



# City of Tacoma

## City Council Study Session Minutes

747 Market Street, Tacoma WA 98402, Council Chambers  
Dial: 253-215-8782 Meeting ID: 894 9617 1192  
Webinar Link: [www.zoom.us/j/89496171192](http://www.zoom.us/j/89496171192) Passcode: 896569  
**March 22, 2022**  
**12:00 PM**

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### JOINT MEETING WITH THE PUBLIC UTILITY BOARD

#### Call to Order

Mayor Woodards called the joint study session to order at 12:07 p.m.

#### Roll Call

**Present:** 9 - Blocker, Bushnell, Daniels, Hines, McCarthy, Rumbaugh, Ushka, Walker and Mayor Woodards

Public Utility Board Members:

Present: 4 - Cohen, Cooley, O'Loughlin, and Watson

Absent: 1 - Patterson

#### Joint City Council / Tacoma Public Utility Board Briefing Items

1. [22-0341](#) Tacoma Public Utilities MyAccount Upgrades: New Customer Portal Features

At approximately 12:09 p.m., Jackie Flowers, Director, Tacoma Public Utilities (TPU), provided opening remarks and introduced Jen Treece, Project Team Manager, and Kelli Sullivan, Business Systems Analyst, Customer Services. Ms. Treece presented the TPU MyAccount customer portal upgrades, including utility modernization and customer expectations; 2021 payment channel usage; the technology that is enabling TPU's objectives, noting equitable customer services, economic development, environmental stewardship, and reliability and resiliency; a comparison of the old and new portals and features; TPU's digital vision for customers; and additional features in the modern customer portal. Ms. Sullivan then provided a live preview of the MyAccount upgrade, including features for residential and commercial customers, paperless billing, new site features, and navigation. Ms. Treece concluded by reviewing the ePortal high-level timeline and next steps.

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Mayor Woodards stated that due to a scheduling conflict, the joint study session must be recessed, and the regular study session convened, to allow United States Representative Derek Kilmer to present Item No. 3 at this time.

**MOTION: Deputy Mayor Ushka moved to recess the joint study session.**

**SECONDED BY: Council Member Blocker.**

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

**Ayes:** 9 - Blocker, Bushnell, Daniels, Hines, McCarthy, Rumbaugh, Ushka, Walker and Mayor Woodards

The joint study session recessed, and the regular study session convened, at 12:37 p.m.

### City Council Briefing Items

- 3. [22-0343](#) Bipartisan Infrastructure Law and Build Back Better Act

At approximately 12:39 p.m., Representative Kilmer presented information on the Bipartisan Infrastructure Law (BIL) and the Build Back Better Act (BBB), including appreciation for City staff and elected officials; activities over the previous year; impacts of the American Rescue Plan Act (ARPA); additional funding, programs, and grant applications that are available or opening soon; priorities for federal transportation funding; regional and local impacts of federal funding; BIL funding opportunities and project criteria; encouraging agencies to apply for any programs they qualify for; the recently passed omnibus spending bill; housing projects in the Hilltop neighborhood; the upcoming funding cycle; BBB updates, noting focus areas, funding sources, and status; and additional information that is available online at [kilmer.house.gov/infrastructure](http://kilmer.house.gov/infrastructure).

Discussion ensued regarding appreciation for Representative Kilmer’s leadership, workforce development, housing projects and partnerships, economic development programs, and the process for Council Members to provide input and request projects to be included in the City’s budget process.

**MOTION: Deputy Mayor Ushka moved to recess the regular study session.**

**SECONDED BY: Council Member Blocker.**

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

**Ayes:** 9 - Blocker, Bushnell, Daniels, Hines, McCarthy, Rumbaugh, Ushka, Walker and Mayor Woodards

The regular study session recessed, and the joint study session reconvened, at 1:01 pm.

## **(Continued) Joint City Council / Tacoma Public Utility Board Briefing Items**

1. [22-0341](#) Tacoma Public Utilities MyAccount Upgrades: New Customer Portal Features

Discussion ensued regarding timing for the new portal to go online; the requirement to reset customer passwords; a suggestion to incorporate other utilities into the portal, noting solid waste service requests and prepayment options; the use of vendors and third party tools; the mobile-responsive site; impacts of shifting to advanced metering technology, noting real-time usage data, remote reads, and automatic outage notifications; monthly billing; language options; accessibility, ease of use, and the level of information provided; and improvements in the modern system, noting that existing services and payment options will continue to be available.

2. [22-0355](#) Customer Payment Plan Transition

At approximately 1:26 p.m., Mayor Woodards provided opening remarks on the customer payment plan transition, noting the end of the City's utility disconnection moratorium on March 31, 2022, and encouraging customers to contact Customer Services about the assistance that is available. Ms. Flowers introduced Steve Hatcher, Customer Services Manager, noting that he is retiring soon; and expressed appreciation for Mr. Hatcher and all staff who have been working to connect with customers. Mr. Hatcher presented an update on TPU's work to support customers in utility account recovery, including current activity, noting the March 31, 2022, expiration of the utility disconnection moratorium and efforts to inform customers; an update on assessment and assistance; open customer balances by customer segment and jurisdiction; and next steps, noting how other cities and utilities are handling

similar issues, proposed changes to the Tacoma Municipal Code related to late fees, an equity analysis of disconnection and reconnection fees, notices, and when disconnections will resume.

Discussion ensued throughout regarding appreciation for Mr. Hatcher and the Customer Services staff members; providing a human connection for utility customers; the default two-year payment plan option; federal funding, noting deadlines to use funds; and unrecoverable accounts, noting TPU is required to collect on utility bills.

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Vice Chair Cooley stated that today is the United Nations’ observance of World Water Day, and shared information about Tacoma Water, including the City’s watersheds and water sources.

The joint study session concluded, and the regular study session reconvened, at 1:54 p.m.

**(Continued) City Council Briefing Items**

- 3. [22-0343](#) Bipartisan Infrastructure Law and Build Back Better Act

This item was addressed earlier in the study session.

- 4. [22-0344](#) Sidewalk Program Update

At approximately 1:54 p.m., Kurtis Kingsolver, Director, Public Works, provided opening remarks regarding the City’s sidewalk program, and introduced Liz Kaster, Senior Planner and Active Transportation Coordinator, Sandra Guffey, Sidewalk Program Coordinator, and Mark D’Andrea, Project Manager, Public Works. Ms. Kaster presented an update on the City’s sidewalk program, including an overview; the importance of sidewalks; caveats about the data; network completion, noting bikeways, sidewalks, curb ramps, Safe Routes to Schools crossing improvements, and accessible pedestrian signals; estimated funding needed to complete the network; ways to achieve network completion, noting average annual progress and changes needed to meet the goal of completing the network by 2050. Ms. Guffey reviewed the unfit and unsafe sidewalks program, including funding, an overview, and new features in 2021 for the City to fund free sidewalk replacement for low-income properties. Mr. D’Andrea reviewed the pilot project for sidewalk beveling and repair to remove trip hazards, noting the methods, low costs, and rapid evaluation and repair. Ms. Kaster concluded by reviewing priority actions, including current, upcoming, and future activities; and how other communities are addressing missing and unsafe sidewalks.

Discussion ensued regarding the complaint-based program and addressing areas with no existing sidewalks; federal and City funding options; the high costs of labor and materials; financial support to homeowners; the importance of sidewalks for safety and livability; pedestrian accessibility improvements and curb ramps; equitable analysis and spending; support for the pilot beveling program; and future presentations to the Infrastructure, Planning, and Sustainability Committee.

## Other Items of Interest

5. [22-0345](#) Council Contingency Request - Tacoma Refugee Choir

Deputy Mayor Ushka presented a Council Consideration Request (CCR) to allocate \$25,000 of Council Contingency Funds to assist the Tacoma Refugee Choir in funding the music video portion of their 2022 spring projects, including the song “Everyone Can Love Someone”, plans for the music video, impact of past videos, and the request for support.

Discussion ensued regarding Council Member support and participation in the music video.

6. [22-0346](#) Council Contingency Request - Litter Free 253

Council Member Hines presented a CCR to allocate \$2,500 of Council Contingency Funds for litter pick-up tools for the annual volunteer-led Litter Free 253 event on April 16, 2022, noting the success of previous events, other contributors, and information available on the group’s Facebook page. She stated that the South Sound Sustainability Expo will be held on the same day.

Discussion ensued regarding the event and making connections with others in the community.

## Committee Reports

There were no committee reports.

## Agenda Review and City Manager's Weekly Report

- 7. [22-0356](#) Weekly Report to the Mayor and City Council, March 17, 2022

City Manager Elizabeth Pauli stated there is one ceremonial on tonight's meeting agenda, proclaiming Tuesday, March 22, 2022, as Racial Equity Champions and Facilitators Day; that tonight's agenda includes a public hearing; Virtual Forum will be held after the meeting; and that no changes are expected to tonight's agenda.

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Mayor Woodards stated she toured the Jefferson and Hood Street Surface Water Interceptor project at 1147 Dock Street earlier today, that she plans to recognize the women engineers who are leading the project at tonight's meeting, and thanked staff and contractors who are working on the project.

## Adjournment

On proper motion, the study session was adjourned at 2:41 p.m.

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Victoria R. Woodards, Mayor

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Doris Sorum, City Clerk