



RESOLUTION NO. 40652

1 BY REQUEST OF MAYOR WOODARDS AND COUNCIL MEMBERS HUNTER
2 AND THOMS

3 A RESOLUTION amending Rule 9 of the *Rules of Procedure of the Council of the*
4 *City of Tacoma*, Public Comment/Public Forum, to increase opportunities for
5 public feedback to the Tacoma City Council during the COVID-19
6 declaration of emergency and for the duration in which the Tacoma City
7 Council holds virtual business meetings.

8 WHEREAS the City Council appreciates hearing from community members
9 about items on its agenda, and the *Rules of Procedure of the Council of the City of*
10 *Tacoma* includes Rule 9, Public Comment/Public Forum, which sets aside time at
11 the start of each City Council business meeting for Public Comment, and during
12 the meeting on the second Tuesday of each month for Community Forum, and

13 WHEREAS, to ensure equal opportunity for the public to comment, Rule 9
14 states that during Public Comment, a speaker's comments shall be limited to up to
15 five minutes per person, per meeting, and where necessary, due to the number of
16 persons who want to address the City Council, the presiding officer shall retain
17 authority to limit all persons' remarks to an equal period of less than five minutes,
18 and

19 WHEREAS, to ensure equal opportunity for the public to comment, Rule 9
20 states that during Community Forum, a speaker's comments shall be limited to up
21 to three minutes per person, per Community Forum, and where necessary, due to
22 the number of persons who want to address the City Council, the presiding officer
23 shall retain authority to limit all persons' remarks to an equal period of less than
24 three minutes, and
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WHEREAS Rule 9 provides instructions for how individuals can sign up to share Public Comment in the case of an in-person meeting, and

WHEREAS the Novel Coronavirus (“COVID-19”) transmission is widespread in our region, and as of September 9, 2020, there were 2,167 COVID-19 cases and 45 tragic deaths in the City of Tacoma, and

WHEREAS the state of Washington declared a state of emergency on February 29, 2020, limiting in-person meetings, and

WHEREAS, on June 5, 2020, Pierce County entered Phase 2 of the state’s Safe Start Recovery Plan, and while in Phase 2, the Governor has prohibited groups of more than five persons from meeting together, and

WHEREAS, on March 12, 2020, the City of Tacoma proclaimed a State of Emergency related to COVID-19, and

WHEREAS, on March 24, 2020, the City Council unanimously suspended the rules in order to allow only written comments to be provided for the Public Comment and Community Forum portions of City Council meetings until the Proclamation of Emergency caused by the COVID-19 virus is terminated, and

WHEREAS City staff have worked diligently to expand the City’s technological capabilities in order to allow for virtual, verbal testimony, and

WHEREAS the City Council held its first virtual Public Hearings with verbal comments on May 5, 2020, and

WHEREAS, at the July 7, 2020, City Council meeting, the City Council adopted a motion to allow verbal comments to be taken for Community Forum



1 during the virtual-only Zoom City Council meetings, with verbal comments
2 commencing at the July 14, 2020 meeting, and

3 WHEREAS the City has proven that it has the technological capacity to
4 allow for verbal comments during the regular Public Comment period, and

5 WHEREAS the City Council seeks to adapt to the virtual format to allow for
6 more opportunities for feedback from the public; Now, Therefore,

7 BE IT RESOLVED BY THE COUNCIL OF THE CITY OF TACOMA:

8 Section 1. For the purpose of utilizing technology to reinstate verbal Public
9 Comment and to resume setting aside time at the start of each Council business
10 meeting for public comment, Section A of Rule 9 of the *Rules of Procedure of the*
11 *Council of the City of Tacoma*, entitled "Public Comment," is amended as follows:
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13 A. **Public Comment.** The City Council appreciates hearing from
14 community members about items on its agenda, and desires to set aside time at
15 the start of each Council business meeting for Public Comment. All comments
16 must be limited to items on the agenda. Speakers are asked to identify the specific
17 agenda items they wish to address.
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19 To ensure equal opportunity for the public to comment, a speaker's
20 comments shall be limited to up to ~~five minutes~~90 seconds per person, per
21 meeting. Where necessary, due to the number of persons who want to address
22 the Council, the presiding officer shall retain authority to limit all persons' remarks
23 to an equal period of less than ~~five minutes~~90 seconds. To further ensure equal
24 opportunity for the public to comment, each person may address the Council only
25 one time during the Public Comment portion of the meeting. Comments may be
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1 made on resolutions as well as first and final readings of ordinances. Comments
2 shall not be accepted on ordinances forwarded to the Council by the Hearing
3 Examiner for which a public hearing has been held. Written comments submitted
4 prior to Council action shall be considered in the same manner as oral comments.

5 ~~When~~ In the event that the Council, after taking public comment, suspends its rules
6 to include a new resolution or ordinance on the agenda, public comment will be
7 taken at the time the Council considers the new resolution or ordinance. Where an
8 ordinance has been substantially changed at its final reading, a person may speak
9 to the changes. ~~Public comment sign-up forms will be available at the back of the~~
10 ~~Council Chambers for use by those persons wishing to address the Council. To~~
11 ~~request to speak during Public Comment, please press the Raise Hand button~~
12 ~~near the bottom of your Zoom window or *9 on your phone. The last four digits of~~
13 ~~your phone number will be called out when it is your turn to speak.~~ All remarks will
14 be addressed to the Council as a whole.
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17 Section 2. For the purpose of continuing to reserve time on the City Council
18 agenda for Community Forum on the second Tuesday of each month, Section C of
19 Rule 9 of the *Rules of Procedure of the Council of the City of Tacoma*, entitled
20 "Community Forum – Second Tuesday," is amended as follows:
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22 **C. Community Forum - Second Tuesday.** On the second Tuesday of
23 each month, time shall be reserved for community members' comments. The
24 purpose of this forum is to assist the Council in making policy decisions; therefore,
25 items of discussion shall be limited to matters over which the City Council has
26 jurisdiction. A speaker's remarks shall be limited to up to ~~three minutes~~ 90 seconds



per person, per Community Forum. Where necessary, due to the number of
1 persons who want to address the Council, the presiding officer shall retain
2 authority to limit all persons' remarks to an equal period of less than ~~three~~
3 minutes90 seconds. To further ensure equal opportunity for the public to
4 comment, each person may address the Council only one time during the
5 Community Forum portion of any meeting. Comment shall not be made in support
6 of or opposition to any matter on the Council Agenda for which the time for public
7 comment has passed.
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10 Section 3. For the purpose of creating a new opportunity for the community
11 to share feedback, Rule 9 of the *Rules of Procedure of the Council of the City of*
12 *Tacoma* is amended to add a new Section G, entitled "Virtual Forum," reading as
13 follows:

14 G. Virtual Forum. On the fourth Tuesday of each month at 6:00 p.m., or in
15 the event the regular meeting of the City Council adjourns after 6:00 p.m., promptly
16 following such adjournment, there shall be held a "Virtual Forum" for community
17 members' comments. The purpose of the Virtual Forum is to give community
18 members an opportunity to share their thoughts and views to assist the Council in
19 making policy decisions; therefore, items of discussion shall be limited to matters
20 over which the City Council has jurisdiction. No action shall be taken by the City
21 Council during the Virtual Forum.
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24 Speaker's comments shall be limited to up to 90 seconds per person, per
25 Virtual Forum. Where necessary, due to the number of persons who want to
26 address the Council, the presiding officer shall retain authority to limit all persons'



1 remarks to an equal period of less than 90 seconds. To further ensure equal
 2 opportunity for the public to comment, each person may address the Council only
 3 one time during the Virtual Forum.

4 Guidelines set out in Rule 9 – Public Comment/Public Forum, Section
 5 B, Courtesy; Section D, No Use of Public Comment or Community Forum for
 6 Campaigns; Section E, No Use of Public Comment or Community Forum for
 7 Advertising; and Section F, Transgression, will apply to the Virtual Forum.

8 Section 4. The foregoing amendments to Section 9 of the *Rules of*
 9 *Procedure of the Council of the City of Tacoma* shall expire upon termination or
 10 revocation of the Proclamation of Emergency caused by the COVID-19 virus, and
 11 thereafter shall be of no force or effect.
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 14 Adopted _____

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 Mayor

17 Attest:

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 19 _____
 City Clerk

20 Approved as to form:

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 22 _____
 Chief Deputy City Attorney