



## City of Tacoma

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Council Member John Hines  
*Position 1*

Mayor Woodards and Members of the City Council,

The Government Performance and Finance Committee (GPFC) of the City Council approved proposed guidelines to potentially allow certain study sessions to be done in hybrid format as directed by Mayor Woodards' Emergency Rule No. 4 instated on August 19, 2021. The Emergency Rule states:

“Effective August 19, 2021, City Council and Public Utility Board study sessions and business meetings, and any other public meetings of the City of Tacoma, will be held in virtual format only. I am also directing the Government Performance and Finance Committee (“GPFC”) to develop proposed guidelines to potentially allow certain study sessions to be done in hybrid format. The guidelines should be presented to the City Council by the end of September and must be consistent with current COVID-19 guidelines and staff safety protocols.”<sup>1</sup>

The Committee supports using the following guidelines and metrics that would trigger a discussion at City Council to potentially hold in-person or hybrid-format study sessions using Pierce County data:

- **7-day rate of new COVID-19 hospitalizations per 100,000 population is less than 5**
- **14-day average case rate is under 200**
  - Justification: Both of the proposed metrics above were used by the State of Washington to allow counties with a population over 50,000 people to move into Phase 3 reopening. Phase 3 allowed gatherings with no more than 50 people; resumed non-essential travel; and restaurants could open at less than 75% capacity.<sup>2</sup> The metrics are proposed to trigger a discussion at City Council so all Council Members can evaluate their comfort level on returning to in-person meetings and provide input on the final decision.
- **After discussion at City Council on whether to return to in-person or hybrid meetings, if the two metrics are maintained for six weeks in Pierce County, City Council would automatically return to holding in-person or hybrid public meetings, unless otherwise directed by the Mayor.**
  - Justification: Waiting six weeks attempts to account for a potential rebound in case numbers to avoid returning to in-person meetings only to revert to exclusively virtual meetings. The 14-day average case rate from the periods May 12, 2021-May 25, 2021 to July 13, 2021-July 26, 2021 was below 200. However, the 14-day average case rate beginning in the period July 14, 2021-July 27, 2021 crept above 200 and has remained there ever since.<sup>3</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> [https://www.cityoftacoma.org/in\\_the\\_news/proclamation\\_of\\_emergency\\_rule\\_no\\_\\_4](https://www.cityoftacoma.org/in_the_news/proclamation_of_emergency_rule_no__4)

<sup>2</sup> <https://coronavirus.wa.gov/sites/default/files/2020-05/PhasedReopeningChart.pdf>

<sup>3</sup> <https://www.doh.wa.gov/Emergencies/COVID19/DataDashboard>

- **Safety protocols for any in-person meeting shall use the same guidelines which apply to all City of Tacoma employees and established in the Covid-19 Safety Protocols Directive.**<sup>4</sup> Those include, but are not limited to:
  - All employees, regardless of vaccination status, must wear a face covering while indoors, or while in outdoor spaces where physical distancing is not possible. When employees are working alone in segregated spaces, they may remove their face covering.
  - Occupancy limitations will require a minimum physical distancing of 6 feet or more, not to exceed a maximum of 50% occupancy.

The Committee requested information on how other elected bodies in Pierce County are addressing in-person public meetings. Among the seven jurisdictions researched, four are meeting in hybrid format and three in virtual format. The following information is provided for context in how Tacoma conducts public meetings versus our neighboring jurisdictions:

- Pierce County: Pierce County Council is meeting in-person with the public able to attend virtually or in-person (aka “hybrid” format).<sup>5</sup>
- City of Puyallup: City Council meetings are being held in person as well as virtually.<sup>6</sup>
- City of Lakewood: City Council meetings are being held virtually.<sup>7</sup>
- City of University Place: As of September 20, 2021, the Council had held two hybrid Council Meetings with one Council Member hosting in-person while the others attended virtually. Public comment was accepted by phone, in-person, and by email.<sup>8</sup>
- City of Fife: As of September 14, 2021, City Council meetings were held in hybrid format with both Council Members and the public attending virtually and in-person.<sup>9</sup>
- City of Fircrest: City Council meetings are being held virtually.<sup>10</sup>
- City of Gig Harbor: City Council meetings are being held virtually.<sup>11</sup>

Sincerely,



John Hines, Chair, GPFC

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<sup>4</sup> [http://cityweb/Gnet/Departments/HR/SiteAssets/Pages/Information-for-Employees-on-Coronavirus-\(COVID-19\)/Covid-19%20Safety%20Protocols%20Directive.pdf](http://cityweb/Gnet/Departments/HR/SiteAssets/Pages/Information-for-Employees-on-Coronavirus-(COVID-19)/Covid-19%20Safety%20Protocols%20Directive.pdf)

<sup>5</sup> <https://www.piercecountywa.gov/99/Pierce-County-Council>

<sup>6</sup> <http://www.cityofpuyallup.org/827/Agendas-Minutes-and-Videos>

<sup>7</sup> <https://cityoflakewood.us/calendar/#MEETINGS>

<sup>8</sup> <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ThoCYrNwAGA>

<sup>9</sup> <https://www.cityoffife.org/454/Watch-Now?clientID=4845477838&eventID=2021091000>

<sup>10</sup> <https://www.cityoffircrest.net/government/city-council/ccagenda-minutes/>

<sup>11</sup> [https://www.cityofgigharbor.net/AgendaCenter/ViewFile/Agenda/\\_09272021-155?html=true](https://www.cityofgigharbor.net/AgendaCenter/ViewFile/Agenda/_09272021-155?html=true)