

December 8, 2021

MEMORANDUM

To: Seattle City Council
From: Karina Bull, Analyst
Subject: Council Bill 120248: Fire Chief Compensation Program

On December 9, 2021, the Public Safety and Human Services Committee (Committee) will discuss and possibly vote on [Council Bill \(CB\) 120248](#), legislation that would establish a new compensation program for the Fire Chief. This memo provides a high-level summary of the bill and identifies next steps. Central Staff has not identified issues or concerns for Council’s consideration.

Summary

This legislation would create a discretionary “Fire Chief” compensation program that would replace the position’s current designation as “Executive 4” within the Accountability Pay for Executives Program.¹ The compensation program would be effective as of July 1, 2021. The Seattle Department of Human Resources (SDHR) Director would review the compensation program at least every two years and recommend adjustments to the pay band for approval by Council.

The salary rate for the Fire Chief would range from \$88.69 to \$141.91 per hour (i.e., \$185,185 to \$296,308 annual salary). The maximum salary rate for the Fire Chief would reflect a 17 percent increase from the maximum salary rate for an Executive 4. See Table 1 for a comparison of the compensation programs.

Table 1: Compensation program comparison

Compensation Program	Rate Per Hour	Annual Salary
Executive 4	\$73.63 - \$121.49	\$153,739 to \$253,671
Fire Chief	\$88.69 - \$141.91	\$185,185 to \$296,308

SDHR states that the Mayor’s Office requested review of the Fire Chief’s salary and that the recommended salary range was informed by a comparative analysis of maximum salary rates for fire chief positions in seven jurisdictions known as the “West Coast Seven.” The analysis showed geographically adjusted maximum salary rates ranging from \$118.51 to \$151.34. See Table 2 for West Coast Seven comparator data.

¹ For more information on the discretionary pay program see [Seattle Municipal Code 4.20.380](#) and the [City of Seattle 2021 Salary Schedule](#), “Compensation Plan Administration” (page 3).

Table 2: Maximum salary rates in West Coast Seven jurisdictions

Jurisdiction	Position	Geographically Adjusted Maximum Salary Rate
City/County of San Francisco (CA)	Fire Chief	\$151.34
City of San Diego (CA)	Fire Chief	\$130.16
City of Oakland (CA)	Fire Chief	\$130.09
City of Long Beach (CA)	Fire Chief	\$129.56
City of Sacramento (CA)	Fire Chief	\$122.23
City of San Jose (CA)	Fire Chief	\$118.72
City of Portland (OR)	Fire Chief	\$118.51

Based on this data, SDHR concluded that the maximum salary rate of the Executive 4 pay band (\$121.49) fell within the range of maximum salary rates in the West Coast Seven, but below the market midpoint (\$129.56).

The SDHR Director’s recommendation for a new Fire Chief compensation program incorporates the market midpoint of \$129.56 and includes a 60 percent range (\$88.69 - \$141.91) that would match the range of the Police Chief compensation program. SDHR states that the range would provide opportunity for salary adjustments and resolve salary compression issues with other SFD employees in Executive 4 positions, such as the Deputy Fire Chiefs.

For further reference, City of Seattle (City) data shows maximum salary rates for the highest earning, individual compensation programs ranging from \$121.49 to \$206.08. The maximum salary rate for the Fire Chief compensation program would fall within this range. See Table 3 for City comparator data.

Table 3: Maximum salary rates in the City

City Department	Compensation Program	Maximum Salary Rate
Seattle City Light	City Light GM/CEO	\$206.08
Seattle Public Utilities (SPU)	SPU GM/CEO	\$172.75
Seattle Police Department	Seattle Police Chief	\$141.91
<i>Seattle Fire Department</i>	<i>Fire Chief</i>	<i>\$141.91</i>
Seattle Information Technology Department	Chief Technology Officer	\$135.34
Legislative Department	City Auditor	\$121.49
Legislative Department	Hearing Examiner	\$121.49

Financial Impacts

The Mayor would have discretion to pay the incumbent in the Fire Chief compensation program a base salary within the authorized compensation program and could approve market rate adjustments. Any additional salary costs for the incumbent would be absorbed by the department.

Next Steps

If the Committee votes on the legislation at its meeting on December 9, 2021, Council action could occur at the Full Council meeting on December 13, 2021.

Please contact Karina Bull if you have questions about the proposed legislation.

cc: Esther Handy, Director
Dan Eder, Deputy Director
Aly Pennucci, Policy and Budget Manager