



# City of Tacoma City Council Minutes

Dial: 253-215-8782 Meeting ID: 819 3179 3243

Webinar Link: [www.zoom.us/j/81931793243](https://www.zoom.us/j/81931793243) Passcode: 418748

May 27, 2021

11:00 AM

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## SPECIAL MEETING

### CALL TO ORDER

Mayor Woodards called the special meeting to order at 11:06 a.m.

Mayor Woodards stated that we gratefully honor and acknowledge that we rest on the traditional lands of the Puyallup People where they make their home and speak the Lushootseed language.

### ROLL CALL

**Present:** 8 - Blocker, Hines, Hunter, McCarthy, Thoms, Ushka, Walker and Mayor Woodards

**Absent:** 1 - Beale

All Council Members participated virtually.

### EXECUTIVE SESSION - Potential Litigation

**MOTION:** Deputy Mayor Blocker moved to convene to Executive Session pursuant to RCW 42.30.110(1)(i)(i) and RCW 42.30.110(1)(i)(ii) to discuss potential litigation, not to exceed 30 minutes.

**SECONDED BY:** Council Member Thoms.

**ACTION:** Voice vote was taken and carried. The motion was declared adopted.

**Ayes:** 8 - Blocker, Hines, Hunter, McCarthy, Thoms, Ushka, Walker and Mayor Woodards

**Absent:** 1 - Beale

The City Council convened to Executive Session at 11:06 a.m. City Attorney Bill Fosbre, Mike Smith, Deputy City Attorney, and Nicholas Brown, Partner, Pacifica Law Group, were present.

The Executive Session was extended by 30 minutes at 11:35 a.m., and by 15 minutes at 12:05 p.m.

The Executive Session concluded, and the City Council special meeting reconvened, at 12:16 p.m.

Mayor Woodards stated that following a brief recess, the City Council would consider a joint statement in response to the Washington State Attorney General’s charging decision related to the death of Manuel Ellis.

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The special meeting recessed at 12:18 p.m.

The special meeting reconvened at 12:31 p.m.

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**BRIEFING ITEM**

- 1. [21-0538](#) Consideration of a Council Statement Regarding the Attorney General’s Charging Decision Related to the Death of Manuel Ellis.

At approximately 12:32 p.m., Mayor Woodards presented opening remarks on the proposed joint City Council statement regarding the Washington State Attorney General’s Office (AGO) charging decision related to the death of Manuel Ellis. City Manager Elizabeth Pauli outlined the City’s disciplinary process, noting that no disciplinary action will take place today.

Discussion ensued regarding expressing condolences to Manuel Ellis’ family; recognizing community concerns; the leave and employment status of the officers involved; frustration with the length of the process to date; the charges filed with the Pierce County Superior Court, noting that two officers were charged with manslaughter in the first degree and murder in the second degree while one officer was charged with manslaughter in the first degree, that the AGO will prosecute the cases, and that warrants have been issued; that the case will likely take place over the next year; the difference between criminal charges and conviction; the criminal trial process; resources available to the community, such as the Heal the Heart Core Coordinating Team; internal resources for staff; methods to provide regular, transparent, accessible updates to the City Council and the community; information available online at [cityoftacoma.org/transform](http://cityoftacoma.org/transform) and [cityoftacoma.org/useofforce](http://cityoftacoma.org/useofforce); the internal investigation process, noting possible discipline, policy, or training changes; the need for swift action and a

thorough and accountable process; and which charging and investigation documents from the Pierce County Sheriff, Washington State Patrol, and the AGO have been received by the City to date.

Mayor Woodards presented the draft statement, read it aloud, and requested feedback from Council Members.

Discussion continued regarding the issues and concerns addressed; a request for more information on Washington Initiative 940 regarding law enforcement training, standards for use of deadly force, and investigations; appreciation for staff who helped draft the statement; purpose of the statement; the need for an open and transparent process; and promises made to the community.

**MOTION: Deputy Mayor Blocker moved to approve the City Council statement regarding the Attorney General's charging decision related to the death of Manuel Ellis.**

**SECONDED BY: Council Member Thoms.**

**ACTION: Voice vote was taken and carried. The motion was declared adopted.**

**Ayes:** 8 - Blocker, Hines, Hunter, McCarthy, Thoms, Ushka, Walker and Mayor Woodards

**Absent:** 1 - Beale

Mayor Woodards stated that the City Council's statement will be provided to the public and media soon; additional statements will be issued by herself, the City Manager, and the Interim Police Chief later this afternoon; more information will be provided to the public and Council Members by June 1, 2021, about the process and schedule for future updates; and provided a reminder that more information is available on the City website on the Use of Force and Transformation pages.

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**MOTION: Deputy Mayor Blocker moved to excuse Council Member Beale from the special meeting.**

**SECONDED BY: Council Member Thoms.**

**ACTION: Voice vote was taken and carried. The motion was declared adopted.**

**Ayes:** 8 - Blocker, Hines, Hunter, McCarthy, Thoms, Ushka, Walker and Mayor Woodards

**Absent:** 1 - Beale

**ADJOURNMENT**

On proper motion, the special meeting was adjourned at 1:04 p.m.

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Victoria R. Woodards, Mayor

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Doris Sorum, City Clerk