

It is my pleasure to serve as your City Manager and I wanted to provide some updates on several issues. First, thank you for serving in our City government as we serve the Norcross community! We have come through a tough time of a pandemic and high inflation.

As City Manager, one of my roles is to present a balanced budget each year for consideration by the City Council, which is comprised of the Mayor and five Councilmembers. Two years ago, we had a salary study done that, for the first time, put all city positions on a level playing field. Prior to that, some of our positions were more competitive than others. That disparity was addressed, and a consistent approach to equitable pay adjustments was completed in December 2021. Even if you were not here when that was done, you benefited from the pay structure that we put in place.

Because of the sheer cost of phasing in the cost over the past two budgets (a cost equal to about a 10-percent pay increase), our recent annual merit increases were not significant. The upcoming budget, which is scheduled to be approved in August, proposes an average 6 percent average merit pay increase for employees in September. Any employee who has been with the City for at least 3 months would be eligible for an increase. The actual increase for any employee would be based on performance. I wanted you to each know that a significant merit pay increase was my highest priority in developing the budget for consideration by the City Council.

I am also recommending that we increase our pay ranges by one-half of that amount. Increasing our pay ranges accomplishes two things: it reduces the likelihood that any employee hits the top of their pay range any time soon, and it helps with our competitiveness in hiring and promoting employees by increasing the minimum pay for each pay range by 3 percent. Earlier this year, the City Council approved two changes that can also benefit employees: discretionary pay increases after completing probation that apply not only to new hires but also to existing employees who are promoted, and payments to employees who successfully recruit new employees. These each reflect our commitment to hire and retain employees. We want promotions to be worth applying for by increasing what a successful in-house candidate can earn, and we want to encourage you to help us fill vacancies.

Our current health insurance plan with Cigna is good through December as we transition to an annual health insurance plan year of January through December, but we will be offering employees two enrollment periods to decide what coverage you may want to select, and it will be a few months before we have details on exactly what insurance will cost next year. We have been fortunate to keep changes in our plans modest in recent years and our hope is to do so for this upcoming year as well.

I encourage every employee to take the time to look at your paystub to see not only what you earn and what deductions you have, but also our commitment as a City to not only your health coverage but also other benefits the City invests in.

You've recently received emails describing commitments to improve our organizational culture. Let me provide a little context. About a year ago, we conducted an employee survey in which about three-quarters of our employees participated. The results of that survey showed that a little over 72 percent of respondents agreed or strongly agreed that they feel appreciated and that their work is valued in the workplace. On the other hand, about 11 percent disagreed or strongly disagreed. (The remaining 17 percent couldn't make up their mind.) We have heard concerns expressed by some employees and so the City Council enlisted an outside firm to conduct interviews regarding our organizational culture. Elected officials, department heads, and a sampling of other employees were interviewed. As the most

recent email you received indicated, we received some recommendations on how to move forward to improve our organizational culture. We can always do better.

One of the areas for improvement involves how elected officials and I work as a team. You may or may not be familiar with how exactly our organizational structure works but as, with any organizational structure, it works best when everything fits together well. The City Council sets policy for the organization and approves positions and the budget. Policies can impact how we are structured, and they clearly define how we operate and serve this community. Additionally, the Mayor is the official spokesperson, runs meetings, and can vote to break ties. They are each elected to represent our community. As City Manager, my role is the day-to-day operations of the City government. Every employee reports to me through the structure of their department. I report to the City Council as a group of six. Earlier this year, we reminded employees of two existing elements of our Employee Handbook: that the chain of command reports up to me, and that we have an open-door policy. They aren't necessarily the most important elements of the Handbook, but they work together. Any issue that concerns you should flow through the chain of command that ultimately ends with me or my successors in the role of City Manager, and... you are welcome to schedule a meeting to discuss any concerns with me. Employees do not have the option of bypassing me to elected officials, and elected officials similarly do not have the option of bypassing me to direct city staff. As I indicated earlier, I believe that the City Council and I are committed to improving our working relationships as one of the takeaways of the external review.

Within our departments, I believe we can break down any silos that may exist or appear to exist so that employees develop improved cross-organizational relationships. That not only provides the opportunity to improve our overall working environment, but I think that it will present some better recognition that there may be more than one direction to advance. I want to encourage us to expand cross-training where it can make sense to offer employees more options.