



Monroe County Democratic Party

PO Box 92
Bloomington, IN 47402
812-272-3439
www.monroedems.org

David G. Henry, Chair
Shruti Rana, Vice Chair
Ashley Pirani, Secretary
Karen Wrenbeck, Treasurer

Cory Ray, Chief of Staff
Alex Workman, Assistant to the Chair
and Operations Director
Isabella Frieze, Social Media

Ed Robertson, Principal Deputy Chair
Susan Hingle, Deputy Chair, Special
Projects
Chrissie Geels, Deputy Chair, GOTV
and Precincts

26 August 2023

Mayor Hamilton and Members of the Common Council,

Today, I ask that the Mayor and Common Council consider the request of the City Clerk to adjust the salary of the City Clerk position to the same level as a departmental head in the City's budget. This letter comes not as a party statement, but the personal view of this chair. However, the values under consideration here are shared by many in our Democratic community.

Unique in municipal government, the independently elected City Clerk serves as both a role under Indiana Code and has departmental duties prescribed under local ordinance. As the position has evolved alongside the creation of new boards and commissions, it follows that the budget and position should be compensated to reflect the growth in staff, duties, and responsibilities to those and other obligations.

I do not write solely as the chair of our party, but also from experience. As a senior management fellow early in my career in the District of Columbia Government, I worked on the executive compensation for the mayor's appointees. In that instance, the mayor sought to compare a city of about 600,000 people against Chicago, New York and Los Angeles and compensate his leadership at the same level as those cities. The selection bias for certain data to fit the proposal was nakedly apparent. Our task was to find more appropriate measures for the city council - population and city class wasn't sufficient. CPI, Cost of Living, and whether our salaries would break the market or lag it should be well known metrics to you and the city's human resources department. Salary comparisons among comparable cities should also look into the code to compare duties unique to each jurisdiction. The intersection of those data with comparable cities should be the goal, and has been presented by the Clerk already for your consideration.

In making the case for adjusting the compensation of our own City Clerk, I fell back on this training and insight to inform my support for this proposed budget adjustment. Here are some basic observations that support the pay adjustment from my perspective:

The City Clerk's supervisory role is similar to several peer department heads with staff Legal, HR and Council itself. Those Departments have a staff in the range of 4-12 FTEs. In that sample alone, those positions earn approximately 50% more than the Clerk position. This is to say that as a department head of several employees, the Clerk lags the payband significantly.

Yet in the city's own budgeting of department heads, the number of FTEs per department doesn't seem to be a measure for salary, as Parks has 30 times the employees of the Controller's office yet has a similar payband. This is to say it seems that department heads enjoy a similar pay equity save two outliers - the City Clerk and Council Attorney.

Lastly, in preparing and negotiating a budget for her staff, the Clerk is performing departmental duties, and is de facto a department head while having the the singular experience of being elected into that role instead of appointed by the executive - and serves at the pleasure of the voter and not at-will by the executive.

Setting aside how the analysis and data support an adjustment, there is a more compelling, Bloomingtonian reason to adjust this compensation.

Our party's natural impulse is to seek out equality. While ledger lines and columns and raw numbers may seem black and white, the lives and roles and duties behind those numbers are the spaces where gaps in income equality grow into chasms. As we learned from Dr. King, budgets are moral documents - that they are where we put our money where our mouth is. And so, we have to look past the spreadsheets and toward what brings equity and opportunity for office seekers in the future.

Should our elected departmental heads - like the mayor and clerk - be positions that only those citizens who have personal financial security are able to seek? Or, ought we have compensation for these elected offices that attract competent professionals so that they needn't impoverish their quality of life in exchange for public service? The proposed adjustment isn't extravagant whatsoever compared to the compensation of every departmental head in the civil service.

Secondly, voters have sent women into the role of Clerk-Treasurer and Clerk in Bloomington for over 60 years. And while Hoosier women on average earn \$.75 to every dollar a man does in our state, the Clerk has historically earned 50% of the salary of the other full-time elected position in city government. Again, there is an opportunity to show leadership in a state that historically is indifferent about compensation and gender.

I recognize that the growing gaps in compensation for the City Clerk are not the oversight of any one term or one administration. They are the gradual accumulation of annual proposals, the creation of new and expanded boards and commissions, the increase in office duties, and the erosion of compensation by inflation over the past 20 years, that have turned minor disparities into glaring ledger lines. And that is not one person's fault, but it means that we did not heed Franklin's advice - that an ounce of prevention is worth a pound of cure. If this gap is not adjusted in this budget cycle, it will only continue to grow. We will find ourselves here again, but with what will be an even larger deficit to try to rectify and more pounds of cure to apply.

While I believe that an adjustment to the salary of the City Clerk should be considered independently of the incumbent, it is simply impossible to look past the incumbent and her stewardship of her duties as Clerk.

As you all know, Nicole Bolden's integrity and work to be a true servant leader - promoting pay raises for her staff before herself - is exemplar of the best of what we can hope for in elected leadership. As an elected official, she has had to negotiate meticulous budgets where every dollar programmed is accounted for and completely transparent in public view.

As her office grew with the added duties of 21st Century stewardship of the city's documentation, she has managed this growth smartly and absorbed added duties in her role beyond comparable cities of class and size in our state. Those duties may be unique in the state to Bloomington - from the meeting the preference of Council to have narrative minutes over the summary format recommended by Robert's Rules of Order and what is minimally required in code, to the average length of Council meetings relative to peer communities and the copious documentation those proceedings generate.

Clerk Bolden has managed those activities while assuring improvement of living wages for her staff and even reestablishing positions eliminated in the past that have shown essential to maintain the operations of her office in the present day. Like any good shopkeeper, she has worked to make sure her people were compensated first and well, before herself in these previous budget proceedings as a department head. The retention and low turnover of her staff speaks clearly to her leadership.

By adjusting this compensation, our city will continue to demonstrate the moral righteousness of our decision making - that our budget speaks to our values when it comes to pay equity.

As is the case with much of the Indiana Code, the manner by which state law intrudes upon and perforates home rule should also be considered.

Considering the oddity of one independently elected officer setting the budget for another instead of each submitting their own, the Council has an opportunity to work with an independently elected office holder. In the current situation, the Clerk basically functions budgetarily as a department head having to work with the executive on her budget. This is wholly unique and could be rectified at the council level. Second, we cannot ignore myriad ways the state code ignores the 21st century economic realities - realities that prevent many citizens from seeking office without tremendous personal sacrifice while the affluent might run without such worry. Thus, we should welcome the opportunity to work within those strictures to show how we can lead instead of finding reasons not to lead our state in how we compensate essential elected officials.

Therefore I strongly urge you to recognize the unique role and evolution of this position - as a constitutional office in our state code and a

departmental head in our government - and rectify the compensation to at least that of a departmental head in the City of Bloomington.

This request is easily and frankly, modestly attainable given other proposals and increases in budget from the General Fund over the past cycles. If this goal is not politically palatable for some in this budget cycle, the setting of salary to the same compensation of council attorney would be a modest step in the right direction.

Thank you for your consideration of this request,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "David G. Henry". The signature is fluid and cursive, with a large initial "D" and "H".

David G. Henry, Chair
Monroe County Democratic Party