



City of Tacoma City Council Minutes

733 Market Street, Tacoma, WA 98402

Conference Room 16

Dial: 253-215-8782 Meeting ID: 894 9617 1192

Webinar Link: www.zoom.us/j/89496171192 Passcode: 896569

May 31, 2024

9:00 AM

SPECIAL MEETING

Call to Order

Mayor Woodards called the special meeting to order at 9:17 a.m.

Present: 8 - Bushnell, Daniels, Diaz, Hines, Rumbaugh, Scott, Walker and Mayor Woodards

Opening Remarks and Timeline Updates

Mayor Woodards provided opening remarks and stated that this meeting and upcoming study sessions and special meetings related to City Charter amendments will be held in Tacoma Municipal Building North Conference Room 16. She further outlined updates for the proposed Charter amendment topics, timelines, dates for possible special meetings, and scheduling considerations.

Discussion on Charter Review Committee Recommended Amendments

1. [24-0600](#) (24) Form of Government

Mayor Woodards introduced Tracy Burrows, Executive Director, Municipal Research and Service Center of Washington (MRSC). Burrows presented on forms of municipal government, noting the role and mission of MRSC, and her professional background; form of government choice, noting how jurisdictions decide; and how authority is distributed between the various forms of government, noting executive powers and authority, legislative powers and authority, and powers and authority that vary by form of government. She continued by outlining specific forms of government and typical authority distribution, including Council-Manager; the Mayor-Council plan; and the Mayor-Council Plan with a Chief Administrative Officer (CAO). She further listed charter cities, noting the size and form of government for each, considerations for each form of government, and what might shift if the City transitioned to a Mayor-Council form of government. She also outlined

possible issues related to the City's Charter Review Committee (CRC) proposed amendment to change the form of government, noting impeachment, the proposed CAO role, and authority of the Mayor and Council. She concluded by outlining the process to change the form of government, including requirements in state law and immediate tasks.

Discussion ensued regarding examples from other jurisdictions, noting Council powers, trust, efficiencies, resident satisfaction, and timeline for cities that have changed their form of government; impacts of changes on staff and the public; benefits of having a CAO; timing of elections; appreciation for CRC members and City staff; rationale for the proposed changes; the Council's authority to direct the City Manager or Mayor to take action; ensuring Council Members receive full and accurate information; the importance of relationships and personalities in any form of government; ways to give Council Members power over hiring and firing staff and proposing ordinances; impact of city size; and a request to review other cities' models for staffing and number of Council Members.

City Manager Elizabeth Pauli presented the CRC's proposed amendment related to form of government, including a summary; legal opinions; current and potential future fiscal impacts; and suggested revisions to assist with transitioning.

Mayor Woodards led the Council Members through a series of questions and discussion continued regarding perceptions of accountability; belief, trust, and transparency; options to revise the proposed CRC amendment; role of a CAO; importance of consensus; changes to Council support staff; providing future CRC's with additional information and tools; recruitment and hiring for leadership positions; introducing new amendments; and next steps.

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The City Council special meeting recessed at 11:19 a.m., and reconvened at 11:39 a.m.

2. [24-0601](#) (7) Council and Staff

Mayor Woodards introduced the CRC's proposed amendment regarding authorizing the Council to audit and conduct investigations into the affairs of the City and the executive branch. City Attorney Chris Bacha reviewed existing powers and authority for First Class Charter cities, including subpoena power.

Discussion ensued regarding current authority compared to the proposed language; scope of investigative powers; best practices; and methods to investigate issues, noting retaining special counsel or directing the City Manager to investigate.

Mayor Woodards and City Manager Pauli concluded by summarizing next steps regarding the full-time City Council and staffing structure topics.

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The City Council special meeting recessed at 12:28 p.m., and reconvened at 1:06 p.m.

3. [24-0602](#) (3) Referendum

At approximately 1:26 p.m., City Manager Pauli outlined the proposed CRC amendments related to referendums, including increasing the number of days to collect signatures for a referendum petition from 30 to 90 calendar days, and changing references to the word “citizens” with “residents who are qualified electors under state law.”

Discussion ensued regarding a separate proposed amendment to replace the word “citizen” throughout the Charter, state law related to referendum timelines, impacts on legislation if the timeline was increased, and the difference between the referendum and initiative process.

4. [24-0603](#) (4) Initiative

At approximately 1:43 p.m., City Manager Pauli outlined the proposed CRC amendment related to initiatives, to prohibit the City Council from submitting any proposed ordinance to the voters that contains provisions that would substantially conflict with an ordinance that has been proposed by an initiative petition filed with the City Clerk.

Discussion ensued regarding definitions, the intent of the proposed language, removing powers of the City Council, impacts to belief and trust when the Council places a competing item on the ballot, and options for amendment language.

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The City Council special meeting recessed at 1:57 p.m., and reconvened at 2:16 p.m.

Discussion on Council Proposed Amendments

At approximately 2:16 p.m., Mayor Woodards introduced proposed amendments from Council Members, noting deadlines to submit new proposed amendments, and language to amend CRC proposed amendments.

Mayor Woodards introduced proposed amendment C1, Version B, to allow City Council meetings to be cancelled when a quorum is not available and to

clarify that the meeting requirements apply to the City Council business meetings and not other regular meetings. She further stated that study sessions can be counted as regular meetings, and the proposal would have no less than 70 meetings a year, which provides greater flexibility for community events and religious holidays.

Discussion ensued regarding the regular order of business, taking action at study sessions, existing language about holding one regular meeting per week, cancelling meetings as needed, flexibility, and how the proposed amendments will come forward.

Council Member Bushnell introduced proposed amendment C2, Version B, to allow Public Utility Board (PUB) Members to hold public office other than Tacoma City Council positions.

Discussion ensued regarding residency requirements for PUB Members and Council Members.

Council Member Bushnell introduced proposed amendment C3, Version B, to provide the utility the authority to determine volunteer incentives for PUB Members attending board meetings.

Discussion ensued regarding combining proposed amendments into a single ballot item.

Council Member Rumbaugh introduced proposed amendment C4, related to selling or disposing of waterfront property as long as it stays within public ownership and access.

Discussion ensued regarding the purpose of the request as proposed by Metro Parks Tacoma, managing public lands efficiently, involving the Puyallup Tribe of Indians, allowed uses, public ownership, and properties that might be impacted.

Council Member Rumbaugh introduced proposed amendment C5, related to requiring the City to provide a fiscal note for initiatives and referendums.

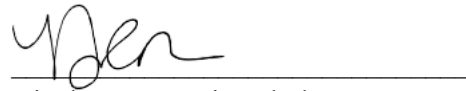
Discussion ensued regarding fiscal responsibility, public perceptions, the existing process to generate fiscal notes for legislation, how the note would be made available, and a new state law regarding statewide initiatives on the ballot to have a fiscal note.

Adjournment

On proper motion, the special meeting was adjourned at 2:45 p.m.

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read "V. Woodards", written over a horizontal line.

Victoria R. Woodards, Mayor

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "N. Emery", written over a horizontal line.

Nicole Emery, City Clerk