

**DEPARTMENT HEAD AND CITY COUNCILMEMBER
JOB DIFFERENCES**

This table compares and contrasts basic job differences between a staff department head job and elected city councilmember using generally accepted public sector concepts.

Compiled by Jerri Potras, January 2024

ELEMENT	DEPARTMENT HEAD	CITY COUNCILMEMBER
Work Characteristics	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Takes orders from superior. ▪ Hires and evaluates work performance of employees under supervision. ▪ Has role in personnel matters with staff under supervision. ▪ Subject to discipline by superior. ▪ Required to attend workplace harassment prevention training. ▪ Required to participate in workplace investigations. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Does not take orders. ▪ Hires and evaluates work performance of City Manager and City Attorney only. ▪ No role in staff personnel matters or access to personnel files. ▪ Discipline limited to censure or recall. ¹ ▪ Required to attend workplace harassment prevention training. ▪ Cannot be forced to participate in workplace investigations.
Job Qualification Requirements ²	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Hired via competitive exam process. ▪ Must meet specific qualifications associated with the job classification held. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Elected to office by constituents. ▪ To hold office, must be: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ At least 18 years of age. ▪ A United States citizen. ▪ A resident of and registered to vote in the district represented.
Time Commitment (Minimum)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ 40 Hour Work Week (160 Hours per Month) ^{2, 3} 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ 12-15 Hours per month for council meetings attendance; additional time spent preparing for meetings, listening and responding to constituent concerns, representing city on regulatory boards, attending city events, etc. ^{4, 5}
Compensation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Salaried, Overtime Exempt ³ 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Stipend ⁶
Benefits	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Approved by City Council 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Approved by City Council
CalPERS (Retirement)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Automatic upon employment. ▪ Vested after 5 years of service. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Optional. ▪ Vested after 5 years of full-time service.
Unemployment Benefits Eligibility	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Yes if termination is initiated by employer. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ No.
Notes	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> ¹ Censure is a vote by council majority that a member did something wrong. The Council majority can vote to remove a mayor/mayor pro tem from the position but not from the council. Constituents can remove councilmember from office via recall process or by not re-electing the him/her. ² <u>Department Head</u> job requirements typically include knowledge of and professional level experience performing the essential functions associated with the job classification. A Bachelor degree in discipline related to the job classification is required; a Master degree is desirable. A job related license or certificate may be required. <u>Councilmembers</u> are not legally required to have any education, training, or experience with government but are expected to maintain ethical standards, avoid conflicts of interest, represent constituent interest, be transparent, and follow laws. ³ Department Heads are present at Council meetings to answer Councilmember questions when an item on the meeting agenda is in their area of supervision. Some department heads attend community meetings, events, and/or oversee event set-up and handle “after hour” emergencies. ⁴ West Covina Closed Council meeting are generally scheduled from 6:00 PM to 7:00 PM prior to the regular Council meeting. Regular Council Meetings start at 7:00 PM and, depending on the agenda items, typically end somewhere between 10:00 PM and Midnight. ⁵ The time spent reviewing a council packet, responding to constituent concerns, and attending civic events varies with each councilmember. Time spent representing the city on regularly boards is compensated by the regulatory board. ⁶ A stipend is fixed dollar amount paid each month to cover expenses. City council stipends are sometimes referred to as “pay” or “salary”. California Government Code § 36515 caps the monthly stipend but does not cap benefits. 	
References	<p>City of West Covina documents include but are not limited to: 2024 Benefits Guide: Active Employees; Personnel Rules Effective September 5, 2023 (Resolution No. 2023-72); December 5, 2023 & December 19, 2023 City Council Meeting Agendas and Staff Reports.</p> <p>Green, R. and Petrusis, J. League of California Cities. (2021, April 30). <i>Elected Officials and Employment Law: When the Rules Don't Apply.</i></p>	