

Media Advisory

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Winburn calls upon city council to give up questionable taxpayer funded health and pension benefits

Ghiz plan to cut council salaries doesn't go far or fast enough; Cutting benefits will save \$400,000 in current biennial budget and prevent additional police officer layoffs and fire company brownouts

Cincinnati, Ohio – Former Cincinnati City Councilman and current candidate Charlie Winburn is calling upon city council members to not wait until November to take action to prevent the scheduled public safety employee layoffs. Winburn is suggesting council immediately give up their health and pension benefits, which he says could be illegal.

Winburn noted that a recent review of the city charter revealed that current benefits paid for council members' health care and pension may not be allowed. Article II, Section 4 of the City Charter states in part:

Each member of council shall receive annual compensation in an amount equal to three-fourths (3/4ths) of the annual compensation payable to the county commissioners of Hamilton County, Ohio, as the same is from time to time established by the Ohio General Assembly. Such compensation shall be payable semi-monthly.

“At some point in the past, the city administration decided to start paying these expenses, possibly without proper authority,” Winburn said. The former councilman is calling on the current council to review the apparent oversight and misinterpretation of what they are entitled to under the term “compensation.”

Winburn noted that this option is certain and can be done immediately because it does not require council to have six votes in order to place it on the ballot, as does the charter amendment. Nor will it need voter approval in November in order to cut council salaries.

Winburn also pointed out that taxpayers are paying city council a full-time salary for a part-time job, especially at a time when full-time city workers are being laid off. City council members currently receive the following compensation:

1. \$65,670 annual salary (equal to 75% of county commissioner compensation)
2. \$9,198 annual pension benefits
3. \$5,000 - \$8,000 annual health benefits
4. \$83,268 approximate total of annual compensation

(more)

Current city policy for part time employees who work less than 30 hours per week does not provide health care benefits. This decision to cut benefits would put all part time employees, including council members, on the same playing field as it applies to health care benefits.

Winburn said Councilwoman Ghiz's proposal to cut council pay is a good start but doesn't go far enough in **reforming the total council compensation package for city council members** and that's why he is calling upon the mayor and city council on September 1, 2009 to consider the following proposal:

The mayor and city council should pass an ordinance immediately rescinding the health insurance and pension benefits of all current and future city council members and make additional budgetary changes that relate to the following:

- A. The city council should reimburse the taxpayers for unauthorized benefits received through current budget expenditures.
- B. The city council should restrict giving out council staff bonuses at the end of each year.
- C. The city council should cut all city council office expense budgets by 15%.

Winburn believes that his plan to stop the health and pension benefits of city council members can save taxpayers enough money **to rehire many of the public safety employees** scheduled for layoffs.

“If you cut council salaries in half, plus cut their health and pension benefits, and cut all council office budgets by 15%, it could result in saving approximately \$1 million over a two year period that could go a very long way to **prevent some of the police layoffs and fire company brownouts,**” concluded Winburn.

Winburn concluded by stating that as the city council works to reform the city's budgetary priorities, they should lead by example by reforming their own tax payer funded benefits and office operations first. “Most every public and private entity is struggling with these issues today and this is definitely an opportunity for our council to truly be a public servant,” Winburn said.

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