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Suggested benefits cut for elected leaders gets chilly reception

Story and Photos

By Jeff M. Hardison

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BRONSON-- Bronson Town Councilwoman Katie Parks expressed an idea Monday night (Sept. 19) that struck a nerve with Councilman Aaron Edmondson.

Parks said she felt that the Bronson Town Council might consider cutting its benefits, including all health, dental and vision insurance, to the elected members of the Town Council.

Bronson Town Councilwoman Katie Parks

Parks said this reduction in pay to the five Town Council leaders might help the annual budget.

The councilwoman said she also believes this could lead to the ability to hire another full-time worker and another part-time worker.

Here is a detailed listing of payments and benefits for Bronson Town Council members.

Council Exp.

	Council Pay Monthly	Yearly	Bonus	Health Mon (16-17 Cost)	Health Yr	Dental Mon (16-17 Cost)	Dental Year	Life Insurance	IPAD Expense Month	I Pad Expense Year	YR Total Exp
Mayor	\$ 800.00	\$ 9,600.00	\$ 250.00	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -	\$ 36.05	\$ 432.60	\$ 11,118.65
Vice Mayor	\$ 600.00	\$ 7,200.00	\$ 250.00	\$ 613.76	\$ 7,365.12	\$ 30.61	\$ 367.32	\$ 756.00	\$ 36.05	\$ 432.60	\$ 17,651.46
Seat 1	\$ 500.00	\$ 6,000.00	\$ 250.00	\$ 613.76	\$ 7,365.12	\$ 30.61	\$ 367.32	\$ 756.00	\$ 36.05	\$ 432.60	\$ 16,351.46
Seat 2	\$ 500.00	\$ 6,000.00	\$ 250.00	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -	\$ 36.05	\$ 432.60	\$ 7,218.65
Seat 5	\$ 500.00	\$ 6,000.00	\$ 250.00	\$ 613.76	\$ 7,365.12	\$ 30.61	\$ 367.32	\$ -	\$ 36.05	\$ 432.60	\$ 15,595.46
Totals	\$ 2,900.00	\$ 34,800.00	\$ 1,250.00	\$ 1,841.28	\$ 22,095.36	\$ 91.83	\$ 1,101.96	\$ 1,512.00	\$ 180.25	\$ 2,163.00	\$ 67,935.68

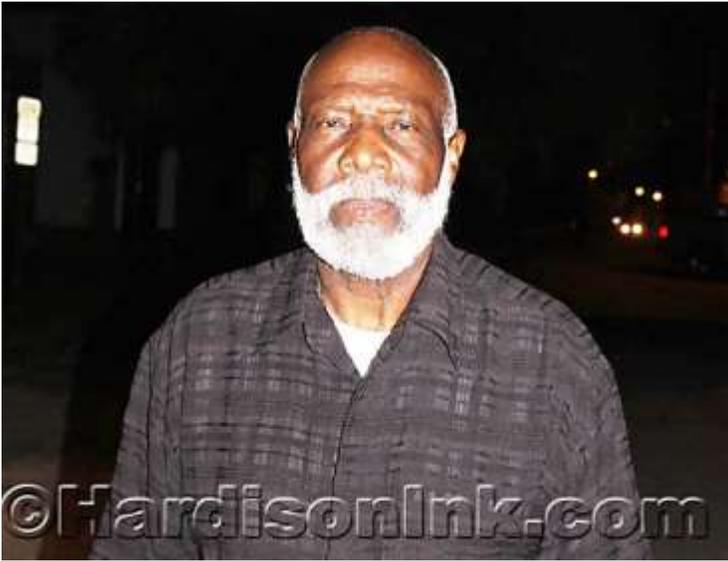
Parks said she felt that the Bronson Town Council might consider cutting its benefits, including all health, dental and vision insurance, to the elected members of the Town Council.

Parks said this reduction in pay to the five Town Council leaders might help the annual budget.

The councilwoman said she also believes this could lead to the ability to hire another full-time worker and another part-time worker.

Parks said she feels like Town Council members are part-time workers who are getting full-time benefits. She noted that in some cases of these five individuals, the monetary value of benefits exceeds the stipend that is paid to the Town Council member.

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Bronson Town Councilman Aaron Edmondson

Following is the breakdown of the annually budget payment totals of the stipend (including the annual \$250 bonus) combined with the value of benefits for each municipal leader, including the iPad rental, and all forms of insurance:

* Seat 4 Mayor Bruce Greenlee \$11,118.65

* Seat 3 Vice Mayor Beatrice Roberts \$17,651.46

* Seat 1 Councilman Aaron Edmondson

\$16,351.46

* Seat 2 Councilwoman Katie Parks \$7,218.65

* Seat 5 Councilman Jason Hunt \$15,595.46

Vice Mayor Roberts said that while Parks may see the stipend and benefits as being excessive for Town

Council members to accept as compensation for what they do, she reminded Parks that whenever a person calls any of them about matters in the town, then they are called into some sort of action.

Edmondson said he especially needs his health insurance, and he believes he has earned the benefit provided to him by the taxpayers as an elected member of the Bronson Town Council.

Edmondson said insurance for Town Council members started 15 years ago, when Jamie Griffin was mayor, and it has continued ever since then.

Edmondson had just retired back then, he said, and so he had no health insurance. Griffin's action helped Edmondson and that health insurance benefit continues to be part of the compensation to the councilman for his service to the residents and visitors of Bronson.

Edmondson said it was his feeling that Parks was just tearing down what had been established for 15 years now, as he noted she has only been in her office for a couple of years. Parks does not need to accept health insurance and some of the other benefits, because she has a job that covers those needs in her life.

Edmondson said he plans not run for reelection after he completes this term.

Beyond that, if the majority of the Town Council votes to eliminate benefits for elected Town Council members, then Edmondson is going to leave his position, he said, indicating that exit would be before his term ends.

Edmondson said he thinks the town has a sufficient amount of employees and they are doing an adequate job.

Vice Mayor Roberts had noted that the \$22,000 that the town would save annually by eliminating benefits for council members would not pay the \$30,000 worth of salary and benefits to hire one full-time worker, much less a full-time worker and a part-time worker for a year.

"If my stuff gets cut," Edmondson said. "I am through with it. I am finished. It's as simple as that. That's the way I feel about it. You say you don't want to step on anyone's toes, but if you cut my benefits, then I am finished."

Mayor Greenlee said he felt that if this matter was going to go forward, then it will take more discussion. There was no action on the suggestion by Parks, including no planning for a workshop or mention of putting the matter on a future agenda.

The Bronson Town Council does not have regular meetings in October each year.