

Date: January 28, 2025

To: Members of the Somerville City Council

From: Anne Gill, HR Director and Michael Mastrobuoni, Budget Director

Subject: Proposal for Tiering Boards and Commissions and Standardizing Stipends Based on Responsibility Levels

Dear Members of the Somerville City Council,

I am writing to present a proposal for tiering the city's boards and commissions based on their levels of responsibility, size, and meeting frequency, and to standardize stipends accordingly. This analysis aims to establish an equitable and consistent framework that reflects the commitment and responsibilities of each board and commission.

Executive Summary

The proposed tiering system categorizes boards and commissions into pay tiers based on the nature and extent of responsibilities, size of the board, and workload based on their enabling law, ordinance, or regulation.

Additionally, specific stipend amounts are recommended for each tier:

- **Pay Tier 1:** \$0 (volunteer basis)
- **Pay Tier 2:** \$4,000 annually
- **Pay Tier 3:** \$6,000 annually

Chairs are proposed to receive a **5% higher stipend**, and alternates would receive **50% of the full stipend** for their respective tiers. This approach ensures equitable compensation that aligns with the demands placed on board and commission members.

Two additional bodies are not included in the analysis below: The Somerville Retirement Board (SRB) and the Board of Assessors. The compensation for the retirement board is self-funded. Additionally, the

Board of Assessors currently receives a stipend in excess of the recommendations below and should be reviewed individually.

Methodology

Each board, commission, or committee was assessed based on three key factors, with 1 point awarded for each:

1. **Advisory Role:** Provides recommendations or guidance on policy matters.
2. **Enforcement Authority:** Has the power to enforce regulations or ordinances.
3. **Financial Responsibility:** Controls or influences budgetary expenditures.

The total points determined the pay tier assignment:

- **Pay Tier 3 (Highest Responsibility):** 3 points
- **Pay Tier 2:** 2-3 points
- **Pay Tier 1:** 1-2 points

Analysis and Tier Assignments

Below is the table detailing the boards and commissions, total points, assigned pay tiers, and current and proposed stipends:

Boards and Commissions Tiering and Stipends

Board/Commission/Committee	Total Points	Current Stipend	Proposed Stipend
Pay Tier 3 (Highest Responsibility) - 2 or 3 points			
Jobs Creation and Retention Board	3		6,000
Affordable Housing Trust	2		6,000
Planning Board	2	5,968	6,000
Zoning Board of Appeals	2	5,968	6,000
Pay Tier 2 – 2 points			
Redevelopment Authority	2	3,816	4,000
Board of Health	2	3,832	4,000
Licensing Commission	2	3,816	4,000
Community Preservation Committee	2		4,000
Condominium Review Board	2	3,816	4,000
Elections Commission	2	3,831	4,000
Pay Tier 1 – 1 or 2 points			

Historic Preservation Commission	2
Arts Council Board	2
Fair Housing Commission	2
Traffic Board	2
Traffic Commission	2
Urban Forestry Committee	2
Commission for Persons with Disabilities	2
Ethics Commission	1
Urban Design Commission	1
Bicycle Advisory Committee	1
Biosafety Committee	1
Board of Library Trustees	1
Commission on Energy Use and Climate Change	1
Conservation Commission	1
Council on Aging	1
Gang Advisory Board	1
Memorialization Committee	1
Multicultural Affairs Commission	1
Municipal Athletic Facilities Commission	1
Municipal Compensation Advisory Board	1
Municipal Scholarship Committee	1
Pilot Advisory Task Force	1
Police Chief Selection Committee	1
Recreation and Youth Commission	1
SomerPromise Board of Trustees	1
Veterans Commission	1
Wage Theft Advisory Committee	1
Women's Commission	1
Human Rights Commission	1
AIDS Commission	1
Housing Authority	1

Please note that City employees would not draw a stipend for work while serving on a City Board or Commission, if that work is part of their regular job duties/current responsibilities.

Proposed Stipend Adjustments

In furtherance of standardizing across boards & commissions, the following stipend template is proposed:

- Chairs Receive a 5% Higher Stipend:** Recognizing the additional leadership duties and responsibilities that chairs undertake, they would receive a stipend that is **5% higher** than the standard amount for their respective pay tier.
 - For Pay Tier 3:** Chair's stipend would be **\$6,300** (5% of \$6,000 = \$300 additional).
 - For Pay Tier 2:** Chair's stipend would be **\$4,200** (5% of \$4,000 = \$200 additional).

- **Alternates Receive 50% of the Full Stipend:** Alternates, who must be prepared to serve whenever needed and often participate in meetings and deliberations, would receive a stipend equal to **50%** of the full stipend for their assigned pay tier.
 - **For Pay Tier 3:** Alternate's stipend would be **\$3,000**.
 - **For Pay Tier 2:** Alternate's stipend would be **\$2,000**.

Conclusion

The tiering system, combined with the standardized stipend amounts and adjustments, provides an equitable framework for compensating members of boards and commissions based on multiple factors:

- **Responsibilities:** Advisory role, enforcement authority, and financial control.
- **Board Size:** Larger boards often require more coordination and carry greater responsibility.
- **Meeting Consistency:** Boards that meet regularly demand a greater time commitment from members.

By considering these additional factors, the proposed compensation structure more accurately reflects the demands placed on board and commission members.

Recommendation

It is recommended that the City adopts this tiered compensation structure along with the standardized stipend amounts and adjustments. This system promotes fairness, acknowledges the varying levels of responsibility, and ensures that all members are appropriately compensated for their service to the community. Additionally, this standardized framework allows for future adjustments based on criteria as outlined herein, rather than ad hoc changes over time.

It is recommended that this proposed compensation structure be effective July 1, 2025, in order to identify ordinances that may need to be updated as part of this process.