Study Finds Borough Salaries Competetive With Market

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Brianna Gibbs/KMXT

A new study found that Kodiak Island Borough salaries are competitive with other boroughs across the state, and with similar-sized towns in the Pacific Northwest. Lori Messer is a Senior Consultant for Fox Lawson and Associates, the company that conducted the compensation and classification study for the borough. Messer presented the findings of the borough’s study during a borough assembly work session on Thursday.

“When we look at actual salaries being paid at the borough compared to actual salaries being paid in the market, again, in highly competitive position because the borough is leading by almost 1 percent,” she said.

Messer said the borough remains competitive when employee benefits packages are included in the information. While this is good news overall for the borough, Messer stressed that it is only an average, meaning some positions aren’t competitive.

“This is based on all of the benchmark positions, so it’s an aggregate figure. So there are some positions that are further below the market, some that are further above. This is the overall results of the study, all positions combined.”

After presenting the results of the study, Messer suggested a few methods to bring underpaid jobs up to the market salaries. The options range from costing the borough $4,400 to $176,000 each year. She didn’t go into specifics about what those options entailed, which raised some questions later on in the meeting when the assembly began reviewing the agenda for next week’s regular meeting.

The agenda includes acceptance of the classification and compensation study, but Assemblywoman Carol Austerman asked if that meant the borough would be accepting the $176,000 price tag to bring underpaid jobs in line with the market.

“I still don’t really understand what accepting the study is. I think they did an awesome job, I’m happy to say wahoo, they did a nice job. But as far as then what the implementation of the study looks like, I agree with Mel, I think that we need a lot more information before we as an assembly would say, accept it," she said. "But I also think we definitely need to bring our employees within market range on salary.”

The borough is already talking about next year’s budget, and

Austerman said she didn’t want to miss out on including salary changes in those discussions. She suggested putting the maximum $176,000 as a line item in the budget, but not using it until the assembly can take a closer look at the salary and compensation study.

Borough Manager Bud Cassidy agreed with Austerman, and said that is the approach that staff is recommending.

“There’s still some analyses that needs to occur, there’s no doubt about that. And our suggestion was to do exactly what you suggested, put money in the budget, we can freeze it until we have to use it, but to put money in the budget this year so if it is adopted -- we’re there.”

The borough assembly will meet for a regular meeting at 7:30 pm. on Thursday in the borough assembly chambers. Fox Lawson and Associates also completed a compensation and classification study for the City of Kodiak earlier this fall.