

Case Number: K07-156 Compensation Project

In El Portal (pop. 2,468), the mayor and village council members receive an annual salary of \$1,000, as set by ordinance. They receive another \$1,000 yearly as reimbursement for expenses, as per the charter. City Manager Jason Walker said these funds are treated as regular income, and no vouchers are required to justify expenses.

He said that, in addition, the mayor receives \$150 a month as a cellular phone allowance, for a total of \$1,800 yearly. Council members receive \$70 a month as a phone allowance, or \$840 yearly.

Walker said these three budgetary items are treated as income for commissioners and they receive the appropriate tax documents. In sum, the mayor receives yearly compensation totaling \$3,800 and each city council member receives compensation totaling \$2,840.

Walker said neither the mayor nor council members drive city vehicles, nor are they issued city credit cards. He said each elected official does have a "discretionary account" of \$1,000 that can be allocated to support constituent causes. However, the city manager controls those accounts and will not issue a check unless the request is supported by a memo from the elected official.

Walker said the city manager controls additional monies budgeted for travel for the mayor and council members totaling about \$3,500 so that officials may attend League of Cities meetings and other such events.

In Surfside (pop. 4,710), the salary for the mayor and town commissioners is established by the charter at \$1 per year. The town manager's office advised that officials must use their own cell phones and vehicles, and that all expenses must be approved by the manager's office on an as-needed basis. No town credit cards are issued to elected officials.

Commissioners, including the mayor and vice mayor, are eligible for a monthly expense allowance of \$500. That amount is treated as regular income (\$6,000 annually). At present only one commissioner, Howard Weinberg, receives the expense allowance, officials said.

In Florida City (pop. 8,363), the charter establishes that compensation of elected officials is set by resolution and fixed in the annual budget. City council members receive annual pay of \$5,600 and an expense allowance of \$3,600 – for a total package of \$9,200 each. That amount is treated as taxable income, according to the city's finance director, Mark Ben-Asher.

Ben-Asher said council members must submit their own deductions for expenses when they file their tax returns with the IRS each year.

As for non-taxable items, Ben Asher said the city pays \$48.88 for a monthly cellular phone plan containing 1,000 minutes for each council member. If the council member exceeds that allotment, the cost of any overages is deducted from the council member's salary. The city's council members must share a single vehicle and do not receive a separate car allowance.

Ben-Asher said that another \$7,000 was budgeted for public relations events in fiscal year 2008. This line item was set aside, he said, for all council members, and expenses must be approved during council meetings. He said funds are also budgeted for travel that he controls.

In addition, council members are issued city credit cards with a spending limit of \$1,500, used mainly for travel. Ben-Asher said there is no written policy, but he personally reviews all expenditures to ensure they are legitimate city business. He said officials can not make themselves loans or cash advances with the cards.

Name & Signature:	Karl Ross, Investigator	Date: Item #:
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Florida City Mayor Otis Wallace is also the city's top administrative officer (i.e. "strong mayor") and makes a base salary of \$127,231, as set by the charter and resolution. Ben-Asher said Wallace also earns an annual expense allowance of \$5,600, which is taxable, for total compensation package of about \$132,831 for the mayor.

Ben-Asher added that Wallace has a cellular phone plan with unlimited minutes, a city vehicle and a city credit card with a \$3,000 spending limit. As with the council members, Ben-Asher said he reviews all of the mayor's expenditures.

In Virginia Gardens (pop. 2,294), city council members are paid \$350 a month for a total salary of \$4,200 yearly. They are not given a cellular phone or city vehicle. They do not have an expense allowance. They may only purchase supplies with a city credit card reserved for that purpose. The card is in the city's name, according to village officials.

The mayor of Virginia Gardens is paid a yearly salary of \$10,000 along with a lump sum of \$3,150 to cover expenses. This amount – \$13,150 – is treated as taxable income.

The mayor is provided a city-issued cellular phone, and like the council members can purchase office supplies with a city credit card.

The city's charter states that elected officials shall receive compensation of \$175 a month, but officials said the charter is superseded by the budget process.

All travel and meals for elected officials are reimbursed at the rate set by state law.

In Sweetwater (pop. 13,992), the compensation and salary for elected officials is set by ordinance or resolution, as specified in the city's charter.

In 2007, city commissioners received \$5,738 in salary, an expense allowance of \$7,700, a vehicle allowance of \$6,600 and another \$2,240 for gas. The total yearly compensation package for commissioners equals \$22,278 – or roughly four times base salary.

The city clerk, Val Schmidt, stated that W-2s were issued for the above items, but that any legitimate, documented expenses were deducted from the expense allowance prior to preparing these tax documents. She said some commissioners submitted their expense items; others didn't.

As for the mayor, Schmidt said Mayor Marono earns an annual salary of \$50,108, and has a vehicle allowance of \$7,480 for a base package of \$57,588 in fiscal year 2008.

The mayor also has an annual expense allowance of \$7,913 – the remainder of which at year's end is also treated as income, she said.

Schmidt noted that Marono is a strong mayor and also serves as that city's chief administrator. A separate travel allowance of \$7,000 has also been budgeted for the mayor.

Marono told COE that commissioners do not have city-issue credit cards, but he does have a city credit card, along with some departmental directors. He said the city does not have a formal policy for the use of its credit cards, but rather follows a "common sense" policy.

In Pinecrest (pop. 19,432), the village council members and mayor do not receive a salary or expense allowance of any kind. "It saves us a lot of trouble," City Manager Pete Lombardi said.

Lombardi said city officials are only reimbursed for expenses linked to legitimate city business or travel. He said the village pays officials at the state rate for meals and per diems.

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In West Miami (pop. 5,925), city council members and mayor receive a monthly salary of \$100 or \$1,200 yearly. They also receive as much as \$600 a year for meeting attendance.

The city charter established that elected officials receive \$20 for each meeting they attend. City Manager Yolanda Aguilar said funds are budgeted for up to 30 meetings a year, or \$600.

Aguilar said the officials each have a budget of \$2,400 for expenses and personal representation, but that commissioners are reimbursed only when receipts are provided. This money, she said, is not treated as taxable income.

Aguilar said officials are not issued city credit cards, and that the city manager's office makes all arrangements for out-of-town travel. She said that in such cases, she will use her personal American Express card and seek reimbursement afterward.

Aguilar said she does not accept any awards points in connection with official city business.

In Opa-locka (pop. 15,327), elected officials including city commissioners and the mayor receive a monthly salary of \$550 or \$6,600 yearly. In addition they receive a separate monthly expense allowance of \$200, or \$2,400 a year. Their total taxable income is \$9,000 yearly.

City Manager Jannie Beverly said that, in addition, commissioners and the mayor are each provided a city car, free gas at the city's public works depot and a cellular telephone.

Beverly said elected officials are issued a city credit card with a spending limit of \$3,500. The city revised its credit card policy in 2007 following the arrest of former Vice Mayor Terence Pinder for allegedly abusing his credit card privileges.

The new policy expressly forbids using city cards for cash advances or personal items, and calls for repayment within 30 days for any expenditure deemed to be of a personal nature, whether in whole or in part.

In Palmetto Bay (pop. 24,469), the charter establishes the salary for city council members at \$1,000 monthly and \$2,000 monthly for the mayor. The total taxable compensation is, accordingly, \$12,000 yearly for council members and \$24,000 for the mayor.

Village Manager Ron Williams said elected officials do not receive a vehicle allowance, but are provided with a cellular phone and/ or a Blackberry for city business. He said they do not receive a separate expense allowance.

He said the mayor receives a monthly cellular phone allowance of \$150 and council members get \$75 a month for cellular phones. He said the mayor and two council members also have a Blackberry, the cost of which is \$52.55 monthly. These items are not treated as taxable income, he said.

Williams said only the mayor has a city credit card for travel, and must provide receipts and other information detailing the nature of the expense "for audit purposes."

In South Miami (pop. 11,147), the charter establishes the annual salary and expense accounts for elected officials be set by ordinance as part of the budget process.

City commissioners are paid a yearly salary of \$12,000 and the mayor earns \$14,000 a year. They do not receive expense allowances or other taxable items.

Former City Manager Yvonne Soler-McKinley said commissioners can use their own cellular phones and receive reimbursements of up to \$962.40 a year, or have the city provide them with a phone. The mayor receives up to \$1,150 for cellular phone usage.

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Soler-McKinley said the mayor receives a \$500 yearly vehicle allowance, or \$46 per month. She said the item is not treated as taxable income. Commissioners do not receive either a car allowance or mileage reimbursement, she said.

She said that commissioners are provided a non-taxable discretionary fund of \$1,500 a year for local events and charities, while the mayor has a similar fund of \$2,000. She said the city manager's office controls all spending from the funds.

Soler-McKinley said the city also budgets \$5,000 for travel for elected officials so they can attend Dade Days in Tallahassee, League of Cities meetings and other official events.

In Sunny Isles Beach (pop. 15,399), the charter establishes a base salary for city council members of \$1,000 per month and \$1,250 for the mayor – adjustable by the Consumer Price Index.

The yearly salary for council members is \$12,888 and for the mayor, \$16,110, officials said.

City officials said council members and the mayor each receive a yearly expense allowance of \$4,405. The allowance is not treated as taxable income, and officials are only reimbursed upon providing receipts for the expenses.

Council members and the mayor do not receive a vehicle or allowance, though they are reimbursed for mileage and legitimate expenses. The city does provide cellular phones for elected officials, officials said.

In Miami-Dade County (pop. 2.4 million), county commissioners receive a base salary of \$6,000 as established by the charter. They have a total benefit package worth in excess of 10 times this base salary, however.

According to budget analysts, commissioners are also paid \$9,600 for vehicle-related expenses (\$800 a month), an expense allowance of \$24,000 (\$2,000 a month), \$10,000 in "executive benefits" and \$11,500 towards a retirement account.

These items – totaling \$61,500 – are treated as taxable income or as deferred earnings in the case of the retirement funds, according to budget analysts.

The county's "strong mayor," Carlos Alvarez, receives a base salary of \$235,922, set by county ordinance and adjusted by the CPI. He also gets a vehicle allowance of \$9,600 (\$800 a month), expense allowance of \$42,000 a year (\$3,500 a month), "executive benefits" of \$10,000, deferred compensation of \$20,500 and \$1,500 toward a retirement account.

The mayor's total salary and benefits package equals \$319,522, according to analysts.

County commissioners and the mayor are also eligible to receive a county purchasing card (P-cards) to be used mainly for travel-related expenses. The cards may not be used for any personal items or cash advances.

Eleven out of 13 commissioners used the P-cards in fiscal year 2007, with expenditures ranging from a low of \$2,380 (Comm. Sosa) to a high of \$26,399 (Chairman Barreiro), according to analysts.

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