as well five (5) serving as Senior Legislative Assistant II. The Chief of Council Staff and Senior Legislative Assistant IV are both held by one central staff member per position.

*Table 14 Common Council Staff Salaries*

<b>Position</b>	<b>Annual Salary</b>
<b>Chief of Council Staff</b>	\$ 70,989.00
<b>Senior Legislative Assistant IV</b>	\$ 65,073.00
<b>Senior Legislative Assistant II</b>	\$ 60,345.00
<b>Senior Legislative Assistant</b>	\$ 54,523.00

## Consumer Price Index

According to the United States Department of Labor Bureau of Labor Statistics, the Consumer Price Index is defined as a measure of the average change over time in the prices paid by urban consumers for a market basket of consumer goods and services. To calculate the values in *Table 15*, the CSRC used the CPI rate in July 1998, the date of the last CSRC, as well as the February 2019 rate, the last available data point at the time the data was requested.

*Table 15 Consumer Price Index Salary Inflation*

<b>Elected Office</b>	<b>1998 Buffalo Salary Set by Charter</b>	<b>2019 February Salary CPI Inflation Conversion</b>
<b>Mayor</b>	\$ 105,000.00	\$ 162,631.62
<b>Comptroller</b>	\$ 88,412.00	\$ 136,938.92
<b>Council Member</b>	\$ 52,000.00	\$ 80,541.37
<b>School Board Member</b>	\$ 5,000.00	\$ 7,744.36

## **Commission Rationale**

After reviewing the data, each member of the CSRC developed their own recommendations for the salary for each position. The Chair of the CSRC reviewed the recommendations before giving their own input at the April 16<sup>th</sup> meeting. During the meeting, each member had an opportunity to explain the methodology and reasoning they used to reach their conclusions. The most commonly cited reasons for an increase in salaries are listed below. None of the members of the Commission recommended that the salaries remain left at their current levels or decreased for the offices of Mayor, Comptroller and Council Member.

### Length of Time Since Salary Adjustments

The CSRC viewed the 21-year period between salary adjustments as one of the most relevant factors in their final recommendations. All employees of the City of Buffalo have received cost of living adjustments to their compensation while the City’s elected officials have not. The Commission concludes that this disparity is both inequitable and a potential hindrance to the City’s future progress. The CSRC cited diligence by other municipalities in providing market rate compensation to their elected officials throughout New York State and across the United States. All of the cities that were used for comparison purposes have reviewed and adjusted the compensation of their elected officials since 1998.

In order to fix this gap, the CSRC used the Consumer Price Index as a starting point. The CPI is typically used in contract negotiations between the City of Buffalo and their labor unions. While the final recommendations do not exactly mirror the CPI, the CSRC made it clear they wanted to right-size the gap while maintaining fiscal responsibility. The \$291,588 in recommended total salary adjustments for the City of Buffalo elected officials have less than a .06% impact on the City of Buffalo’s over \$500 million general budget and the \$45,000 in total stipend adjustments for the Board of Education would have a .004% impact on the Buffalo Public Schools’ \$1 billion budget.

## Improved Job Performance

Adequate compensation allows elected officials to meet the diverse and growing needs of their constituents without having to balance them against the demands of outside employment. This ensures that elected officials are focused on the needs of their community and can continue a career in elected public service, gaining much needed experience, institutional knowledge, and a greater understanding of how to address their constituents' needs.

Renee Bowen, an economist at Stanford, and Cecilia Mo, a political scientist at Vanderbilt, developed the concept of the Voter's Blunt Tool. They base their findings on the assumption that the only motivation for elected officials is re-election. The Voter's Blunt Tool finds that when elected officials are paid more, they are more invested in keeping their jobs, therefore more likely to pursue citizen-friendly policies. Bowen and Mo also argue that one of the best ways to limit corruption in government is to fairly compensate elected officials, thereby removing any perception that money is exchanged for influence.

## Attracting and Retaining Top Leadership in Public Service

Members of the CSRC and many throughout the community believe in the renaissance of the City of Buffalo. This would not have been possible without intelligent and talented leaders, who have acted decisively and helped lead the City to its current level of growth and stability. In order to attract the best possible candidates to serve, the salaries of elected offices must be fair and aligned with market value. Fair compensation will eliminate the need for incumbents to seek other offices at the County, State, and Federal level, solely based on financial need.

## **Recommendations**

The City of Buffalo's Citizens Salary Review Commission made the following recommendations by a majority vote in all categories:

- The Mayor shall have an annual salary of \$158,500.00
- The Comptroller shall have an annual salary of \$119,500.00
- The Council Members shall have an annual salary of \$75,000.00
- The Board of Education Members shall have an annual stipend of \$10,000.00

(Base salaries do not include benefits or per diems, etc. for any office)

As per the City Charter, the Common Council has until June 15, 2019, to approve, modify or reject this report.