

# DRAFT 2016 City of Tacoma Legislative Agenda

## Summary agenda:

- The City seeks state assistance to fund repair or replacement of heavily used aging bridges that are beyond the limitations of existing grant programs. The City also can support a comprehensive water projects funding package that includes stormwater, aquifer, and flooding projects provided all who benefit pay and fully participate.
- The City supports local control of taxes, changes to the 1 percent cap on property tax revenue, new economic development tools, protection of the EMS levy and a narrow public records exemption for municipal retirement systems.
- The City supports the State meeting its obligations to fully fund K-12 education with new revenue.
- The City supports increased State funding for a continuum of services, provided both by the State and local government, to assist homeless individuals and families. The City supports changes in law to help cities improve police/community relations.
- The City supports adoption of statewide requirements for paid sick and safe leave and an increase in the minimum wage to at least the level approved by Tacoma voters.

## Detail agenda:

### Economic development:

The City supports the use of economic development tools that facilitate urban redevelopment and encourage development, including affordable housing, in transit station areas to carry out the goals of regional transit supportive initiatives. This includes, but is not limited to, value capture tools like tax increment financing, local improvement district legislation, and restored funding of existing tools such as local infrastructure financing and business district assistance.

“The paramount” duty of the State is to “make ample provision for the education of all children...” and the Legislature is faced with a significant challenge to meet this responsibility in light of the McCleary decision by the State Supreme Court. Any solution to this problem cannot create winners and losers between the state’s school districts and must not be done while causing further damage to the State’s social safety net and higher education or by offloading State responsibilities to local government. New revenue will be required to meet the requirements of the court decision.

Environment:

The City supports creation of a sustainable funding source to assist local governments with obligations under Federal storm water regulations. Funding should encourage innovation in meeting permit goals for both water quality and quantity. This funding can be part of a comprehensive water package that includes aquifer and flooding projects so long as funding for this package comes from all areas of the state that will benefit from projects and that all funded projects require local remedial actions and matching funds.

Fiscal:

The City believes local control of tax and regulatory processes is in the best interest of city residents and businesses. Local control allows innovation and greater flexibility to match taxes and regulations to a changing local economy. Local control also means allowing the City more authority over its local taxes, such as business and utility taxes. The City supports removing existing State controls over these taxes to allow the City to become less dependent on shared revenue from the State.

The City believes certain policy, such as requiring paid sick leave be offered by all employers and increasing the minimum wage to at least the level approved by Tacoma voters, should be uniform across the State. The City supports adoption of State laws requiring minimum paid sick and safe leave and increasing the State minimum wage to at least the levels approved by Tacoma voters.

The City also supports changes to the 1 percent cap on property taxes that will allow growth in revenue year over year of up to the rate of inflation in Washington.

The voters of Tacoma have approved a permanent levy of 50 cents per thousand to pay for essential emergency medical services provided by the Tacoma Fire Department. Despite this approval, other provisions of state property tax law have resulted in reductions of this revenue and increased pressure on the City's General Fund to make up the difference. Revenue for this vital public service must be better protected. The City supports changes to EMS levy statutes that will increase the maximum levy rate to 75 cents per thousand and also protect the levy from erosion by placing it outside the 1 percent limit on taxes.

Tacoma, Seattle and Spokane operate their own municipal employee retirement systems. The systems invest employee and employer contributions in publicly traded stocks and bonds as well as private equity markets. Some private markets are unavailable to the City systems because of public records requirements. The Washington State Investment Board and the University of Washington have exemptions from public records laws concerning reporting of strategies and other proprietary information from private equity managers

which allows these pensions systems to fully participate in private equity markets. The three cities seek a similar exemption.

#### Human Rights:

The State has constitutional obligations to the mentally ill population of Washington. The State, and cities and counties each play a role in providing services to this population. The State significantly increased funding for its institutions in 2015 and must now do more to help local government meet growing needs for service at this level. The City supports increased funding for a full continuum of subsidized and supportive housing for mentally ill and chemically dependent homeless persons.

The manner in which local law enforcement and the community it serves interact with one another is critical to successful community policing, the community's sense of comfort and safety, and the level of respect police are afforded. This is an on-going and multifaceted process. The State can assist with funding these efforts as well as by adjusting laws that make achieving good community/police interaction more difficult. The City supports changes to State law that restrict hiring of police officers to only citizens of the United States. The US military allows individuals to serve who are legally in the country but have not yet become citizens. The same opportunity should be allowed for legal residents to serve as police officers provided they pass all other background checks.

#### Transportation:

The City applauds the Legislature for its adoption of a comprehensive funding package that will construct important highway projects throughout the state. The package includes modest increases in shared gas tax revenue for cities as well as new funding for important grant programs and mobility projects.

Unfortunately there are critical infrastructure issues related to preservation of existing resources that were not addressed by this package. In Tacoma and throughout Washington there are heavily used aging bridges that need significant repair or replacement. The Puyallup River Bridge carries over 30,000 cars per day even with existing load limits. After a decade of applying, the City has acquired partial grant funding to replace two segments of the bridge. The remaining six segments will require \$100 million more. Existing grant programs are inadequate to provide this level of funding. The state needs to provide new tools, which may include tolling, to help local governments preserve existing transportation infrastructure.

The City also supports adoption of authority to create a fee based street utility. Similar funding mechanisms are in use in other states and result in a much higher level of citizen satisfaction with the maintenance of local streets.

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