

**SURPRISE REPUBLIC****VP/GENERAL MANAGER:**

Michael Ryan, 602-444-5810

**OPINIONS EDITOR:**

Jennifer Dokes, 602-444-6918

**OPINIONS WRITER:**

Monica Alonzo-Dunsmoor, 602-444-6929

**VISIT OUR BLOG:** Go to [wvblogs.azcentral.com](http://wvblogs.azcentral.com) and then to Plugged In — West Valley

# City manager's salary must be reasonable

**E**l Mirage's B.J. Cornwall is the highest-paid city or town manager per capita in the Valley.

Cornwall pulls \$196,456, an annual base salary that rivals managers of the Valley's three largest cities. That doesn't include additional perks, such as car allowances, health benefits and travel allowances.

That's not a bad deal for managing a community of about 34,000.

By comparison, Christopher Brady, the city manager in Mesa, population 456,344, makes just \$437 more a year than Cornwall.

Phoenix and Glendale city

## Manager's salaries

Valley managers have many responsibilities, including overseeing city and town departments, ensuring the community's financial health and carrying out policies adopted by elected officials. They are compensated well for their work.

City	Salary	Population*	Per capita
Phoenix	\$236,998	1,538,568	0.15
Glendale	\$227,163	246,076	0.92
Mesa	\$196,893	456,344	0.43
El Mirage	\$196,456	33,583	5.85
Scottsdale	\$190,008	240,126	0.79
Chandler	\$190,000	241,205	0.79
Tempe	\$185,295	167,871	1.10
Surprise	\$185,000	104,895	1.76
Peoria	\$184,500	151,541	1.22
Avondale	\$175,032	75,256	2.33
Gilbert	\$175,011	203,656	0.86
Goodyear	\$168,000	55,954	3.00
Buckeye	\$165,000	40,467	4.08

\*Arizona Department of Commerce 2007 population estimates.

managers — David Cavazos and Ed Beasley, respectively — make \$236,998 and \$227,163.

Officials from the League of Arizona Cities and Town Representatives, an organization that lobbies on behalf of its municipal members, often point out that city and town managers still earn less than their counterparts in the corporate world.

A fair assessment, but corporate giants aren't primarily being funded by public tax dollars, save all those living off federal stimulus money, of course.

Given everything that the Valley has heard from El Mirage about being short on revenue streams to ensure a sustainable future, the size of



**B.J.  
Cornwall**



**David  
Cavazos**



**Christopher  
Brady**



**Ed  
Beasley**

*Salaries and other expenses in El Mirage merit scrutiny because the city's financial concerns are largely behind its efforts to be compensated for land around Luke Air Force Base.*

Cornwall's salary sends a mixed message.

Salaries and other expenses in El Mirage merit scrutiny because the city's financial concerns are largely behind its efforts to be compensated for land around Luke Air Force Base that's within city limits but essentially out of its reach.

Those swaths of land are saddled with building restrictions aimed at protecting the base. But city officials have complained that restrictions have also kept potential investors and developers at bay.

Money worries also had El Mirage push an unsuccessful lawsuit against Glendale all the way to the Arizona Supreme Court in hopes of breaking through Glendale's strip annexation of some 40 acres of county land. El Mirage was eyeing that land for economic development.

Ultimately, a trip in March to Washington, D.C., where El Mirage officials asked for \$400 million from the federal government to cover base-related losses, culminated in a battle about Luke.

El Mirage financial worries

became the state's financial worries. Many perceived El Mirage's concerns as a threat to Luke, one of Arizona's largest economic engines. As a result, Valley leaders forged a statewide and very public campaign to support the base.

What appear to be disproportionate salaries for any government employees also will raise eyebrows because of local economic conditions. Arizona now is the worst state in the nation for job growth, reaching an unemployment rate of 9.3 percent in October, according to experts at Arizona State University's W.P. Carey School of Business.

Most cities are slashing employees, services and benefits, trying to bridge multimillion-dollar budget gaps. Some city managers, including those in Glendale and Goodyear, are voluntarily freezing their salaries.

In El Mirage, Cornwall's salary has nearly doubled from the \$102,852 he earned when he was hired in 2003.

Stacy Pearson, a spokeswoman for El Mirage, said the increases were a conscious de-

cision by elected officials to provide stability for the community.

As a result of salary increases, Cornwall is the longest-tenured manager in El Mirage's recent history.

Pearson said there also is less support staff in El Mirage, thus more direct responsibilities fall on Cornwall's shoulders. Under his management, the city has not had to make cuts in staff or city services, she said.

No doubt that the small city was not bloated with large staffing levels and that it has not had to juggle projects or services as have neighboring cities also play a role in its better-than-average outlook.

Some reflection is in order to justify the salary that city administrators receive in comparison with the management duties in the community.

Of course, a bad or inexperienced manager — and El Mirage has seen its share of them in the past — isn't good for the community. And a competitive salary is important to draw good candidates. But it has to be reasonable and pass the test of public perception.

### Your voice counts

**E-mail:** [wvalley.letters@arizonarepublic.com](mailto:wvalley.letters@arizonarepublic.com)

**Fax:** 623-412-9577

**Mail:** The Arizona Republic, West Valley Letters, 17235 N. 75th Ave., Suite A-100, Glendale, AZ 85308

Please include your name, address and phone number. Please limit letters to 200 words and columns to 400 words.