

What I Earn

by Dave Kiff

City Manager of Newport Beach

City officials in Bell did a very troubling thing, but one outcome of that situation was not troubling – an increased attention to what public officials earn, particularly during these challenging economic times.

For the record, I make \$225,000 a year and receive a car allowance of \$500 per month. In return, it's my responsibility to run the day-to-day operations of the City of Newport Beach. This involves overseeing a "full-service" city with a staff of more than 800 full-time employees, about 400 part-time and seasonal employees, and an annual operating budget of \$180 million.

In addition to my salary and car allowance, I also receive benefits, including health and pension, that amount to about \$63,000 annually. For many hard-working families, this sounds like a significant salary and benefit package. I want to assure you that I appreciate and value what our community pays me, especially because I'm among the fortunate who get to work at a job they truly enjoy. I understand that my employment here is a privilege and one that I must work hard to maintain.

When the City Council hired me in September 2009 and set my compensation, it had the discretion to place me (or any other of the 50+ candidates who competed for the job) in a range reflecting what other city managers in "comparable" cities make. We usually compare our compensation packages to those in cities like Costa Mesa, Irvine, Huntington Beach, Anaheim, Orange, Carlsbad, Torrance, Pasadena, and even Laguna Beach (not Bell!). No city is exactly like ours, but those are generally the comparisons we use. We look at population, complexity of the city, services provided, and then overlay that with a candidate's experience and education. As those comparables and the economy change, our salaries and benefits should, too – up or down.

My employment contract went to the City Council in a public meeting, and the community had a chance to see it and comment on it. It's also on the City's website attached to a formal Council resolution (Resolution 2009-61). The contract included an agreement to help me comply with a provision in the City Charter that requires the city manager to live in town (As of the date I write this – September 2010 - I am remodeling the house we bought in October 2009 on 23rd Street and I am not officially relocated. I expect to be there as soon as the plumbing is back in). This is not an enforceable provision due to court cases elsewhere, but I did not want to be the first city manager in Newport Beach history who said, "No, thanks, I don't want to live here." So the agreement is that the City co-owns my house, and gets its investment back plus a little more than half the equity when the home is sold. As a side note, the proposed Charter amendment on the November ballot would delete the city manager residency requirement and make it conform to the law.

Why am I telling you this? I want to be sure that you have the facts and where to find them. The City of Newport Beach's financial information, including salary and benefits, is easily accessible and has been for a number of years. It's contained in the City's budget documents - those are available for viewing through the City website, at our City libraries and at City Hall. The "Budget Detail" is updated annually and lists salary and benefit information by position title (mine is easy, because I'm the only person with that title). You can also see what the City Council members earn (\$14,443 per year in salary, plus benefits). The mayor makes a bit more, at \$20,491 per year, for his or her one-year term.

Please click on this link to find our salaries and benefits:

<http://www.newportbeachca.gov/citybudget>.

Once you're there, select the first option under Budget Detail and in that document, you will find my salary and benefits on page 70 of 415 (Note: You will find a salary amount that includes my car allowance – therefore it shows \$230,993.50). Our job descriptions, salary schedules (in defined steps) and benefit information are also located on the City website, under the Human Resources Department. Those can be viewed by visiting <http://www.newportbeachca.gov/index.aspx?page=60> and selecting the area of interest from the left-hand column.

I understand that you are busy people, but I do believe it's important that you know what your local government is doing with your tax dollars. It's also important because I think we serve you better when you know us better. It's Ronald Reagan's "trust, but verify" concept. I would like you to trust that what happened in Bell can't or won't happen here, but we need to give you the tools to verify that. In large part, that's our budget document, our open City Council meetings, our website, and my availability with a call or e-mail. A good local news media also plays a part in this. We are fortunate in Newport Beach to have three newspapers and at least two well-read, on-line media sources that follow what's happening at City Hall on an almost daily basis.

I consider my employment here to be part of a public trust. I am entrusted by you and the Council to be a good steward of your dollars, and to provide you the value of a safe, prosperous, high-quality Newport Beach as I manage the City's staff to those outcomes. I am very honored to serve in that role. If you have any questions about our compensation or practices, please don't hesitate to contact me at dkiff@newportbeachca.gov or 949-644-3000.