

## Montgomery voters to decide whether council positions should be considered full time

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Montgomery County voters will decide in November whether County Council positions should be considered full-time jobs and, as a result, be paid a higher salary.

The Council voted 6-3 Tuesday to put the referendum on November's ballot. If approved, it would amend the county charter.

"For purposes of compensation, it would basically define the jobs as full time," said Council spokesman Patrick Lacefield. "The charter is silent on the issue."

The measure would not, however, prohibit council members from outside employment, Lacefield said.

Council members have said the elected position requires a full-time commitment. Four of the nine members are employed outside of their council slots.

"I think it's very difficult to hold a job outside the council," Council Vice President Marilyn Praisner said.

Currently, the average salary for county council members is \$79,721, a

sum deemed too low by the demands of the job by a special compensation committee in November.

The Council president is paid \$87,694 and the county executive makes \$150,747 annually. The charter prohibits the county executive from having a second job.

The thrust for the designation is to increase council members' pay, Praisner said.

"What the charter review commission recommends is that when compensation is considered, one should think of the council member as a full-time position," Praisner said.

Council members Steve Silverman, Nancy Foren and Mike Subin voted against the measure.

Subin called the measure a "smoke-screen to increase salary" but said it would be acceptable if it included a restriction that council members not hold additional outside jobs. Subin also has a private practice law firm. He said he'd leave the council if he were forced to choose between it and his job.

"Council members are free to do what they want according to how they treat the job," Subin said.

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