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**By JAMES W. WADE III**

Staff Reporter

East Cleveland Mayor Gary Norton found out he would be taking a huge pay cut. Last week, four attending council members voted unanimously to remove Mayor Norton from his position as the city's public safety director, knocking his salary from $77,000 to $40,000.

Council members say because of lost revenue the city has little choice when it comes to the budget. Mayor Norton says that is not true. "Not only did we cut the budget by 15 percent, we preserved the number of police and firemen that we had."

City council said they also voted to cut 10 percent of the budget from most city departments. It is now up to the mayor to decide if those cuts will be made to personnel. "Nothing about East Cleveland is improved as a result of the decision that they made," said Mayor Norton. "In 2012, $40,000 a year is not fair compensation for the chief executive officer of the city, who is the mayor. The only people who can rectify that problem are the voters."

This salary has been in place since 1983 when they first did the charter, going from a City Manager to a Mayor, which was a part-time position. Since then, the city has adopted the position as full-time.

At various events over the holiday season, the question was discussed a few times. Most seem to think it is personal and not about the business at hand. Norton had more than a few council members who where upset earlier this year over the use of traffic cameras in the city.

In November, East Cleveland residents became the first in the nation to vote in favor of traffic cameras after the mayor and others argued that photo enforcement was necessary for safety and revenue from tickets. Norton also threatened layoffs if the measure was defeated.

In 1997 then Mayor Onunwor served 2 terms getting the Safety Director pay, then following Mayor Samantha Goggins also received it. During her term they voted to remove it in 2006 when Eric Brewer became Mayor.

In 2009 East Cleveland Council voted to restore the salary for the new Mayor, which was Gary Norton. So the same people that voted to give it to him, have now decided to remove it.

East Cleveland is a charter city in which the governing system is defined by the city's own charter document rather than by state, provincial, regional or national laws. In locations where city

charters are allowed by law, a city can adopt or modify its organizing charter by decision of its administration by the way established in the charter.

These cities may be administered predominantly by citizens or through a third-party management structure, because a charter gives a city the flexibility to choose novel types of government structure. Charter cities are similar in administrative structure to special administrative regions
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"There are a lot of problems in East Cleveland that need to be fixed," said Norton, who served on council for nearly four years before becoming mayor. "But one real problem for the city is stabilizing the salary of the mayor. The reality is that the voters of East Cleveland are eventually going to have to fix this in order to get a good, stable mayor who can move the city forward."