



CITY OF CHARLESTON West Virginia



Council Member – AT-LARGE

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Planning, Streets and Traffic Committee, Vice Chair
Environment and Recycling Committee

AGENDA SELECT COMMITTEE ON THE SIZE AND ELECTION OF COUNCIL November 9, 2023 5:30 PM AV ROOM #308, CITY HALL 501 VIRGINIA ST. E.

1. APPROVAL OF PREVIOUS MINUTES

10-25-2023

2. UPDATES/DISCUSSION

Update from City Attorney Kevin Baker regarding data from the Municipal League concerning the size of other municipalities

Memo presentation from Councilmember Pepper concerning the size of other municipalities

Discussion regarding cost of Charleston City Council

Discussion regarding bipartisan elections

Updates from Committee Members

Next date to meet and potential topics for next meeting

3. ADJOURN

4. THE AGENDA WAS AMENDED ON 11-6-2023

JP/ns

*Meetings may be recorded and broadcast via internet <https://charlestonwv.civicclerk.com>

MINUTES

SELECT COMMITTEE ON SIZE AND ELECTION OF COUNCIL

THE MEETING WAS HELD IN THE AV ROOM #308 IN CITY HALL.

5:30 P. M., OCTOBER 25, 2023

Mayor Goodwin called the meeting of the Select Committee on Size and Election of Council to order at 5:30p.m., October 25, 2023.

Committee Members Present:

Mark Davis
Mary Beth Hoover
Sam Minardi
Chuck Overstreet
Emmett Pepper
Jennifer Pharr
Chad Robinson

Members Absent:

Jonathan Frazier
Karen Williams

Other Councilmember Present:

Joe Solomon
Beth Kerns
Chelsea Steelhammer

A roll call was taken, and it was determined that a quorum was present.

1. Welcome

Mayor Goodwin stated that the size of Council has been an ongoing conversation for at least the past 25 years. She expected the Committee to elect a Chair and Vice Chair, and to discuss what their goals should be. The members were selected because they represent a range of opinions on the subject.

City Attorney Kevin Baker added that Charleston has always had Wards, with a representative elected to those Wards. The size of Council has changed a lot during its history. In 1907, there was a Board of Affairs with 20 Councilmembers and a Board of Affairs, who essentially functioned as At-Large. Bills had to pass both elected bodies. That lasted about 8 years, but there has always been a combination of Ward Council and At-Large Council after that. There were 15 Wards in 1919, and 21 Wards by 2010 (6 At-Large). In 2014, Council eliminated one Ward.

Councilmember Minardi asked if there was a ballot initiative each time the size, etc. of Council was changed. Baker replied that to amend the Charter, there would be a bill and a public hearing. If no members of the public voiced their opposition at the public hearing, it would be a vote of Council. If there were opposition, the bill would be put on the ballot. There was not a ballot initiative in 2014, as it did not change the Charter.

Councilmember Pepper added that he would like for the members to introduce themselves and state their current position on the subject:

- Mark Davis stated that he has recently retired from City National Bank, and has served on several non-profit boards. He is currently thinking that Council is too large.
- Councilmember Pharr (At-Large) is currently thinking that Council is too large. Additionally, she wants to discuss term limits, attendance, etc.
- Councilmember Pepper (At-Large) is currently thinking that Council size should not change. He is interested in discussing attendance, etc. as well.
- Councilmember Minardi (Ward 15) is currently open to changing Council size. He is interested in discussing term limits and non-partisan races.
- Councilmember Robinson (Ward 20) is currently undecided.
- Councilmember Hoover (Ward 9) is currently undecided.
- Councilmember Overstreet (Ward 2) is currently thinking that Council size should not change. He is interested in At-large members being tied to a Ward or specific area. He wants to educate the public more on what Councilmembers do.

2. Election of Chairs

Davis inquired about the possibility of Co-Chairs. The Mayor replied that a Chair and Vice Chair that are on either side of the debate would be a good choice.

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Davis nominated Councilmember Pharr as Chair. Councilmember Minardi seconded.

Councilmember Overstreet recommended that one of those positions be a citizen. Councilmember Robinson agreed.

With the members present having voted unanimously in the affirmative, Councilmember Pharr was approved as Chair.

Councilmember Pepper added that he thought the Vice Chair should have an opposite opinion from the Chair, and that it should be one of the Ward Councilmembers.

Councilmember Minardi nominated Councilmember Overstreet as Vice Chair. Councilmember Papper seconded.

With the members present having voted unanimously in the affirmative, Councilmember Overstreet was approved as Vice Chair.

3. Discussion of goals for committee/Review of Resolution 561-21

Mayor Goodwin added that she has discussed Council size with other Mayors. She would be willing to do more specific research if the Committee found that helpful. Councilmember Overstreet added that he would like to know if those Councils had full time/had dedicated staff, and how they were paid (per meeting, etc.). Councilmember Pepper added that he would like to know how many people there are per Ward. Davis suggested that citizens be appointed to serve on Committees. Councilmember Pepper added that he would like to know if other cities have Boards with mandatory Councilmembers assigned to it (similar to the Spring Hill Cemetery Commission).

Councilmember Pharr asked if this sort of data could also be collected nationally from cities the size of Charleston. Councilmember Pepper added that he had done research on the subject. Charleston has the 7th largest Council size in the country (most of the largest are in New England). Mayor Goodwin added that the typical Council size in West Virginia is 6-11. Councilmember Pepper added those numbers are typical nationally as well.

Councilmember Pharr added that some of the goals that had already been stated were:

- Size
- Attendance
- Term limits
- Partisan
- Regional At-Large

Councilmember Pharr asked if there was a deadline for a possible ballot initiative. Baker replied that due to the requirements and deadlines of the County, the Committee would

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need to have everything ready by July for the November 2024 election. He added that a ballot initiative would not be needed to change the number of Wards as that is not specified in the Charter (the number of At-Large and the requirement of one Councilmember per Ward is). He added that the City would need the County to be willing to help with redistricting outside of the normal cycle.

Councilmember Pepper added that Resolution No. 561-21 required that the Committee report to Council by the end of the year. Baker replied that it didn't need to be a final report, but some sort of update.

Councilmember Pharr added that they should have listening sessions/public hearings for input. Councilmember Pepper added that he would like to have speakers from other cities, especially from those that have larger Councils. Councilmember Minardi added that they could also have speakers from cities that have recently reduced or increased their Council size.

From the audience, Councilmember Kerns added that she agreed with Councilmember Overstreet's suggestion that At-Large be associated to a specific region if the number were to remain the same. This would prevent the possibility that the majority of the At-Large Councilmembers be from the same area. From the audience, Councilmember Steelhammer agreed.

Councilmember Pharr stated that they will review the information and come up with questions/comments for the next meeting.

A member of the audience asked if this was something that had to be done. Councilmember Pharr answered that it was not. This is an opportunity to have a conversation openly about it to determine what is best for the City.

Councilmember Pharr added that the At-Large roles probably need to be discussed.

Councilmember Robinson added that the Committee needed to first decide to either move forward with the July deadline in mind, or to decide to take more time. They would also need to decide what the implementation date of any changes would be.

4. Discussion of future meetings dates

The Committee decided that it would be best for now not to have a standing meeting date. The Committee decided that the next meeting would be November 9, 2024, at 5:30.

Councilmember Minardi motioned to adjourn the meeting.
Meeting adjourned.

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Full Name	City Population	Council	Population per Council Member
Town of Anmoore	513	5	102.6
City of Hinton	2,245	4	561.25
Town of Hundred	255	5	51
City of Huntington	46,842	11	4258.363636
City of Hurricane	6,961	5	1392.2
Town of Huttonsville	163	5	32.6
Town of Iaeger	257	5	51.4
Town of Jane Lew	408	5	81.6
Town of Junior	384	5	76.8
City of Kenova	3,033	5	606.6
Town of Kermit	317	5	63.4
Town of Ansted	1,303	5	260.6
City of Keyser	4,864	6	810.6666667
City of Keystone	176	5	35.2
Town of Kimball	145	5	29
City of Kingwood	2,980	5	596
Town of Leon	137	5	27.4
Town of Lester	338	5	67.6
City of Lewisburg	3,922	5	784.4
Town of Lost Creek	359	5	71.8
Town of Lumberport	717	5	143.4
Town of Mabscott	1,341	5	268.2
Town of Athens	962	5	192.4
City of Madison	2,913	5	582.6
Town of Man	772	5	154.4
City of Mannington	1,952	5	390.4
Town of Marlinton	998	5	199.6
Town of Marmet	1,504	5	300.8
City Of Martinsburg	18,777	7	2682.428571
Town of Mason	866	5	173.2
Town of Masontown	510	5	102
Town of Matewan	412	5	82.4
City of McMechen	1,697	6	282.8333333
Town of Auburn	79	6	13.16666667
Town of Meadow Bridge	324	5	64.8
Town of Middlebourne	717	5	143.4
Town of Mill Creek	560	5	112
City of Milton	2,811	5	562.2
Town of Mitchell Heights	314	5	62.8
Town of Monongah	965	5	193
City of Montgomery	1,275	5	255
Town of Montrose	145	5	29
City of Moorefield	2,524	5	504.8
City of Morgantown	30,347	7	4335.285714
Town of Bancroft	387	5	77.4
City of Moundsville	8,093	7	1156.142857

City of Mt. Hope	1,125	5	225
City of Mullens	1,480	4	370
City of New Cumberland	1,020	6	170
Town of New Haven	1,476	5	295.2
City of New Martinsville	5,204	6	867.3333333
Town of Newburg	259	5	51.8
City of Nitro	6,624	7	946.2857143
Town of North Hills	834	5	166.8
Town of Northfork	231	5	46.2
Village of Barboursville	4,456	5	891.2
Town of Nutter Fort	1,493	5	298.6
City of Oak Hill	8,179	7	1168.428571
Town of Oakvale	133	5	26.6
Town of Oceana	1,449	5	289.8
City of Paden City	2,541	5	508.2
City of Parkersburg	29,738	9	3304.222222
City of Parsons	1,327	6	221.1666667
Town of Paw Paw	410	5	82
Town of Pax	136	5	27.2
City of Pennsboro	1,054	4	263.5
Town of Barrackville	1,201	5	240.2
City of Petersburg	2,284	5	456.8
City of Peterstown	448	5	89.6
City of Philippi	2,929	5	585.8
City of Piedmont	718	5	143.6
Town of Pine Grove	363	5	72.6
Town of Pineville	645	5	129
City of Pleasant Valley	3,498	7	499.7142857
Town of Poca	874	5	174.8
City of Point Pleasant	4,070	10	407
Town of Pratt	483	5	96.6
Town of Bath	753	5	150.6
City of Princeton	5,872	7	838.8571429
Town of Pullman	135	5	27
Town of Quinwood	222	5	44.4
Town of Rainelle	1,190	6	198.3333333
Corporation of Ranson	5,433	6	905.5
City of Ravenswood	3,865	5	773
Town of Reedsville	530	5	106
Town of Reedy	150	5	30
City of Richwood	1,660	7	237.1428571
Town of Ridgeley	591	5	118.2
Town of Bayard	201	5	40.2
City of Ripley	3,079	5	615.8
Town of Rivesville	828	5	165.6
Town of Romney	1,724	6	287.3333333
City of Ronceverte	1,572	5	314.4

Town of Rowlesburg	438	5	87.6
Town of Rupert	877	5	175.4
City of Salem	1,529	6	254.8333333
Town of Sand Fork	180	5	36
Corporation of Shepherdstown	1,531	5	306.2
City of Shinnston	2,328	7	332.5714286
City of Beckley	17,286	7	2469.428571
City of Sistersville	1,412	8	176.5
City of Smithers	754	5	150.8
Town of Smithfield	103	4	25.75
Town of Sophia	1,130	5	226
City of Spencer	2,063	5	412.6
City of St. Albans	10,861	12	905.0833333
City of St. Marys	1,831	6	305.1666667
Town of Star City	1,779	5	355.8
City of Stonewood	1,798	5	359.6
Village of Beech Bottom	553	6	92.16666667
City of Summersville	3,431	7	490.1428571
Town of Sutton	863	5	172.6
Town of Sylvester	171	5	34.2
Town of Terra Alta	1,415	5	283
City of Thomas	611	5	122.2
Town of Thurmond	5	3	1.666666667
Town of Triadelphia	669	6	111.5
Town of Tunnelton	296	5	59.2
Town of Union	419	5	83.8
Village of Valley Grove	275	7	39.28571429
City of Belington	1,805	8	225.625
City of Vienna	10,652	5	2130.4
City of War	623	5	124.6
Town of Wayne	1,443	5	288.6
City of Weirton	19,163	7	2737.571429
City of Welch	3,590	5	718
City of Wellsburg	2,450	8	306.25
Town of West Hamlin	524	5	104.8
Town of West Logan	399	5	79.8
Town of West Milford	449	5	89.8
Town of Belle	1,169	5	233.8
Town of West Union	653	5	130.6
City of Weston	3,952	4	988
City of Westover	3,955	6	659.1666667
City of Wheeling	27,052	6	4508.666667
Town of White Hall	597	5	119.4
City of White Sulphur Springs	1,806	5	361.2
Town of Whitesville	361	5	72.2
City of Williamson	3,083	4	770.75
City of Williamstown	2,997	4	749.25

Village of Windsor Heights	361	5	72.2
City of Belmont	875	5	175
City of Winfield	2,393	5	478.6
Town of Worthington	179	5	35.8
Town of Falling Spring	170	5	34
City of Benwood	1,252	7	178.8571429
Town of Bethany	781	5	156.2
Village of Bethlehem	2605	7	372.1428571
Town of Beverly	622	5	124.4
Town of Blacksville	118	6	19.66666667
City of Bluefield	9,658	5	1931.6
City of Dunbar	7,480	8	935
Town of Wardensville	269	5	53.8
City of Logan	1,439	5	287.8
Town of Bolivar	1,036	5	207.2
City of South Charleston	13,647	8	1705.875
Town of West Liberty	1,454	5	290.8
Town of Bradshaw	207	5	41.4
Town of Bramwell	276	5	55.2
Town of Brandonville	129	5	25.8
City of Bridgeport	9,336	7	1333.714286
Town of Bruceton Mills	63	5	12.6
City of Buckhannon	5,186	5	1037.2
Town of Buffalo	1,211	5	242.2
Town of Burnsville	394	5	78.8
Town of Cairo	176	5	35.2
Town of Camden-On-Gauley	126	5	25.2
City of Cameron	861	6	143.5
Town of Capon Bridge	420	5	84
Town of Carpendale	860	5	172
Town of Cedar Grove	718	5	143.6
Town of Ceredo	1,408	5	281.6
Town of Chapmanville	1,020	5	204
City of Charles Town	6,534	8	816.75
City of Charleston	48,864	26	1879.384615
Town of Chesapeake	1,335	7	190.7142857
City of Chester	2208	5	441.6
City of Clarksburg	16,061	7	2294.428571
Town of Clay	396	5	79.2
Village of Clearview	472	6	78.66666667
Town of Clendenin	854	5	170.8
Town of Coalton	189	5	37.8
Town of Cowen	487	5	97.4
Town of Danville	672	6	112
Town of Davis	600	6	100
Town of Davy	209	5	41.8
Town of Addison	731	5	146.2

Town of Delbarton	422	5	84.4
Town of Durbin	231	5	46.2
Town of East Bank	822	6	137
Town of Eleanor	1,542	5	308.4
Town of Elizabeth	724	6	120.6666667
Town of Elk Garden	212	5	42.4
City of Elkins	6,934	10	693.4
Town of Ellenboro	221	5	44.2
City of Fairmont	18,416	9	2046.222222
Town of Fairview	373	5	74.6
Town of Albright	249	5	49.8
Town of Farmington	392	6	65.33333333
Town of Fayetteville	2,887	5	577.4
Town of Flatwoods	264	5	52.8
Town of Flemington	309	6	51.5
City of Follansbee	2848	6	474.6666667
Town of Fort Gay	675	5	135
Town of Franklin	495	5	99
Town of Friendly	101	5	20.2
Town of Gary	773	5	154.6
Town of Gassaway	759	5	151.8
Town of Alderson	975	5	195
Town of Gauley Bridge	553	5	110.6
Town of Gilbert	333	5	66.6
Town of Glasgow	703	5	140.6
City of Glen Dale	1,496	5	299.2
City of Glenville	1,129	5	225.8
City of Grafton	4,722	5	944.4
Town of Grant Town	685	5	137
Town of Grantsville	494	5	98.8
Town of Granville	1,355	5	271
Town of Hambleton	218	5	43.6
Town of Anawalt	165	5	33
Town of Hamlin	1,039	5	207.8
Town of Handley	223	5	44.6
Town of Harman	95	5	19
Corporation of Harpers Ferry	269	6	44.83333333
Town of Harrisville	1,631	5	326.2
Town of Hartford	503	5	100.6
Town of Hedgesville	300	5	60
Town of Henderson	228	5	45.6
Town of Hendricks	228	5	45.6
Town of Hillsboro	232	5	46.4

Note

(Mayor elected from the body)

(five seated as council, two elected from body as Mayor and Recorder)

(Mayor elected from the body)



CITY OF CHARLESTON WEST VIRGINIA

COUNCILMEMBER – AT LARGE



Emmett Pepper
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Environment and Recycling Committee
Ordinance and Rules Committee

TO: Select Committee on the Size and Election of Council, Mayor Goodwin, Chief Sutton, City Attorney Baker, City Manager Mishoe, City Clerk's Office

FROM: Emmett Pepper, Councilmember

DATE: November 6, 2023

SUBJECT: **Survey of U.S. city councils in cities with a population of 25,000 or more.**

I. Background

In preparation for the City Council Size and Election Committee meeting, I took the time to briefly look through the websites of every city or town in the country with a population of 25,000 or more. Chair Pharr asked me to pass along what I found, so I created this summary of my findings. My main focus was to try to get a general sense of what other cities around the country are doing regarding the structure of their city council.¹

II. Council size

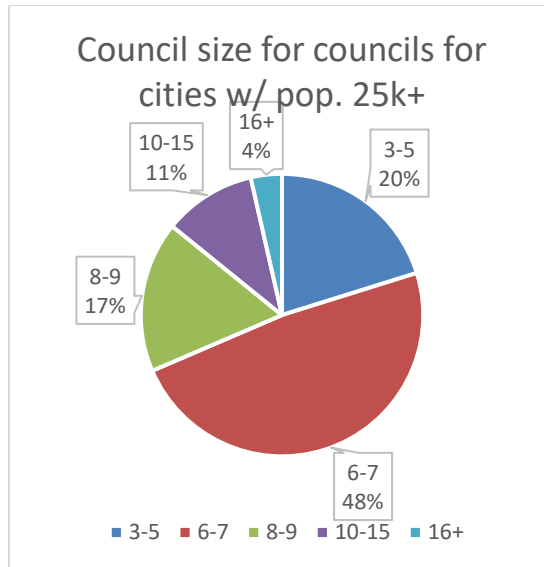
There is no question that the City of Charleston has a large city council, compared to others in the U.S. In a survey of cities across the nation above 25,000 population, 85% of all cities have a city council of less than 10 members², as exhibited by the chart below:

¹ I created a fairly messy working document where I took fragmented notes and crunched numbers, in order to create this report and to speak about my research at our meetings. The working document is a predecessor draft of this report to the committee and supplements my own memory and recollection from reading through the websites.

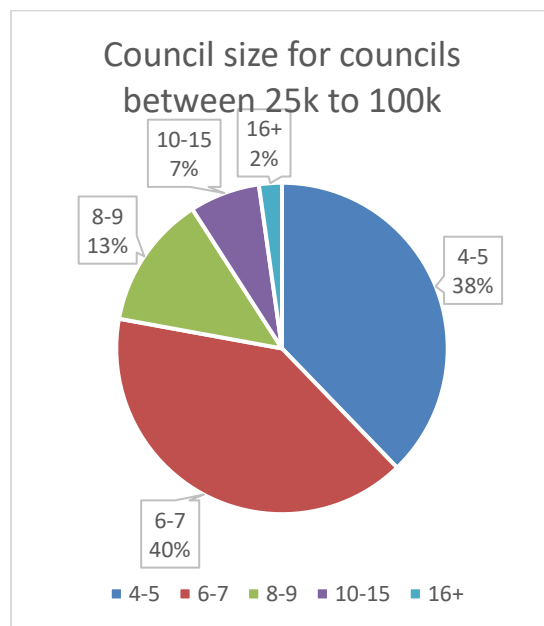
I think that this broader report is more appropriate than emailing the Excel, because I would need to put a bit more time nailing down specifics, if I wanted to provide more granular details. In other words, this is not an exhaustive survey. But I am confident that the overarching trends and broad points that are included in this document are accurate.

Many websites were not clear about how members are elected, but many were not. One extreme example is the Village of Kiryas Joel, NY. I was unable to determine the governance of that village at all. I assume I could have found out through some digging, but it did not seem to be a good use of time to be researching those details. My methodology is described in further detail at the end of this report.

² One aspect that I did not get to fully research was state laws regarding council size. For example, I noticed that nearly all (~85%) of the 260 cities in California with populations between 25,000 and 250,000 have city councils with exactly 5 members (including mayor), which leads me to believe that there is some sort of policy in place that either greatly incentivizes or requires them to be that size, but I was unable to identify what that policy was in the time that I had. I did find a statute that said that



Just looking at councils for cities with populations similar to Charleston’s doesn’t yield significantly different results. For cities with populations between 25,000 and 100,000, about the same percentage, 91%, have fewer than 10 members of council:



So, it is clear that we are not similar to most other cities in this regard. The question, though, is whether that is a good or bad thing for our city and its residents. If there are perceived shortcomings that come from this, we should be clear about what those are and whether the best and most effective way to address them is by reducing the number of decisionmakers that our citizens elect, or some other way.

councils in California needed to be of “at least five members,” but nothing mandating they be exactly that amount. CA Govt Code § 36501(a) (2022).

A. What are the largest city councils in the U.S.?

Establishing that we are definitely in the top 4% of councils in the U.S., how do we rank? It’s a more difficult question than one might think.

For municipalities that have governing bodies they call councils, we rank tied for 7th:

<u>Municipality name</u>	<u>Pop.</u>	<u># of mems</u>	<u>Pop./mem.</u>
1. New York, New York	8,804,190	51	172,631
2. Chicago, Illinois	2,746,388	50	54,928
4. Nashville-Davidson, Tennessee	689,447	40	17,236
4. Stamford, Connecticut	135,470	40	3,387
5. New Haven, Connecticut	134,023	30	4,467
7. Louisville/Jefferson County, Kentucky	386,884	26	14,880
7. Charleston, West Virginia	48,864	26	1,879

However, that does not tell the full story, due to the tradition of town meetings in New England. For centuries, many towns in New England had an annual meeting when every voter in the town could come to a certain location and vote on the policies of the town. To this day, that method of governance is in use in many towns in Maine, New Hampshire, Massachusetts, and perhaps other states. Over time, the town meeting method had morphed in some places into a Representative Town Meeting (RTM), where there are large numbers of individuals who are selected by voters to represent them in the policies voted on. These tend to have between 100 and 400 members in each town, sometimes regardless of population, though some have between 30 and 50 members. For populations of 25,000 to 100,000, here are the RTMs that I found³:

<u>Municipality name</u>	<u>Population</u>	<u># of members</u>	<u>Population/member</u>
Belmont, Massachusetts	27295	297	92
Brookline, Massachusetts	63191	281	225
Milton, Massachusetts	28630	279	103
Norwood, Massachusetts	31611	266	119
Milford, Massachusetts	26971	260	104
Needham, Massachusetts	32091	254	126
Arlington, Massachusetts	46308	252	184
Falmouth, Massachusetts	32517	244	133
Billerica, Massachusetts	42119	240	175
Shrewsbury, Massachusetts	38325	240	160

³ Some of these were difficult to nail down in terms of the actual size, given that there are some members that are culled from local government, and sometimes there were vacant seats. I did my best, however, and I think these are all certainly very close to the correct numbers.

Wellesley, Massachusetts	29550	240	123
Greenwich, Connecticut	63518	230	276
Reading, Massachusetts	25518	192	133
Lexington, Massachusetts	34454	189	182
Natick, Massachusetts	37006	180	206
Stoughton, Massachusetts	29268	168	174
Chelmsford, Massachusetts	36392	165	221
Plymouth, Massachusetts	61217	162	378
Walpole, Massachusetts	26383	152	174
Danvers, Massachusetts	28087	149	189
Burlington, Massachusetts	26377	126	209
Fairfield, Connecticut	61512	40	1538
Westport, Connecticut	27141	36	754
Branford, Connecticut	28273	30	942

However, many of these RTMs function more similarly to how the town meetings previously operated. They meet once a year or maybe three times a year. Sometimes these “meetings” are spread out over several evenings. So, while we meet about 25 evenings each year as a full council in Charleston, many of the above meet between 1 and 9 evenings each year. To me, that is not really the same as a city council, and it isn’t fair to compare it as such. Additionally, some of the RTMs have limited scope as to what they can do, such as only repealing or amending laws already established, approving a submitted budget, etc.

But some of these RTMs meet monthly and are the primary body that establishes laws for their municipality. In my view, those RTMs should be counted as being comparable to a city council, as apples-to-apples. Including just those RTM municipalities, and the city councils that are larger than ours, I think the best ranking is as follows:

<u>Municipality name</u>	<u>Population</u>	<u># of mems</u>	<u>Population/member</u>
1. Brookline, Massachusetts	63,191	281	225
2. Greenwich, Connecticut	63,518	230	276
3. New York, New York	8,804,190	51	172,631
4. Chicago, Illinois	2,746,388	50	54,928
5. Groton, Connecticut	38,411	45	854
8. Nashville-Davidson, Tennessee	689,447	40	17,236
8. Stamford, Connecticut	135,470	40	3,387
8. Fairfield, Connecticut	61,512	40	1,538
9. Westport, Connecticut	27,141	36	754
11. New Haven, Connecticut	134,023	30	4,467
11. Branford, Connecticut	28,273	30	942
13. Louisville/Jefferson County, Kentucky	386,884	26	14,880
13. Charleston, West Virginia	48,864	26	1,879

Again, there is no question that we are among the largest municipal policy-making bodies in the country. Most of those larger bodies are for municipalities with populations larger than ours, but some are not. Either way, the question is not whether we have a large council, it is whether that serves us and how our governance structure can best serve our citizens.

B. Population per Councilmember

An obvious metric for assessing the accessibility of council members would be the amount of population per councilmember. Given that council sizes are essentially the same throughout the country, regardless of population, it should be no surprise that population per ward is mostly simply a function of population. The table below shows the average population per councilmember for various population ranges:

Population range	Average population per councilmember
750,000+	116,029
500,000 – 749,999	69,428
250,000 – 499,999	44,269
100,000 – 249,999	23,482
25,000 – 99,999	8,077

This means that the larger the city, the less accessible members of its council are.

Some cities have recognized this lack of accessibility as an issue and taken actions to formalize methods to improve citizen engagement. These cities have created boards or commissions that allow more direct accountability to city government. For example:

- Washington, DC, has 53,000 people per member of their city council, but for 50 years have had Advisory Neighborhood Commissions (ANCs). There are 46 Commissions, with 345 commissioners in total. Each commissioner represents a single-member district that, by law, has a population of about 2,000. The ANCs have formalized power, and the city government has to give credence to the input from the ANCs.
- Portland, OR, has 163,000 residents per councilmember, but has created 94 official “Neighborhood Associations” that have formalized power and must be given notice of upcoming council actions.
- Helena, MT, has 8,000 residents per councilmember, but also has an elected 28-member Citizens Council (4 members per 7 wards; ~1,150 residents per member). The Citizens Council meets monthly to make recommendations for policies and budget items.

While these citizen boards are not common in West Virginia, it is quite common to have small numbers of residents per councilmember. All of the municipalities in Kanawha County have fewer people per councilmember than Charleston:

<u>Municipality</u>	<u>Population</u>	<u># of members</u>	<u>Population per member</u>
Charleston	48,864	26	1879
South Charleston	13,639	8	1705
Nitro	6,618	7	945
Dunbar	7479	8	935
St. Albans	10,861	12	905
Montgomery	1,280	4	320
Marmet	1,501	5	300

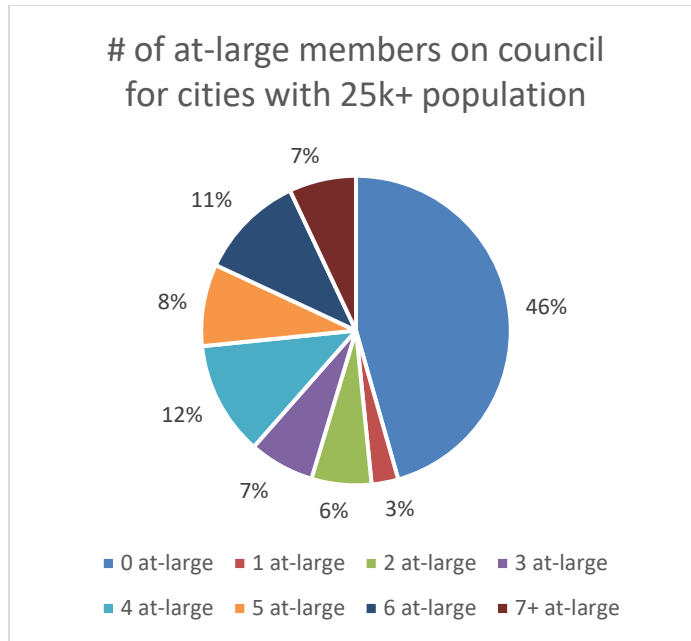
While Charleston does not need to do what other cities do, it is not out of the ordinary to have 1,500 to 2,000 residents per councilmember (or fewer) in West Virginia. Cities with larger numbers per councilmember are the exception, not the rule, due to the fact that most city councils are about the same size regardless of population.

III. At-Large versus Wards

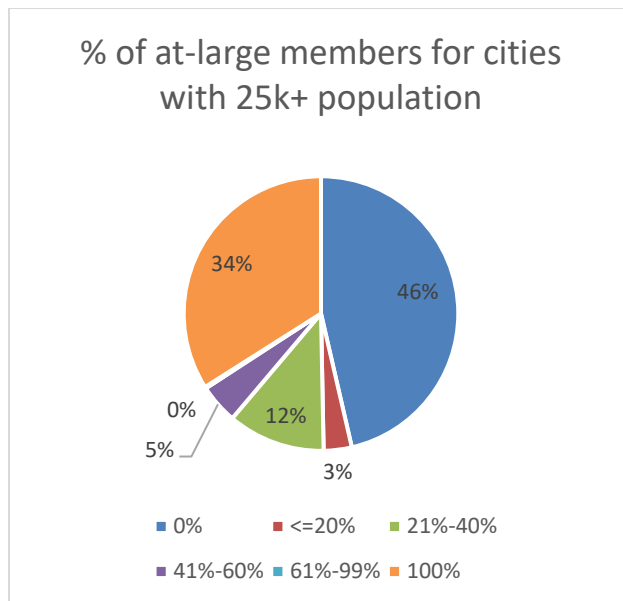
The question of at-large members versus ward members is interesting and has already arisen in the first meeting of the Committee. There is a wide variety of approaches that cities have taken to that aspect of council structure.

A. At-Large versus Wards: The Numbers

Nearly half of the city councils I surveyed have no at-large ward members, only utilizing ward-based representation, but most do have at least some number of at-large members. Remember, nearly all of these cities have fewer than 10 members of council:

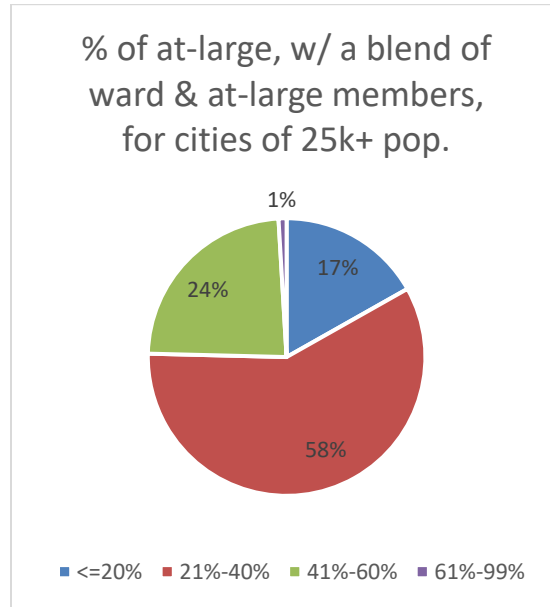


But there are many city councils that are all elected at-large, with various numbers of members. Occasionally those councils have residency requirements within certain areas (Morgantown does that, for example), but I believe that most do not do so. The chart below, which shows the percentage of at-large members on council, demonstrates that about 80% of councils are either all elected at-large or all elected from wards:



Again, since most councils are smaller than 10, I do think there is some logic to those cities having one method of election, since having different voting methods for different members may seem overly complicated when you're just talking about a few members.

Focusing on the councils where they have a blend of at-large and ward-based members, it seems that councils that have a blend of ward-based and at-large members, like we do, usually find the 21-40% range to be a sweet spot. Twenty-three percent (23%) of councilmembers in Charleston are at-large, so we are on the lower end of that range.



Again, while I don't think we necessarily need to follow what other cities have done, there may be some logic to 20-40% of Council being elected at-large, especially for a council our size. It requires some members to have a broader view than the hyperlocal representation that ward representatives have. The at-large members have to consider the needs and desires of the entire city, not just their specific neighborhoods. While most of the power should lie in the collective wisdom of local ward-based members, having some at-large members emphasizes a city-wide, broader perspective.

B. At-Large versus Wards: Different Ways of Structuring

There are a surprising number of ways that at-large members can be elected. In looking at various council websites around the country, I found that people do things different ways, which I tried to capture here, for the committee's consideration.

1. Residency requirements

Sometimes, individuals can be elected at-large, but are required to live in a certain location, which can be based on ward – where everyone in the city votes for all of the members of council, but people run for each ward.⁴ That is how Morgantown does it, with seven wards, all elected at-large. Some places will put a requirement that no more than x number of individuals will come from a certain area. Our school board is elected that way, with no more than two members being

⁴ Morgantown, WV, and Cape Coral, FL do this, with all seven wards members elected at-large, from people who live in one of each of the wards. Plano, TX, also does this with 2 members from each of 4 wards, but all are elected at-large. DeSoto, TX, has 6 districts, with people elected at-large.

allowed to come from the same magisterial district; there are five board members, but only four magisterial districts. As discussed below, a few places have multiple members per ward, with some elected at-large and some elected from within the ward.

2. Multi-member wards

Several cities have smaller numbers of wards, but 2 or 3 members elected from each ward.⁵ At least one even has one ward member elected by ward residents and one ward member elected from the entire city, at-large, making the multi-member ward partially at-large, partially ward-based.⁶

3. “Super wards” or “super districts”

Some cities will combine wards and allow people to elect someone from the combined districts, which they sometimes call “super wards” or “super districts.”⁷ Those are, I think, normally

⁵ A (likely) non-comprehensive list of cities with combined wards :

8 wards, 2 members each: Wauwautosa WI, Belleville, IL, and Wildwood, MO,

7 wards, 2 members each: Danbury, CT (+ 7 at-large); Elmhurst, Danville, Quincy, and West Chicago, IL.

5 wards, 3 members each: Waterbury and East Haven, CT

6 wards, 2 members each: Overland Park, KS, Missoula, MT, Hendersonville, TN, and Rochester, NH

5 wards, 2 members each: New Britain, CT (+5 at-large); Amherst, MA (+3 at-large); Broomfield and Lakewood, CO; Ann Arbor, MI; Billings, MT; East Orange, NJ; West Allis, WI; Roswell, NM; Jefferson City and Raytown, MO; Benton and Jacksonville, AR; O’Fallon, Belvidere, and Granite City, IL; Ithaca, NY; and Homewood, AL

3 wards, 3 members each: Cheyenne, Laramie, and Casper, WY; Neenah, WI; and Rome, GA;

4 wards, 2 members each: Meriden, CT (+ 4 at-large); Dover, DE (+1 at-large); Carlsbad, Clovis and Santa Fe, NM; Medford, OR; Bentonville, Conway, North Little Rock, Sherwood, Springdale and Rogers, AR; Brighton, Loveland, Northglenn, and Wheat Ridge, CO; Chesterfield, Liberty, Maryland Heights, and St. Peters, MO; Derby, Lanexa, and Leawood, KS; Spring Hill, TN; Moorhead, MN; Kearny, NJ; Shelton, CT; Grants Pass, OR; Ballwin, De Pere, Fitchburg, and Sun Prairie, WI; College Park, MD; Aberdeen, SD; Winchester, VA; Anderson, SC; and Muskogee, OK; and Victoria, TX (+ 2 “super district” members)

3 wards, 2 members each: Mount Vernon, Pullman, Puyallup and Spokane Valley, WA; and Austin, MN (+1 at-large); Albany, Hillsboro, and McMinnville, OR; Moore, OK; Bristol, CT; Blue Springs and Grandview, MO; University City and Wentzville, MO; Milton, Newnan, and Tucker, GA; Gillette, WY; Bella Vista, AR; and Walker, MI.

2 wards, 3 members each: Juneau, AK; Spokane, WA; Blaine, MN; LaGrange, GA;

2 wards, 2 members each: Canton, GA, Laurel, MD (+ 1 at-large)

⁶ Kansas City, MO, has this, with 6 wards, with 2 members each. One of the members is elected only by the ward residents and one is elected by the full city. So each voter would vote for 7 people each election.

⁷ Burlington, VT, has 8 wards, with “districts” that are comprised of 2 wards each. Instead of numbers, they give descriptive names for the districts: North, Central, East, and South.

We could do something similar with Kanawha City, South Hills, West Side, and East End/Downtown, if we wanted to, either as a “super ward” or as a residency requirement for at-large.

Victoria, TX, similarly has 4 wards, with 2 “super districts” containing 2 wards each.

Norfolk, VA, has five wards, with two “super wards” that are not coterminous with the wards, in fact, only one ward is completely contained within one of the super wards.

elected only from within the super wards/districts, but could also be elected at-large with residency requirements based on some larger districts or wards.

4. At-large “seats” versus cumulative voting

One election detail that I think we definitely get right in Charleston is using cumulative voting rather than “seats” for at-large members. Cumulative voting refers to how the top six candidates with the most votes for the at-large positions win and are elected to the council.⁸ By contrast, a “seats” system is where at-large candidates have to choose a specific “at-large seat” that they are running for.⁹ Running for a specific seat makes it harder to have a diversity of candidates to win, because it is a binary choice for each seat, instead of a situation where all candidate compete against all others,¹⁰ plus I believe it is overly complicated for voters and candidates. In my review of cities, I noticed that Texas had a fair amount of all seat-based at-large councils, though I did not track or compile statistics about that.

IV. Conclusion

The City of Charleston very clearly has a larger council than others, but we are not alone in West Virginia in having small numbers of residents per member of council. There are also plenty of other councils around the country that have a blend of at-large members and district/ward-based members, though most councils are small and elect members by one method or the other. Ultimately, I believe we should not base our decisions on the lowest common denominator for how councils are structured. We should base it on what will best serve our citizens. I look forward to working collaboratively within this committee to determine what that is.

Memphis, TN, has seven wards, with a member elected from each ward, and 2 “super districts” with three members in each super district. The super district boundaries are also not coterminous with ward boundaries, with only one ward per super district that is fully contained within the super district.

⁸ This is how multi-member districts were also handled when the legislature had them in West Virginia.

⁹ This is how judicial races are handled in West Virginia, both the Supreme Court and Circuit Judge races.

¹⁰ When I lived in Westchester County, NY, I was aware of litigation over the Village of Port Chester’s at-large “seat” election system. This “seat” method of at-large elections in the Village of Port Chester, New York, was challenged in court by FairVote back in the early aughts. In Port Chester, there was (and still is, I think) a large population of Latino residents, but not a majority. The “seat” method of elections resulted in no Latinos ever winning an election for city council. FairVote, as I recall, wanted to have ward-based elections. However, the remedy was determined to be that a “cumulative” system, as opposed to the “seat” system, was a fairer result. After cumulative voting was adopted, the first Latino member of city council was elected. Here’s information about that from the Brennan Center: <https://www.brennancenter.org/our-work/court-cases/united-states-v-village-port-chester>.

Methodology

I downloaded a document from the U.S. Census Bureau that showed all municipalities and Census-Designated Places (CDPs) in the U.S. I sorted them into groups of population (<25,000, 25,000 to 100,000, and >100,000), and began the process of going through websites for the municipalities. Frustratingly, part of the way through the process, I found that some of the CDPs are actually incorporated towns, while most were simply areas that the Census Bureau had created. So I went back and looked at them to determine if they were incorporated or not and added in government information if any existed. In my experience, I know that the northern and northeastern states tend to have incorporated towns throughout the state.¹¹ I thought that some of the towns with populations of 25k+ were not in the spreadsheet. Since part of my goal was to figure out where we ranked nationally, I looked at municipalities (towns, cities, etc.) in the states that tended to have the largest governing bodies, such as Massachusetts and Connecticut. Some of the towns in those states were not listed as CDPs in the document I had, so I added them in if they were in the population range. But I did not do this for every state, and many other states have townships.¹² So, it is possible that there are other towns in states like Michigan, Ohio, Pennsylvania, New York, and others, that have a population greater than 25,000 that were not included in my survey. It is possible, but unlikely, that any of those councils are larger than Charleston's, but it is one squishy area with this data. Also, I am not 100% confident that I am using the exact correct number for population for all of these municipalities. The populations could be up or down a little, if you count estimates, etc. I thought I was using the 2020 census numbers, but it seems that there are various numbers that the Census Bureau uses and, rather than fret over a small change between the numbers, I figured it was better to just use the best numbers I could quickly find. As stated above, I am confident that the data presented here is within a margin of error that is acceptable and is useful for us, as we consider how we fit into the nation and what aspects of other cities' governance we should adopt, if any.

¹¹ NY, CT, MA, and others are carved up into towns – every area in the state is either in a town or city, with a town or city government. NY also has carved up the states into counties that overlay the towns, with county governments, but I know that CT does not have governments for its counties.

¹² I think it is somewhat fraught for the Census Bureau to make a distinction between cities and towns when the distinction between them is not consistent. Many towns are quite urban, while some cities have rural areas (including Charleston!). So I think that, for this exercise, it is fairer to simply count all incorporated municipalities the same way and sort/filter by population.



TO: Members of Select Committee on the Size and Election of Council

FROM: Andy Wood, Finance Director

DATE: November 8, 2023

RE: Cost of Charleston City Council

In FY 2024, the City has budgeted \$438,243 to pay for the cost of the 26 members of Charleston City Council. These costs are primarily for the salary and benefits of the members. In FY 2023 the actual expenses were \$411,463. The FY 2024 budget pages related to Council and a report of the FY 2023 actual expenses are enclosed with this memo.

The City budgets \$169,000 for City Council salaries. That equates to \$6,500 budgeted per City Council member in salary. Members are paid \$250 per City Council meeting they attend, so the actual amount spent will be less than that due to members missing meetings. The minimum number of meetings in a year is 25, as City Council meets twice a month for regular meetings and then there is a special meeting in April required by state code to lay the levy. The budgeted amount allows for 26 meetings to accommodate a special meeting, if required.

The matching benefits of FICA and PERS are based on the formulas established for the benefits, 7.65% and 9% of wages, respectively, and total \$28,139. Members have the option of joining PERS at the time they begin on Council. Currently 21 members are contributing to PERS. If a member elects to join PERS later and elects to include their time on City Council as service credit, the City and the member must each contribute the amounts that would have been matched during the time being retroactively applied for.

Medical, life, dental, vision, and workers comp insurance are allocated using the City-wide average for all 26 employees whether the benefits are elected by all members. Net of the employee insurance contribution, the budget is \$240,604 for FY 2024 for those benefits. For budgeting purposes, it is assumed that medical premiums are \$746 per employee per month and dental/vision premiums are \$41 per employee per month.

Currently 18 Council members are enrolled in medical benefits through PEIA – 12 are enrolled in Plan A and 6 in Plan C. Premiums for medical benefits provided by PEIA range from \$389 to \$1,384 per month depending on plan and policy tier. In addition, those 6 members that elect PEIA Plan C receive a contribution into a Health Savings Account in the amount of \$1,500 for single or \$3,000 for family plans.

Council members' employee insurance contribution is the same as active full-time employees and ranges from \$43 to \$227 per month depending on plan and policy tier. As a comparison, the elected members of the WV Legislature are not entitled to employee rates and have a separate premium table. Enclosed is a comparison of those tables.

There is a small budget (\$500) for Materials and Supplies to purchase items needed to conduct Council meetings like name plaques, business cards, and supplies.

Using the budgeted amounts, the cost for each individual Councilmember is \$16,856, primarily with the cost being benefits. A table and chart of those costs is enclosed.

Expenditure Status Report

City of Charleston
 7/1/2022 through 6/30/2023

001 GENERAL FUND

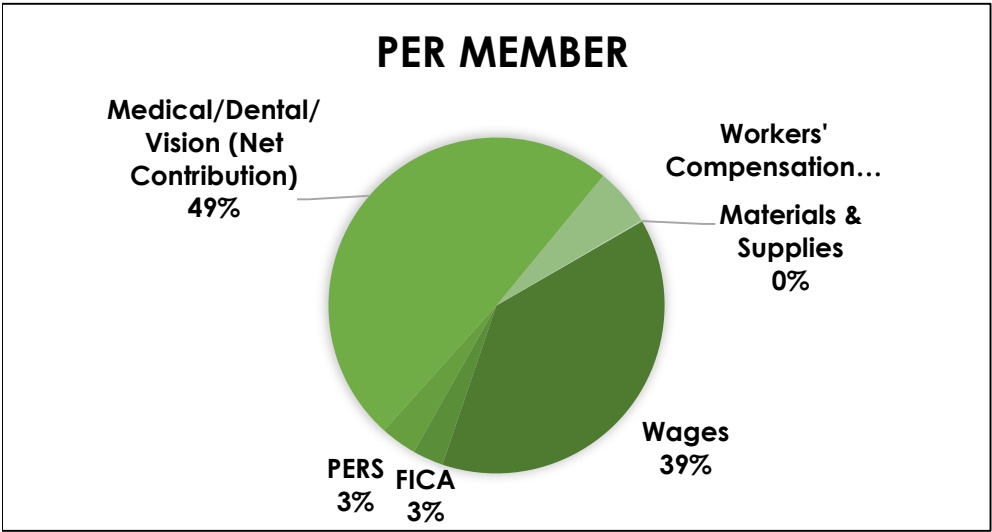
<u>Account Number</u>	<u>Adjusted Appropriation</u>	<u>Expenditures</u>	<u>Year-to-date Expenditures</u>	<u>Year-to-date Encumbrances</u>	<u>Balance</u>	<u>Prct Used</u>
410 CITY COUNCIL						
410-00 *** Title Not Found ***						
410-00-1 PERSONAL SERVICES						
410-00-000-1-101 SALARIES ELECTED OFFIC	169,000.00	153,867.50	153,867.50	0.00	15,132.50	91.05
410-00-000-1-104 FICA	12,929.00	11,669.23	11,669.23	0.00	1,259.77	90.26
410-00-000-1-105 MEDICAL & LIFE INSURAN	202,852.00	206,001.60	206,001.60	0.00	-3,149.60	101.55
410-00-000-1-106 RETIREMENT	15,210.00	11,252.70	11,252.70	0.00	3,957.30	73.98
410-00-000-1-111 DENTAL/OPTICAL INSURAN	13,598.00	12,036.09	12,036.09	0.00	1,561.91	88.51
410-00-000-1-112 INSURANCE-PAYROLL DED	-29,484.00	-52,833.52	-52,833.52	0.00	23,349.52	179.19
Total PERSONAL SERVICES	384,105.00	341,993.60	341,993.60	0.00	42,111.40	89.04
410-00-2 CONTRACTUAL						
410-00-000-2-214 TRAVEL	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00
410-00-000-2-219 BLDG AND EQUIP RENTS	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00
410-00-000-2-226 INSURANCE - WC AND UC	26,858.00	25,210.44	25,210.44	0.00	1,647.56	93.87
410-00-000-2-230 CONTRACTED SERVICES	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00
Total CONTRACTUAL	26,858.00	25,210.44	25,210.44	0.00	1,647.56	93.87
410-00-3 COMMODITIES						
410-00-000-3-341 MATERIALS & SUPPLIES	500.00	1,043.25	1,043.25	0.00	-543.25	208.65
Total COMMODITIES	500.00	1,043.25	1,043.25	0.00	-543.25	208.65
Total GENERAL FUND	411,463.00	368,247.29	368,247.29	0.00	43,215.71	89.50
Grand Total	411,463.00	368,247.29	368,247.29	0.00	43,215.71	89.50

**City of Charleston
Municipal Budget
Health Plan Premium Summary
Fiscal Year 2024**

	Active Employee Premium		State Elected Official Premium	
	PEIA Plan A		PEIA Plan A	
Monthly Premium	Standard	Non-Tobacco	Standard	Non-Tobacco
Employee Only	108.00	83.00	718.00	693.00
Employee + Children	200.00	150.00	970.00	920.00
Family	227.00	177.00	1,578.00	1,528.00
	PEIA Plan C		PEIA Plan C	
Monthly Premium	Standard	Non-Tobacco	Standard	Non-Tobacco
Employee Only	68.00	43.00	589.00	564.00
Employee + Children	103.00	53.00	820.00	770.00
Family	139.00	89.00	1,371.00	1,321.00

Disclaimer: This is a summary of the plan coverages. Any conflict between this table and the actual insurance policy, the policy provision will prevail.

Cost per Councilmember		
	Total Budget	Per Member
Wages	169,000	6,500
FICA	12,929	497
PERS	15,210	585
Medical/Dental/Vision (Net Contribution)	216,242	8,317
Workers' Compensation	24,362	937
Materials & Supplies	500	19
Total	438,243	16,856



**City of Charleston
Municipal Budget
FY 2024**

Fund 001 General Fund
Department 410 City Council
Unit 00 Administrative

Full Time Employees	26
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Expense Object	FY 2022 Actual	FY 2023 Original	FY 2023 YTD Amend.	FY 2023 Current	FY 2023 YTD Dec. Actual	FY 2024 Approved
Personal Services						
000-1-101 Elected Officials Salaries	146,390	169,000		169,000	64,055	169,000
000-1-104 FICA	11,006	12,929		12,929	4,842	12,929
000-1-105 Medical & Life Insurance	188,731	202,852		202,852	103,960	232,856
000-1-106 PERS	20,799	15,210		15,210	4,692	15,210
000-1-111 Dental & Optical Insurance	11,140	13,598		13,598	5,813	12,636
000-1-112 Employee Insurance Cont.	(49,775)	(29,484)		(29,484)	(23,576)	(29,250)
Total Personal Services	328,291	384,105	-	384,105	159,786	413,381
Contractual Services						
000-2-226 Insurance - WC & UC	17,283	26,858		26,858	9,768	24,362
Total Contractual Services	17,283	26,858	-	26,858	9,768	24,362
Commodities						
000-3-341 Materials & Supplies	208	500		500	55	500
Total Commodities	208	500	-	500	55	500
Total City Council	345,782	411,463	-	411,463	169,609	438,243

**City of Charleston
Municipal Budget
FY 2024**

Fund 001 General Fund
Department 410 City Council
Unit 00 Administrative

Authorized Full Time Positions & Salary Schedule

FY 2023 Current		
Title	FLSA/Paygrade	FTE
Council Member	E/002	26
Total		26

FY 2024 Approved		
Title	FLSA/Paygrade	FTE
Council Member	E/002	26
Total		26

FY 2023 Current		
Pay Type	Amount	
Elected Wages & Salaries	169,000	
Regular Wages & Salaries	-	
Irregular Part Time (IPT)	-	
Overtime	-	
Tool Allowance	-	
Total		169,000

FY 2024 Approved		
Pay Type	Amount	
Elected Wages & Salaries	169,000	
Regular Wages & Salaries	-	
Irregular Part Time (IPT)	-	
Overtime	-	
Tool Allowance	-	
Total		169,000

Projected Capital Equipment Acquisitions

Unit #	Equipment	FY 2024				FY 2025	FY 2026
		Direct Purchase	Lease Purchase	New Lease Payment	Total Lease Payment ¹	Estimate	Estimate
Total		-	-	-	-	-	

¹Total Lease Payment includes all payments from outstanding lease purchase cycles that will be paid in FY 2024.