


Personnel Resolution: Sick and Vacation Accrual Rates

City of Winston-Salem General Government Committee

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April 14, 2025



Discussion Topics

- Background
- Summary of sick and vacation accrual rates for City employees
- Comparison of Fire Dept. accrual rates to other municipalities
- Firefighter salary comparisons
- Recommendation and next steps

Background

- Since 2015, Fire Department employees working a 56-hour schedule have been accruing sick and vacation time at a higher rate than other City employees
- From an operational perspective, higher vacation accrual rates mean there is more ability for fire employees to take time off, which contributes to increased overtime to maintain minimum staffing.
- Though the timing of this presentation is occurring after the recent overtime budget discussions, the issue of fire accrual rates not being on par with other City employees has been under discussion since prior to Fall 2024.
- As part of analyzing sick and vacation accrual rates, staff also compared firefighter salaries with other NC municipalities

Sick Accrual Comparison for City of W-S Employees

In 2015, Council approved a change to the personnel resolution to increase Fire Dept. sick leave accruals from 12 hours/day to 24 hours/day.

Though not addressed in the resolution, this change was also made retroactively – existing sick leave balances that were accrued at the rate of 12 hours/day were adjusted to reflect the new accrual rate of 24 hours/day.

40 hour/week Employee

<u># Sick Days/Yr</u>	<u># Hrs/Pay Period</u>	<u># of Sick Hours/Year</u>	<u># Annual Work Hours</u>	<u>Sick as % of Annual Hrs.</u>
12	3.69	96	2,080	4.6%
Equivalent of 8 hours/day				

Fire Dept. 56 hour/week Employee

<u># Sick Days/Yr</u>	<u># Hrs/Pay Period</u>	<u># of Sick Hours/Year</u>	<u># Annual Work Hours</u>	<u>Sick as % of Annual Hrs.</u>
12	11.08	288	2,912	9.9%
Equivalent of 24 hours/day				

Vacation Accrual Comparison for City of W-S Employees

Vacation accruals for Fire Dept. employees working a 56 hour/week schedule had historically been accrued at the rate of 12 hours/day, the same as sick leave.

The 2015 changes to the Personnel Resolution related to sick leave accrual rates did not address any changes to vacation accruals. However, a decision was made by city staff to also increase vacation accrual rates to the rate of 24 hours/day. It should be noted that this change was *not* made retroactively to existing vacation leave balance as was done with sick leave.

First year with the City				
40 hour/week Employee				
<u># Vac. Days/Yr</u>	<u># Hrs/Pay Period</u>	<u># of Vac. Hours/Year</u>	<u># Annual Work Hours</u>	<u>Vac. as % of Annual Hrs.</u>
10	3.08	80	2,080	3.8%
Equivalent of 8 hours/day				
Fire Dept. 56 hour/week Employee				
<u># Vac. Days/Yr</u>	<u># Hrs/Pay Period</u>	<u># of Vac. Hours/Year</u>	<u># Annual Work Hours</u>	<u>Vac. as % of Annual Hrs.</u>
10	9.23	240	2,912	8.2%
Equivalent of 24 hours/day				

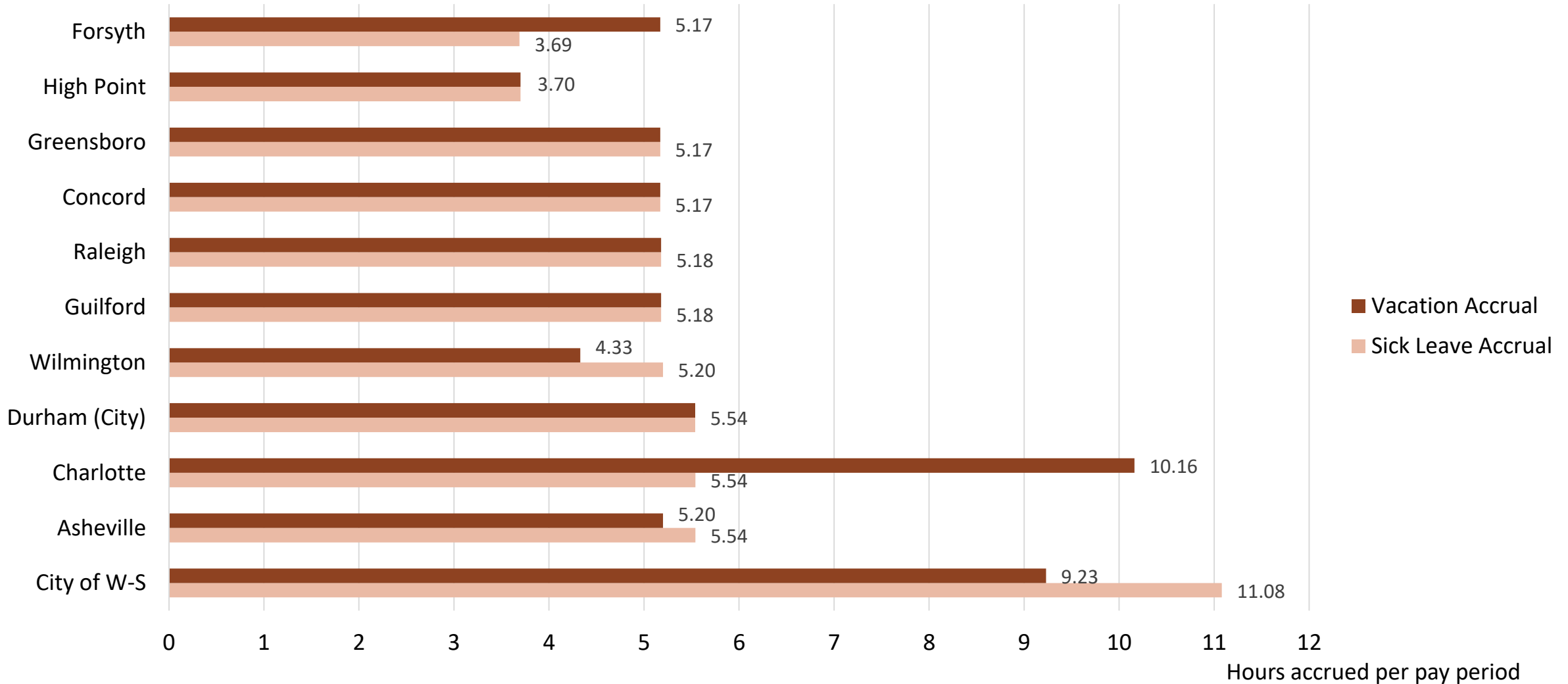
Vacation Accrual Comparison for City of W-S Employees

20+ Years with the City				
40 hour/week Employee				
<u># Vac. Days/Yr</u>	<u># Hrs/Pay Period</u>	<u># of Vac. Hours/Year</u>	<u># Annual Work Hours</u>	<u>Vac. as % of Annual Hrs.</u>
24	7.40 Equivalent of 8 hours/day	192	2,080	9.2% vs. 3.8% for 1 yr of svc
Fire Dept. 56 hour/week Employee				
<u># Vac. Days/Yr</u>	<u># Hrs/Pay Period</u>	<u># of Vac. Hours/Year</u>	<u># Annual Work Hours</u>	<u>Vac. as % of Annual Hrs.</u>
24	22.15 Equivalent of 24 hours/day	576	2,912	19.8% vs. 8.2% for 1 yr of svc

For all City employees, accrued vacation hours in excess of 30 days is “rolled” into their sick leave balance. Upon retirement, unused sick leave is converted to years of service, which increases retirement pension payments from the State.

Vacation and Sick Accrual Rates Per Pay Period

Fire Dept. 56 hour/week Employees in 1st Yr of Service



Summary of Fire Dept. Accrual Rates

Fire Dept. Accrual Rates

- Accrual rates for Fire employees working 56 hours/week are more than double the rate earned by other City employees and roughly double that of comparable fire departments

Near-Term Impacts

- Higher levels of accruals provide the ability to take more time off, which requires calling in other employees on an overtime basis to maintain minimum staffing

Longer-term Impacts

- Vacation hours in excess of 30 days are rolled into an employee's sick leave balance. Unused sick leave is converted to years of service upon retirement.
- More years of service = higher pension payments for life.
- When pension payments exceed the State's forecasted amount for an individual employee, the City must pay a "pension spiking" payment, which can be ~\$100,000 per employee for retired firefighters.

Newly Hired Firefighter Salary Comparison

No formal education			
COUNTY/CITY	PAY RANGE		
	MIN	MID	MAX
WILMINGTON	\$ 45,893	\$ 59,653	\$ 73,412
RALEIGH	46,540	60,080	73,620
FORSYTH	46,738	63,089	79,439
GUILFORD	47,640	58,327	69,014
HIGH POINT ⁽¹⁾	47,915	61,392	74,868
ASHEVILLE	50,310	51,584	52,857
DURHAM (CITY)	51,559	67,772	83,984
GREENSBORO	51,713	54,942	58,170
CONCORD	53,145	70,417	87,689
CHARLOTTE ⁽¹⁾	55,871	69,209	82,547
AVERAGE	\$ 49,732	\$ 61,646	\$ 73,560
CITY OF W-S ⁽¹⁾	\$46,057	\$ 57,572	\$ 69,086

Our pay ranges were increased in 2024 as part of a salary analysis performed by a 3rd party firm. Winston-Salem's salary range for Fiscal Year 2023-24 was \$42,470-\$63,704 which was below the market averages of \$46,662-\$70,997 when the analysis was completed.

Several of these municipalities have conducted salary studies and increased base pay since that time.

7% below avg starting salary

(1) Winston-Salem, High Point, and Charlotte offer an additional 5% incentive to base pay for military service which is not reflected in the table.

Newly Hired Firefighter Salary Comparison

Associate's degree			
COUNTY/CITY	PAY RANGE		
	MIN	MID	MAX
RALEIGH	\$ 46,540	\$ 60,080	\$ 73,620
FORSYTH	46,738	63,089	79,439
WILMINGTON	46,893	60,653	74,412
GUILFORD	47,640	58,327	69,014
HIGH POINT ⁽¹⁾	47,915	61,392	74,868
GREENSBORO	51,065	52,357	53,650
ASHEVILLE	51,713	54,942	58,170
CHARLOTTE ⁽¹⁾	52,848	69,466	86,084
DURHAM (CITY)	53,145	70,417	87,689
CONCORD	58,665	72,669	86,674
AVERAGE	\$ 50,316	\$ 62,339	\$ 74,362
CITY OF W-S ⁽¹⁾	\$ 48,360	\$ 60,450	\$ 72,540

(1) Winston-Salem, High Point, and Charlotte offer an additional 5% incentive to base pay for military service which is not reflected in the table.

4% below avg starting salary

Newly Hired Firefighter Salary Comparison

Bachelor's degree			
COUNTY/CITY	PAY RANGE		
	MIN	MID	MAX
RALEIGH	\$46,540	\$60,080	\$73,620
FORSYTH	46,738	63,089	79,439
GUILFORD	47,640	58,327	69,014
WILMINGTON	47,893	61,653	75,412
HIGH POINT ⁽¹⁾	47,915	61,392	74,868
GREENSBORO	51,713	54,942	58,170
ASHEVILLE	51,819	53,131	54,443
CONCORD	53,145	70,417	87,689
DURHAM (CITY)	54,137	71,160	88,183
CHARLOTTE ⁽¹⁾	61,458	76,130	90,802
AVERAGE	\$50,900	\$63,032	\$75,164

(1) Winston-Salem, High Point, and Charlotte offer an additional 5% incentive to base pay for military service which is not reflected in the table.

CITY OF W-S ⁽¹⁾	\$ 50,778	\$ 63,473	\$ 76,167
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Within market ranges

Summary

- Pay for entry level firefighters without a 4-year degree or military experience is 4-7% lower than comparable departments
- However we have military and education incentives that most other organizations do not have (which are increases to base pay vs 1 time or annual payments)
 - 5% for military experience
 - 5% for 2-year degree
 - 10% for 4-year degree
- Sick and vacation accrual rates for Fire are more than double the rate earned by other City employees and are roughly double that of other organizations
 - Impacts budget from overtime basis as well as pension spiking payments

Staff Recommendations

- Adjust accrual rates for 56/hour Fire Dept. employees to be on par with other City employees
- Staff will evaluate salary adjustments as part of the budget adoption process
- Present additional analysis impacting all city employees at the May 2025 General Govt. Committee meeting:
 - Comparison of vacation accrual rates and maximum number of hours that can be accrued to other municipalities to ensure we are competitive in the market
 - Also compare holiday accrual rates and ability to “roll over” holiday accruals from year to year
 - Expansion of language incentive program

Sick Accrual Comparison for City of W-S Employees

Recommended Changes

40 hour/week Employee

<u># Sick Days/Yr</u>	<u># Hrs/Pay Period</u>	<u># of Sick Hours/Year</u>	<u># Annual Work Hours</u>	<u>Sick as % of Annual Hrs.</u>
12	3.69	96	2,080	4.6%

Fire Dept. 56 hour/week Employee - **Proposed**

<u># Sick Days/Yr</u>	<u># Hrs/Pay Period</u>	<u># of Sick Hours/Year</u>	<u># Annual Work Hours</u>	<u>Sick as % of Annual Hrs.</u>
12	5.17	134	2,912	4.6%

5.17 hrs/pay period = 11.2 hrs/day. Current is 11.08 hrs/pay period or 24 hrs/day = 288 hrs/year

Vacation Accrual Comparison for City of W-S Employees

Recommended Changes

First year with the City

40 hour/week Employee

<u># Vac. Days/Yr</u>	<u># Hrs/Pay Period</u>	<u># of Vac. Hours/Year</u>	<u># Annual Work Hours</u>	<u>Vac. as % of Annual Hrs.</u>
10	3.08	80	2,080	3.8%

Fire Dept. 56 hour/week Employee - **Proposed**

<u># Vac. Days/Yr</u>	<u># Hrs/Pay Period</u>	<u># of Vac. Hours/Year</u>	<u># Annual Work Hours</u>	<u>Vac. as % of Annual Hrs.</u>
10	4.31	112	2,912	3.8%

4.31 hrs/pay period = 11.2 hrs/day. Current is 9.23 hrs/pay period or 24 hrs/day = 240 hrs/year

20+ Years with the City

40 hour/week Employee

<u># Vac. Days/Yr</u>	<u># Hrs/Pay Period</u>	<u># of Vac. Hours/Year</u>	<u># Annual Work Hours</u>	<u>Vac. as % of Annual Hrs.</u>
24	7.40	192	2,080	9.2%

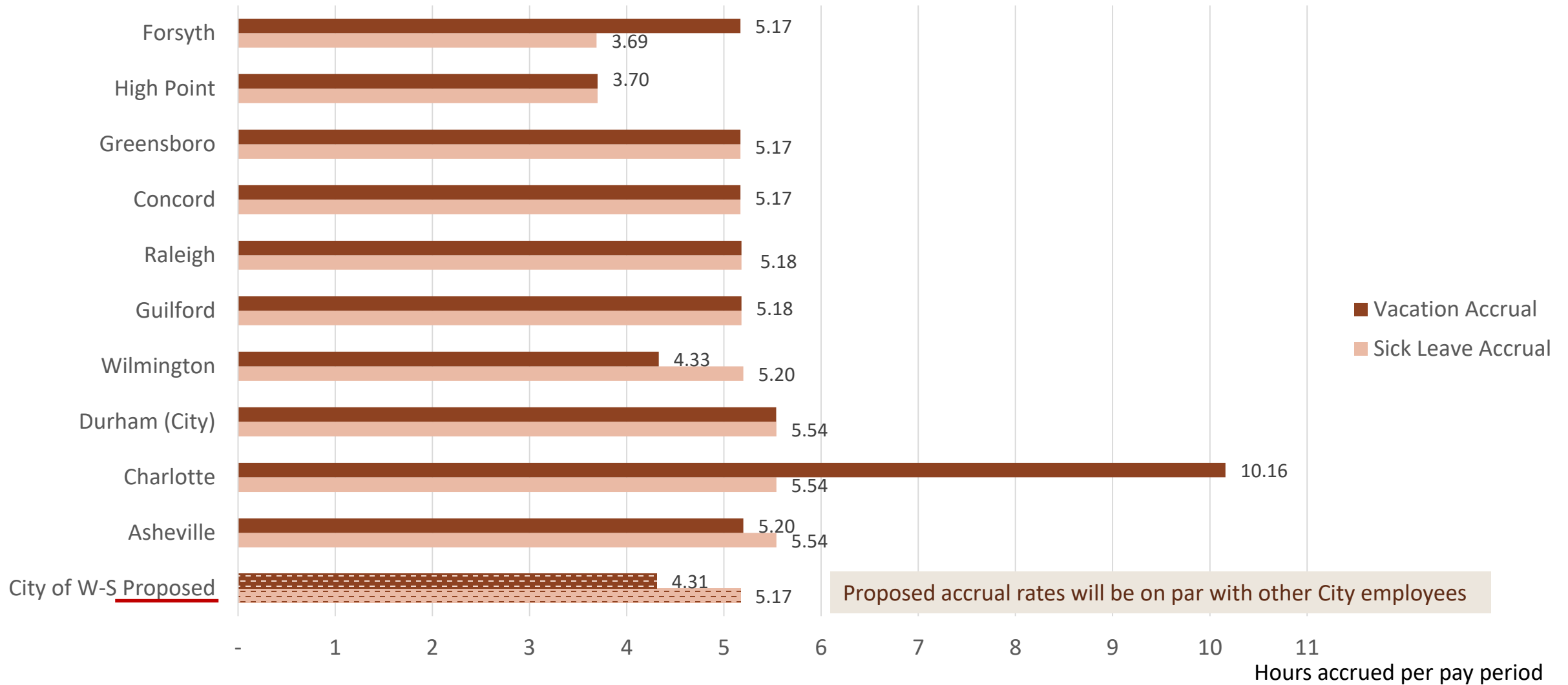
Fire Dept. 56 hour/week Employee - **Proposed**

<u># Vac. Days/Yr</u>	<u># Hrs/Pay Period</u>	<u># of Vac. Hours/Year</u>	<u># Annual Work Hours</u>	<u>Vac. as % of Annual Hrs.</u>
24	10.34	269	2,912	9.2%

10.34 hrs/pay period = 11.2 hrs/day. Current is 22.15 hrs/pay period or 24 hrs/day = 576 hrs/year

Vacation and Sick Accrual Rates Per Pay Period

Fire Dept. 56 hour/week Employees in 1st Yr of Service



Next Steps

5/12/25 General Govt. Committee

Update on holiday accruals and vacation accrual comparisons for all city employees

6/9/25 Committee of the Whole

Present proposed language changes to personnel resolution

6/16/25 Council Mtg.

Adoption of proposed personnel resolution changes

7/1/25 New Fiscal Yr.

Effective date of changes to personnel resolution

QUESTIONS?