

6. New Section 2.26 - Neighborhood Council

Charter Review Committee

Amendment Summary

Section 2.26 (New Section, Article II)

Brief Summary of Amendment

- Establishes the Neighborhood and Community Councils in Charter.
- Establishes an Equity Committee within the Community Council to create a more inclusive and equitable environment for Tacoma residents.
- Charges the Neighborhood Councils and Community Council to act as advisory entities to City Council, Mayor, City Departments, and City boards, commissions, and committees and to have periodic meetings with City officials.
- Requires City Council to set Neighborhood Council boundaries by resolution in recognition of neighborhood groups and City service delivery.
- Requires the City to make a good-faith effort to notify relevant Neighborhood Councils and Community Council of matters of local concern and to the extent allowed by law to request and incorporate Neighborhood and Community Council input prior to making a final decision on matters of local concern.

Committee Vote

Yes: Katie Baird, Nicholas Carr, Maricres Castro, Patrick Fischer, Bryan Flint, Jason Gauthier, Andre Jimenez, Melissa Malott, Latasha Palmer, Rebecca Stith, Steve Wamback, Diamatris Winston, Lok Yin Wu

No: Andrea Reay

Abstain: None

Absent: None

Amendment

NEW SECTION. Section 2.26 -- In order to foster communication and promote resident-based neighborhood involvement in the policies and operations of the City, there shall be independent Neighborhood Councils and a Community Council. The Community Council shall include an Equity Committee for the promoting of diversity, equity, and inclusion, to proactively identify and address bias or discrimination, and for the creation a more inclusive and equitable environment for all Tacoma residents.

The Neighborhood Councils and Community Council shall act as advisory entities to the City Council, Mayor, City departments, boards, commissions, and committees and shall have periodic meetings with appropriate City officials. The City of Tacoma shall provide training on grant-writing and policy for the Neighborhood Councils and Community Council to fulfill and advance their mission and advisory role.

The City Council shall, by resolution, determine the boundaries of the Neighborhood Councils. Boundaries will be determined with the intention of recognizing neighborhood groups and monitoring the delivery of City services in the respective areas.

The City will make a good-faith effort to notify the relevant Neighborhood Councils and the Community Council of matters of local concern to include but not be limited to any significant policy matters, projects, proposals, events, or services that directly impact the neighborhood. Notice should be provided as early in the planning or review process as possible. Subject to applicable law, the City Council and relevant city departments shall request and incorporate Neighborhood Council and Community Council input prior to making a final decision on any matter of local concern.

Amendment Positions

Rationale for Amendment:

The proposed amendment would incorporate Neighborhood Councils (NCs) and the Community Council of Tacoma (CCOT) into the City's charter, which would align with the Tacoma 2025 community vision of enhanced civic engagement, prioritizing resident-based engagement and effective communication channels. This proposed amendment would restore the advisory role of NCs, promote timely collaboration with the city, and secure adequate training for them to fulfill their role effectively. Maintaining NCs' independence also fosters inclusive civic engagement, enabling them to offer valuable assistance to the City Council. Additionally, the amendment highlights key elements of the new CCOT Equity Committee, which include promoting diversity, creating clear mission statements, encouraging open communication, and providing ongoing training on equity issues. These measures will bolster diversity, equity, and inclusion within NCs and enhance Tacoma's governance structure's integrity and responsiveness to the community.

Dissenting Position(s):

As voluntary organizations serving Tacoma's local neighborhoods, Neighborhood Councils are an important part of Tacoma's political and community engagement scene. Their status is embodied in ordinances; any change, addition, or modification to their status can likewise be handled through ordinances. The charter, on the other hand, should not be used to promote organizations that lack democratic oversight, nor should it provide such organizations with an advisory role. The inclusion here of financial support for Neighborhood Councils is better handled by ordinance, where City Council can consider and weigh competing resource needs across the city when making budgetary decisions.