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Powder Springs Council Raises Own Retirement

Met with opposition on Monday, the move coincided with bonuses of up to \$500 for city employees.

By [Michael Stone](#) | [Email the author](#) | December 6, 2011

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Despite being met with opposition Monday, the [Powder Springs City Council](#) voted to raise the retirement for council members from \$40 to \$48 per month for every year in office.

That means eight-year member, for example, will now receive \$384 a month after leaving the city instead of \$320. Each elected term is four years.

Noting that elected officials in small cities aren't paid that well, City Manager Rick Eckert said he has "always been in favor of a reasonable retirement."

The benefit, done through the [Georgia Municipal Association's retirement fund](#), is for council members who serve at least eight years, and Monday's increase isn't retroactive to those already retired.

Councilwoman Cheryl Sarvis was absent and Councilwoman Nancy Hudson was opposed, making the final tally 3-1.

The city will be paying GMA for the retirement increase with contingency funding left over from last year's budget. The increase will initially cost about \$4,700 annually, with a 30-year amortization.

Councilman Tom Bevirt, [whose last legislative meeting](#) was Monday, will be the first to receive the new pension. His 12 years of service will result in a \$576-a-month retirement; without Monday's vote, he would have received about \$100 less.

If she retired in 2016 at the completion of her upcoming term, Mayor Pat Vaughn, who started as a councilwoman in 1996, will get \$960 a month under the new plan. Previously, she would have received \$800.

Monday's council retirement raise coincided with a budget amendment that will give bonuses to city employees: \$500 for those starting work before January, \$100 for January to July, and \$50 for July to December.

Hudson said permanently raising the council's retirement while only giving city employees a one-time bonus is a "disservice." The employees are on

their fourth year without raises.

"It's been four or five years since I've had a raise," she said of her job outside the council, "but yet the upper people where I work get them and I don't."

The council retirement increase will "cause bad feelings," Hudson said.

"I know how that feels, when you're out there working day after day after day and other people get" financially rewarded, she said.

But Eckert said he hopes to make the city bonuses an annual payout, and that he's looking at possible raises in July.

Also voicing their opposition on Monday were two public commenters: former Councilman Ra Barr and his wife, Barbara.

Speaking first, Barbara Barr said she disagreed with Eckert's comment [at Wednesday's work session](#) about council members not getting paid well. They receive \$12,000 annually, while the mayor gets \$18,000.

She said that between work sessions, legislative meetings and preparation for both, council members work an estimated average of 26 hours a month for an hourly rate of \$38.46.

She called the council's retirement money a "gift" from taxpayers, saying elected officials "do not contribute anything to the retirement fund like most employees do."

"I'm glad you've been able to identify funding for bonuses, but I think all of these funds should go to city employees," Barbara Barr said. "They've done their jobs well in a difficult time, and they deserve the rewards."

Ra Barr said that while the employees haven't had a raise in four years, their health insurance premiums have at times gone up, "meaning that their actual take-home pay has gone down."

He questioned whether "empty campaign promises" were made by Vaughn in a *Marietta Daily Journal* article saying city employees would be financially compensated before the council.

Noting the upcoming bonuses, Vaughn responded: "We aren't receiving anything before the employees receive something."

Also on Monday:

- The council voted to table setting the monthly stormwater fee after [making the decision](#) to postpone for the fourth time at Wednesday's work session.
- The council approved the [police department's](#) application to enter into the State of Georgia Law Enforcement Certification Program. Getting the department certified was something Charlie Sewell said he hoped to do when [he was named chief](#). The previous certification expired in 2007, and Sewell hopes to gain the new one in three years.
- The council went into an executive session to discuss legal matters about the [June 1 police traffic stop involving Brice Wilson](#).

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Rick Paul

7:35 am on Tuesday, December 6, 2011

AHHH another well paid part time gov employee. Why are they allowed to vote themselves anything? As they say, your doomed when the gov figures out they can vote themselves money. PISS POOR !!!!!

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James

1:54 pm on Sunday, January 8, 2012

1:47 pm on Sunday, January 8, 2012

We should have sent Pat Packin and Neal too when we had the chance. Nancy Hudson needs to run for Mayor. She seems to be the only one with concern for the city. Thurmon, you will have to run soon. Stop rubber stamping.

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Tea Man

[Delete](#)

1:45 pm on Tuesday, December 6, 2011

This issue was discussed over 4 years ago and a friend of mine was accused by the Mayor of slander for telling others about it before the last election and was threatened with a law suit! Now we have it, she is feathering her own nest, \$900 for her in retirement? Give me a break! And no prior public disclosure of this? Shame on the Mayor and Council!!!! THEY MUST GO! WE WON'T FORGET!

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lois freeland

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5:37 pm on Tuesday, December 6, 2011

Wait a minute, just a month ago my husband was told the City was broke. I guess she can always find money when it benefits her.

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Terri Foschini

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6:39 pm on Tuesday, December 6, 2011

Wow not enough money in town budget for local cops who is retiring to honor him after 25 years with the tradition of a service revolver, a badge, a plaque from the citizens of Powder Springs or a nice humble luncheon in his honor! Politics!

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Suzie Q. Public

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9:06 pm on Tuesday, December 6, 2011

"...hey buddy have you got a dime? And the beat goes on." <http://bit.ly/v60F7o>

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Sunshine

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3:41 pm on Wednesday, December 7, 2011

Thank you Councilwoman Nancy Hudson! Thank you for at least attempting to stick up for the little guys while the mayor and the rest of the council are only concerned about themselves. Not even a month ago they told some of the city workers that they were about to be cutting jobs because the city was broke, now a month later they have enough money to give themselves big fat raises! and how are they basing the raise system for employess? if they started in january they get \$500? and only \$100 or \$50 past that? much less the employees who have been there for YEARS and have not seen a raise in 5 years. Quit lining YOUR pockets "mayor" Pat Vaughn!!

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Stan Kaady

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9:06 am on Thursday, December 8, 2011

Indeed, thank you Councilwoman Hudson. You seem to be the lone voice on city council these days against questionable entitlements and legislation such as this. This vote sends a peculiar message to citizens and city employees. Given that it took place less than a month after city elections and on the evening of Tom Bevirts last night as councilman, it takes on the aroma of secrecy and a self-serving demeanor.

Are my perceptions correct? To me they are. And I'm sure to many others as well. The Patch article offers zero justification from our city officials as to why this increase was needed. I can only assume none was given at the meeting. Are the city councils benefit and salary package for part-time government officials below that of other cities our size? If so, kindly state the reason why, provide proof and data and explain why, during the intense recession we are experiencing, that now is a good time to pass this increase.

Again, Councilwoman Hudson, thank you for your service and keep up the great work.

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Ra Barr

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4:17 pm on Thursday, December 8, 2011

How can the mayor and council compare a one-time payment of a \$500 bonus to a LIFETIME increase in their free, part-time-employment pension? The mayor will get an additional \$500 in less than 4 months of receiving retirement payments!!!!

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