



Councilman seeks raise from 1937 pay

SAN BERNARDINO: A monthly pay hike from \$50 to \$1,553 might attract more candidates.

12:36 AM PST on Monday, February 20, 2006

By CHRIS RICHARD / The Press-Enterprise

Four years after San Bernardino voters narrowly defeated a pay increase for City Council members, the council is preparing to consider the issue again.

At their Tuesday meeting, council members will decide whether to ask voters to amend the city charter and increase their pay thirty fold.

Council members earn a base salary of \$50 per month. They haven't had a raise since 1937.

"I don't know what \$50 per month bought back then, but it doesn't buy much now," said City Councilman Neil Derry, who is sponsoring the proposed pay hike.

He said he works about 20 hours per week on his council duties, and his colleagues put in at least as much time.

"When you consider that we're the lowest-paid employees in the city, it's kind of funny," Derry said.

His proposal would peg council salaries at 12.5 percent of what county judges make. Currently, that works out to \$1,553.75 per month.

The proposal uses the same formula that council members submitted to city voters in 2002, only to see the measure fail. But Derry blamed that in part on a lack of campaigning.

"This time, there will be an education campaign," he said. Derry said he'll ask council members to submit the pay hike to a vote in June.

Councilwoman Wendy McCammack questioned the notion of council members asking voters for a raise. Any such increase should start with a voter initiative, she said.

"I knew how much the job paid when I took it," she said.

Even when compared with much smaller cities, San Bernardino's council pay ranks low.

Council Pay

San Bernardino City Council members may ask voters to approve a pay hike for them.

Base pay: \$50 per month

Bonus: \$75 for every redevelopment agency meeting council members attend

Stipend: \$550 monthly for expenses

Benefits: Health benefits worth \$900 per month

In Loma Linda, for example, council members receive a base salary of \$377 per month, with another \$60 for overseeing the city's redevelopment agency.

Council members there will consider doubling their pay at a Feb. 28 meeting.

In Redlands, council members make \$250 per month. The council formerly made \$500 but cut its pay in half last year because of concerns about a tight budget, Administrative Services Director Marjie Pettus said.

Derry said San Bernardino's council pay discourages qualified candidates from running.

Steve Frates, a senior fellow at the Rose Institute of State and Local Government at Claremont McKenna College, agreed that low pay might be a deterrent to some potential council candidates. But many elected officials are willing to accept a financial loss for the sake of public service, Frates said.

Staff Writers Naomi Kresge and Darrell R. Santschi contributed to this report.

Online at: http://www.pe.com/localnews/sanbernardino/stories/PE_News_Local_B_bmeet20.8840882.html