

Council Hires Bakaly as New Hermosa Beach City Manager

Despite misgivings from some councilmen over compensation, the city council votes 3-2 to hire Thomas Bakaly as the new Hermosa Beach city manager.
Hermosa Beach, CA

By [Eric Farrell \(Open Post\)](#) - July 25, 2012 10:52 pm ET



Tempers flared before the Hermosa Beach City Council voted 3-2 to hire Thomas Bakaly as the city's new city manager at Tuesday night's meeting.

Bakaly—the current city manager of Park City, Utah—received kind words about his resume, but not for his employment contract.

During a presentation to the council, interim City Manager John Jalili outlined the process of finding a new city manager in the wake of longtime former City Manager Steve Burrell's decision to retire in March.

That process included hiring an outside firm that screened 76 applicants, who were then narrowed down until finally the councilmen themselves selected Bakaly as the best choice.

"First, let me say that I think without question that Tom was an impressive dude, and I think that he provides a lot of earned and demonstrated skills that meet our needs and that match quite nicely with our uniqueness," said Councilman Michael DiVirgilio.

The kind words stopped there, as DiVirgilio stated that he thought the city would be overpaying for this new city manager, no matter who it is. Bakaly's base salary—which was ultimately approved in a 3-2 vote—is \$185,000; however, he may also get up to a 7 percent performance-based bonus, deferred compensation of \$8,000 per year, six months' salary and medical benefits for a "no-cause" termination should it happen, and \$25,000 to pay for Bakaly to relocate to Hermosa Beach, according to a city staff report.

"I'm not going to be voting in favor of either of the motions tonight, because in a nutshell, we are overpaying for this position, in my opinion," DiVirgilio said. "I don't think I would hire anybody for a job that I thought was overpaying."

Mayor Pro Tem Kit Bobko added his own biting comments as he agreed with DiVirgilio.

"In Hermosa Beach, we're whistling past the graveyard because we are not having any financial troubles yet," Bobko said. "We weren't going to stand firm and ask of our leader, the person who is in charge of our city's staff, to do what we want the staff to do, which is to pay for his own first contribution. That is deeply disappointing and I think a failure of leadership for this council..."

"How many times does the average salary decrease among city managers? I've never heard of it, and yet again, we aren't willing to take that leadership role."

After Bobko's comments and to loud cheers from the citizens who remained at the meeting, the city council voted 3-2 to approve Bakaly as the city's new city manager and again 3-2 to accept the employment agreement. DiVirgilio and Bobko dissented on both decisions.

The remaining citizens loudly cheered for the final decision.

Bakaly is set to commence his service on Sept. 4, said Jalili.