

9. New Section 3.XX – Climate Commission

Charter Review Committee

Amendment Summary

Section 3.XX and Section 3.XX (New Sections, Article III)

Brief Summary of Amendment

- Adds a new Section to Article III to require the City to establish a carbon budget designed to reach net zero emissions by 2050.
- Adds a new section to Article III to create a Climate Accountability and Sustainability Commission.
- Provides for an eleven-member commission and establishes criteria for the appointment of the members, including diversity, experience, and expertise.
- Requires the Climate Accountability and Sustainability Commission to track and report on the City's progress on its climate action plan, including monitoring the carbon budget and other sustainability measures.

Committee Vote

Yes: Nicholas Carr, Maricres Castro, Jason Gauthier, Andre Jimenez, Melissa Malott, Latasha Palmer, Rebecca Stith, Diamatris Winston

No: Katie Baird, Patrick Fischer, Andrea Reay

Abstain: Steve Wamback

Absent: Bryan Flint, Lok Yin Wu

Amendment

NEW SECTION. Sec. 3.XX -- The City shall include, within its climate action plan, a carbon budget, defined as the allocation or limitation of greenhouse gas emissions within a certain timeframe, set at a local and regional scale, and which sets targets for reducing emissions to mitigate climate change and which is designed to reach net-zero emissions by 2050.

NEW SECTION. Sec. 3.XX –A Climate Accountability and Sustainability Commission shall be created to replace the existing Sustainable Tacoma Commission. The Climate Accountability and Sustainability Commission shall be composed of eleven members, appointed by the City Council for three-year terms.

The Council must ensure the appointments provide for membership diversity of the Commission. The diversity shall include race, ethnicity, gender, backgrounds, experiences, and expertise, and must not be over-represented in any areas of expertise or experience. The members shall be residents of the City of Tacoma. One member shall be appointed for each of the five council districts. Members should have expertise or experience that may include, but not be limited to the following:

- (a) climate science;

- (b) environmental policy and justice;
- (c) green economies; and
- (d) overburdened communities.
- (e) transportation;
- (f) housing;
- (g) public health;
- (h) the small business community as defined by the Small Business Administration;
- (i) the labor community;
- (j) maritime industries;
- (k) the education community; and
- (l) the building industries.

At least one of the eleven positions must be filled by a youth member (age 17-25).

The City shall assign at least two staff members to support the Commission and the Commission shall have such duties and responsibilities as are provided below and by ordinance. The Commission's duties shall include advising, providing oversight, and reporting to the Council on the City's progress in meeting the goals of its climate action plan and sustainability measures, including, but not limited to by:

- (i) monitoring the carbon budget;
- (ii) reporting on climate goals, including impediments to such goals;
- (iii) monitoring Council's existing and future resolutions and ordinances and advising on their operational alignment with the climate action plan;
- (iv) monitoring the City's department budgets and advising on their alignment with the climate action plan;
- (v) monitoring and advising on sustainability measures with broad public interest and long-term impact; and
- (vi) carrying out such other duties and responsibilities as may be set forth in ordinance.

A majority of the voting members of the Commission will constitute a quorum for the transaction of business. The Commission is authorized to adopt rules for the transaction of its business not inconsistent with this charter or ordinances of the City of Tacoma.

Amendment Positions

Rationale for Amendment:

Despite being an existential threat to human society, climate change is not mentioned in the City code or charter. Council intentions on climate to not make it to code. The Sustainable Tacoma Commission was created in 2008 by Resolution No. 37631. A resolution does not have the same legislative impact as an ordinance. As such, it has since never been added to the municipal code or Charter.

The City's climate emergency resolution (2022 -Resolution No. 40776) committed the city to reduce municipal operations emissions, especially restricting natural gas use in existing municipal buildings and

new capital investments, decarbonize transportation, and conduct studies that identify strategies for success and assess impact. This resolution has also never been added to code.

The city must effectively track and hold accountable its commitments to sustainability and climate goals. Our intent is for this Commission to inform Council, improve climate policy and prioritize long term sustainability.

Dissenting Position(s):

This recommendation alters the city's charter to direct Tacoma's government around actions to take to reduce the region's greenhouse gas emissions, and how to undertake these actions. It includes creating and staffing a committee charged with monitoring and ensuring that the city carries through on its new charter obligations.

No place in the charter prescribes policy making in such detail. For good reason. The legislative process is the best way to set the city's priorities and assess tradeoffs when allocating the city's budget. Reducing greenhouse gas emissions in Tacoma is expensive, especially as detailed here. Halting climate change and cutting greenhouse gas emissions absolutely calls for immediate and coordinated actions worldwide. However, any unilateral city effort will have no impact on this global problem. The City Council should retain the ability to determine how residents' concern over climate change fits into all of the City's other pressing challenges.