

## **Joint City/GUC Pay & Benefits Committee**

Wednesday, March 25, 2026

1:00 p.m.

GUC Board Room

- I. Call to Order
- II. Approval of the Agenda
- III. Approval of Minutes – September 11, 2025
- IV. Consideration of Recommendations from Classification & Compensation Study Consultant
- V. Consideration of Market Adjustment/Merit Program for FY 2026-2027
- VI. Review of 401(k) Employer Contribution
- VII. Next Steps
- VIII. Adjournment

**PROPOSED MINUTES OF THE CITY OF GREENVILLE AND GREENVILLE  
UTILITIES COMMISSION JOINT PAY & BENEFITS COMMITTEE**

The Joint Pay & Benefits Committee met on Thursday, September 11, 2025, at 4:30 p.m. in Conference Room 337, located inside of City Hall at 200 W. Fifth Street.

Committee Members Present

Council Member Marion Blackburn, City of Greenville  
Commissioner Wanda Carr, Greenville Utilities Commission  
Commissioner Justin Fuller, Greenville Utilities Commission  
Council Member Portia Willis, City of Greenville

Committee Members Absent

None

Staff Present

Dené Alexander, Assistant City Manager, City of Greenville  
Cortney Bazemore, HR Business Partner, Greenville Utilities Commission  
Glen Buck, Human Resources Manager, City of Greenville  
Tony Cannon, General Manager/Chief Executive Officer, Greenville Utilities Commission  
Michael Cowin, City Manager, City of Greenville  
Phil Dixon, General Counsel, Greenville Utilities Commission  
Leah Futrell, Human Resources Director, City of Greenville  
Ken Graves, Deputy City Manager, City of Greenville  
Steve Hawley, Communications Manager/PIO, Greenville Utilities Commission  
Lou Norris, Secretary to the General Manager/CEO, Greenville Utilities Commission  
Chris Padgett, Assistant General Manager/Chief Administrative Officer, Greenville Utilities Commission  
Lena Previll, Senior HR Manager, Greenville Utilities Commission  
Valerie Shiuwegar, City Clerk, City of Greenville  
Amy Wade, Executive Assistant to the General Manager/CEO, Greenville Utilities Commission  
Paige Wallace, Staff Support Specialist, Greenville Utilities Commission

I. Call to Order

City Manager Cowin called the meeting to order at 4:30 p.m.

II. Approval of the Agenda

Commissioner Carr made a motion to approve the agenda as presented. The motion was seconded by Council Member Willis and carried unanimously, 4:0.

III. Approval of the Minutes

Council Member Willis made a motion to approve the minutes from the March 25, 2025, Joint Pay & Benefits Committee meeting. The motion was seconded by Council Member Blackburn and carried unanimously, 4:0.

#### IV. Mercer Presentation: COG/GUC 2026 Recommendation for Health/Dental Insurance

Mr. Parker Cramer, Principal with Mercer, presented the 2026 renewal analysis and recommendations for medical, pharmacy, vision, and dental benefits.

He reviewed prior plan changes and noted that 2026 renewals reflect Internal Revenue Service (IRS)-mandated Health Savings Account (HSA) deductible increases and no other plan design changes.

The 2025 reforecast showed increased high-cost claim activity, including 15 members with claims over \$100,000 and two exceeding the \$300,000 stop-loss threshold. Major trends this year include inflation, an increase in cancer cases, and a continued pipeline of high-cost drugs. Mr. Cramer noted that it was too early to factor in tariffs.

Mercer projected a 9.4% overall increase for 2026, below the national average of 10.9%. Dental renewal requires a 3.6% increase.

Council Member Willis made a motion to approve the 2026 medical, pharmacy, vision, and dental renewal recommendations as presented. Council Member Blackburn seconded the motion, and it carried unanimously, 4:0.

#### V. Consideration of Community Service and School Involvement Leave Policy

Human Resources Director Leah Futrell presented the proposed policy which would support employees in their efforts to strengthen the community and support their children's efforts. The proposal provides 8 hours of paid leave annually for eligible employees and would be prorated for designated part-time employees. The proposed leave would be voluntary, utilized on a "use it or lose it" basis, and would require supervisory approval.

Committee members asked how such activities are currently handled and the rationale behind the proposed 8-hour leave.

Director Futrell stated employees currently use vacation leave. She further stated that the proposed leave duration was determined by examining peer agencies and their corresponding leave provisions for employees.

Commissioner Fuller made a motion to approve the policy as presented. Commissioner Carr seconded the motion, and it carried unanimously, 4:0.

#### VI. Discussion of Joint Committee Recommendations

Recommendations approved by the Committee will be presented at the September 22, 2025, Joint City Council – GUC Board meeting.

#### VII. Update on Upcoming Compensation Study

Director Futrell provided an update on the comprehensive classification and compensation study underway. Preliminary findings are expected in early 2026 and will be presented to the Joint Pay & Benefits Committee.

Committee members asked if staff foresees significant changes.

Staff noted that because of the recent true-up, the City and GUC are better positioned to avoid wide fluctuations.

#### VIII. Next Steps

Council Member Blackburn made a motion to cancel the September 16, 2025, Joint Pay & Benefits Committee meeting. Council Member Willis seconded the motion, and it carried unanimously, 4:0.

Mr. Cowin reminded the Committee members that these recommendations will be presented to the City Council and the GUC Board of Commissioner at the Joint Board meeting scheduled for Monday, September 22, 2025, at 6:00 p.m. in the City Hall Council Chambers.

#### IX. Adjourn

Council Member Blackburn made a motion to adjourn. Commissioner Fuller seconded the motion, and it carried unanimously, 4:0. The meeting adjourned at 5:19 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Valerie Shiuwegar, CMC  
City Clerk

**MEMORANDUM**

TO: Joint City/GUC Pay and Benefits Committee

FROM: Michael W. Cowin, City Manager   
Anthony C. Cannon, General Manager/CEO 

DATE: March 18, 2026

SUBJECT: Joint City/GUC Pay and Benefits Committee Meeting Items

The meeting of the Joint City/GUC Pay and Benefits Committee is scheduled for Wednesday, March 25, 2026, beginning at 1:00 p.m. in the GUC Board Room. A copy of the Meeting Agenda is enclosed for your review.

**Pay Philosophy**

In order to mitigate pay compression and to attract and retain high-performing employees, the City Council and Greenville Utilities Commission’s Board of Commissioners use an “at market” pay philosophy. As such, both organizations strive to pay at market and adjust the salary structures as needed to maintain market competitiveness. This enhances the City’s and GUC’s ability to recruit and retain qualified and high-performing employees. This is especially important in today’s increasingly competitive and tightening labor market.

**Market Adjustment/Merit Allocation**

The City and GUC have traditionally used Catapult’s (formerly CAI) annual *North Carolina and Regional Wage & Salary Survey* as the primary benchmark guide for establishing the market as it relates to wage growth. Catapult’s survey provides comprehensive pay practice and salary data for private and public-sector employers across North Carolina, with a small number of employers located in the bordering states of South Carolina, Tennessee, Virginia, and Georgia.

In order to make informed compensation decisions and to ensure that Catapult is truly representative of the market, the City and GUC have also used other reliable data sources such as reputable published surveys and wage data from public-sector benchmark organizations and local private-sector employers. Following is data collected from the published survey sources:

| Survey Company                    | Projection |
|-----------------------------------|------------|
| Catapult*                         | 3.4%       |
| Economic Research Institute (ERI) | 3.5%       |
| Korn Ferry                        | 3.5%       |

| Survey Company       | Projection |
|----------------------|------------|
| Mercer               | 3.5%       |
| The Conference Board | 3.4%       |
| Willis Towers Watson | 3.4%       |
| WorldatWork          | 3.6%       |

*\*COG and GUC have traditionally used Catapult as the primary benchmark guide*

As depicted in the chart above, 2026 wage projections and trends among all these surveys are relatively consistent, collectively averaging 3.5%.

As previously noted, in addition to gathering published survey projections, COG and GUC staff also surveyed our established benchmark public-sector organizations and several local private employers to determine their plans related to compensation decisions for FY 2026-2027.

- Public-sector benchmark organizations: The public-sector benchmark organizations are comprised of 26 municipalities and utilities. Of the organizations that responded, 13 gave their employees pay increases in FY 2025/26; the average actual increase was 4.6% (market and/or merit). Most of the benchmark organizations are in the process of developing their FY 2026/27 budgets and have not made a decision regarding pay increases. Of the 5 organizations that have responded, the average pay increase projection for FY 2026/27 is 4.0% (market and/or merit).
- Local private employers: For FY 2026/27, 19 private-sector employers were surveyed. Of the 3 employers that responded, they are projecting pay increases that average 4.0% (market and/or merit). Those same employers reported actual increases averaging 3.7% (market and/or merit) last year.

## COG/GUC Combined Market and Merit Adjustment Benchmark History

| Fiscal Year | Catapult | Private Sector | Public Sector | COG  | GUC  |
|-------------|----------|----------------|---------------|------|------|
| 20/21       | 2.5%     | 2.1%           | 2.2%          | 2.0% | 2.0% |
| 21/22       | 3.1%     | 2.7%           | 3.9%          | 2.0% | 2.0% |
| 22/23       | 3.8%     | 4.8%           | 5.2%          | 4.0% | 4.0% |
| 23/24       | 4.2%     | 3.7%           | 5.5%          | 2.0% | 2.0% |
| 24/25       | 3.9%     | 3.4%           | 4.6%          | 4.0% | 4.0% |
| 25/26       | 3.9%     | 3.7%           | 4.6%          | 4.0% | 4.0% |
| 26/27       | 3.4*     | 4.0%*          | 4.0*          | TBD  | TBD  |

*\*Projections per Catapult's NC and Regional Wage & Salary Survey. The private & public sector data represents projections collected during the Spring of each year as part of the Pay & Benefits planning process.*

## GUC/COG Combined Market and Merit Adjustment History

| Fiscal Year | Annual |       | Combined |
|-------------|--------|-------|----------|
|             | Market | Merit |          |
| 21/22 (GUC) | .5%    | 1.5%  | 2.0%     |
| (COG)       | .5%    | 1.5%  | 2.0%     |
| 22/23 (GUC) | 2.5%   | 1.5%  | 4.0%     |
| (COG)       | 1.0%   | 3.0%  | 4.0%     |
| 23/24 (GUC) | .5%    | 1.5%  | 2.0%     |
| (COG)       | .5%    | 1.5%  | 2.0%     |

| <b>GUC/COG Combined Market and Merit Adjustment History</b> |               |              |                 |
|---|---------------|--------------|-----------------|
| <b>Fiscal Year</b>  | <b>Annual</b> |              | <b>Combined</b> |
|   | <b>Market</b> | <b>Merit</b> |                 |
| <b>24/25 (GUC)</b>  | 2.5%          | 1.5%         | 4.0%            |
| <b>(COG)</b>  | 3.0%          | 1.0%         | 4.0%            |
| <b>25/26 (GUC)</b>  | 2.5%          | 1.5%         | 4.0%            |
| <b>(COG)</b>  | 3.0%          | 1.0%         | 4.0%            |

**Recommendation**

In order to maintain market competitiveness, staff recommends that the City and GUC fund an employee pay adjustment of 3.25% for FY 2026-2027, applied as deemed appropriate by each entity.

**401(k) Employer Contribution Review**

Last year, the Joint Boards approved the Joint Committee’s recommendation to increase the 401(k) employer contribution from 3% to 4% per pay period effective FY 2025/26 for full-time and select designated part-time employees (excluding sworn law enforcement). Additionally, the Joint Boards approved an increase from 4% to 5% effective FY 2026/27. This change to 5%, recommended to be effective January 1, 2027, will align all eligible employees with sworn law enforcement officers who, pursuant to North Carolina General Statute, receive a 5% 401(k) employer contribution. Both organizations continue to see the positive impact of recent changes to 401(k) employer contributions as it relates to employee retention and recruitment.

**Consideration of Recommendations from Classification & Compensation Study Consultant**

Segal Consultants will provide an overview of the Joint Classification and Compensation Study and a recommendation for implementation of the study results.

We look forward to seeing you at the upcoming Committee Meeting on March 25, 2026 at 1:00 p.m.

- cc: Ken Graves, COG Deputy City Manager  
 Dene’ Alexander, COG Assistant City Manager  
 Chris Padgett, GUC Assistant General Manager/Chief Operating Officer  
 Andy Anderson, GUC Chief Administrative Officer  
 Leah Futrell, COG Director of Human Resources  
 Richie Shreves, GUC Director of Human Resources