



RESOLUTION NO. 41924

1 BY REQUEST OF MAYOR IBSEN

2 A RESOLUTION amending Rule 9 of the *Rules of Procedure of the Council of*
3 *the City of Tacoma* relating to Public Comment and Community Forum.

4 WHEREAS in response to commentary and feedback from peers and the
5 public, the proposed amendments to the *Rules of Procedure of the Council of the*
6 *City of Tacoma* ("Rules of Procedure") are intended to revise the format of Public
7 Comment and Community Forum to improve the process for the City Council
8 receiving public comment during its business meeting, for the public attending City
9 Council business meetings, and for the speakers participating in Public Comment
10 and Community Forum, and

12 WHEREAS initial conversations with the Operational Strategy and
13 Administrative Committee regarding proposed amendments to the Rules of
14 Procedure began in March 2026 and were first discussed with the City Council at
15 its Study Session in April 2026, and

17 WHEREAS on March 10, 2026, the City Council adopted a motion to modify
18 the agenda for the regular City Council business meetings to be held on March 24,
19 April 28, and May 26, 2026, to temporarily remove Community Forum from the City
20 Council business meeting agendas while the City Council considered permanent
21 amendments to the Rules of Procedure, and

23 WHEREAS suggested redlined revisions to the Rules of Procedure relating
24 to Rule 9 regarding public comment and Community Forum were shared with the
25 City Council during Study Session on May 19, 2026, and
26



1 WHEREAS some of the proposed amendments are intended to align
2 practices and to clarify commitments such as language access, and some are
3 intended to clarify the purpose of Community Forum and engagement during
4 forum, and address disruptions, access, and time limitations, and
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6 WHEREAS the proposed amendments increase the allowable time for
7 speakers during Community Forum while adjusting the frequency of Community
8 Forums and providing the flexibility to schedule Community Forums in-district to
9 provide access to more speakers to participate, and
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11 WHEREAS the proposed amendments include expectations for City Council
12 Member responses and dialogue, examples of conduct that may constitute a
13 disruption, authority for the presiding officer to recess or adjourn to address
14 disruptions, and a requirement for speakers to identify the subject matter of the
15 speaker's comments to ensure the speakers align their comments with the time,
16 place and manner limitations set forth in the Rules of Procedure, and
17

18 WHEREAS the proposed changes to the Public Comment and Community
19 Forum provisions of the Rules of Procedure are intended to improve equity,
20 accessibility, and meaningful public participation by all persons attending City
21 Council meeting and by reducing barriers to engagement and creating more
22 inclusive opportunities for all residents and participants to be heard without regard
23 to viewpoint of the speakers, and
24

25 WHEREAS enhancements such as expanded language access and clearer
26 time, place, and manner requirements, together with opportunities for in-district



1 meetings, will help ensure that all participants, speakers and viewpoints, including
2 those of historically underrepresented communities, individuals with disabilities,
3 working families, and persons with limited access to technology, are better able to
4 participate in civic processes; Now, Therefore,

5
6 BE IT RESOLVED BY THE COUNCIL OF THE CITY OF TACOMA:

7 That the *Rules of Procedure of the Council of the City of Tacoma* are hereby
8 amended by amending Rule 9, relating to Public Comment and Community Forum,
9 as more specifically set in the attached Exhibit "A."

10
11 Adopted _____

12
13
14 _____
Mayor

15 Attest:

16
17 _____
City Clerk

18 Approved as to form:

19
20 _____
City Attorney

RULE 9 - PUBLIC COMMENT/PUBLIC FORUM

A. Public Comment.

The City Council appreciates hearing from community members about items on its agenda, and desires to set aside time at each Council business meeting where final action is taken. Comments on final action will be taken orally at a meeting, or in writing submitted to the City Clerk's Office at least 24 hours prior to the meeting to enable staff to compile and distribute written comments to the City Council. Written comments received after this deadline will not be made part of the official record of the meeting.

1. All comments must be limited to items on the agenda. Speakers are asked to identify the specific agenda items they wish to address.
2. To ensure equal opportunity for the public to comment, a speaker's comments shall be limited to up to two minutes per person, per meeting. Where necessary, due to the number of persons who want to address the Council, the presiding officer shall retain authority to limit all persons' remarks to an equal period of less than two minutes. Comment time may not be added to/donated to other speakers. To further ensure equal opportunity for the public to comment, each person may address the Council only one time during the Public Comment portion of the meeting.
3. Comments may be made at or before every meeting at which final action is taken, including on resolutions, first and final readings of ordinances, and motions. Comments made regarding ordinances forwarded to the Council by the Hearing Examiner for which a public hearing has been held shall not be incorporated into the formal record of the decision pursuant to state law.
4. Written public comments must be submitted to the City Clerk's Office at a minimum of 24 hours prior to the meeting to enable staff to compile and distribute to the Council.

Written comments submitted according to these Rules shall be considered in the same manner as oral comments.

5. Upon the request of any individual who will have difficulty attending a meeting of the City Council by reason of disability, limited mobility, or for any other reason that makes physical attendance at a meeting difficult, the Council shall, when feasible, provide an opportunity for that individual to provide oral comment at the meeting remotely if oral comment from other members of the public will be accepted at the meeting.
6. Upon the request of any individual who needs information in an alternative format or different language, the Council shall, when feasible, provide options for language access. Individuals using language or sign interpreters will be provided additional time when testifying before the City Council.

76. In the event that the Council, after taking public comment, suspends its rules to include final action on a new resolution, ordinance, or motion on the agenda, public comment will be taken at the time the Council considers the new resolution, ordinance, or motion. Where legislation has been substantially changed at its final reading, a person may speak to the changes.

87. To request to speak during Public Comment, members of the public must indicate they wish to speak as instructed by the Mayor or City Clerk. Those attending in person will sign in at the designated location in Council Chambers; those attending remotely may be asked to click the 'Raise Hand' button or *9 on their phone. The speaker's name or the last four digits of their phone number will be called out when it is their turn to speak.

89. Nothing in these Rules diminishes the City Council's authority to deal with interruptions, puts limitations on the time available for public comment or on how public comment is accepted, or requires the Council to accept public comment that renders orderly conduct of the meeting unfeasible.

B. Courtesy and Conduct.

1. All speakers during Public Comment or Community Forum, in the discussion, comments, or debate of any matter or issue, shall be courteous in their language and deportment and shall not engage in or discuss or comment on personalities, or indulge in derogatory remarks or insinuations in respect to any member of the Council, or any member of the staff or the public, but shall at all times confine their remarks to those facts which are germane and relevant, as determined by the presiding officer, to the question or matter under discussion. All remarks will be addressed to the Council as a whole.

2. Disruptions of the City Council and committee meetings are prohibited. Any person engaging in conduct that disrupts, disturbs or otherwise impedes the orderly conduct of the Council meeting can be considered a failure to comply with the City Council Rules of Procedure. Disruptions include but are not limited to:

- Failure of a speaker to comply with the allotted time established for the individual speaker's public comment;
- Unduly repetitive or irrelevant remarks that are unrelated to the topic on the agenda or within the City's jurisdiction;
- Use of an allotted individual comment period for purposeful delay, including remaining silent or engaging in other activity without conveying a discernible message; or
- Holding or placement of a banner or sign in the Council Chamber in a way that endangers others or obstructs the free flow of pedestrians or the view of others attending the meeting;

C. Community Forum - ~~Second and Fourth Tuesday.~~

~~On the second and fourth Tuesday of each month,~~Once per month, time shall be reserved ~~during the regular business meeting~~ for community members' comments. These forums may be held in the City Council Chambers during the regular business meeting, or "in-district" as a special meeting of the Council or stand-alone event. The purpose of this forum is to ~~assist the Council in making policy decisions; therefore, items of discussion~~

~~shall be limited to matters over which the City Council has jurisdiction.~~ provide a space for community input that informs Council policy decisions, addresses service issues, supports civic education, and helps build trust, transparency, and stronger relationships between residents and their local government.

Community Forum will be limited to ~~sixty minutes~~two hours, and speaker's remarks shall be limited to up to ~~90 seconds~~three minutes per person, per Community Forum. Comment time may not be added to/donated to other speakers. If needed, alternative language can be offered per rule 9.A.6. Where necessary, due to the number of persons who want to address the Council, the presiding officer shall retain authority to limit all persons' remarks to an equal period of ~~less-no more~~ than ~~90 seconds~~two minutes. If there are not enough speakers to last for ~~sixty minutes (one hour)~~two hours, the chair will close Community Forum after the last speaker. To further ensure equal opportunity for the public to comment, each person may address the Council only one time during the Community Forum portion of any meeting. Comment shall not be made in support of or opposition to any matter on the Council Agenda for which the time for public comment has passed. Items of discussion shall be limited to matters over which the City Council has jurisdiction to assist the Council in making policy decisions.

D. No Use of Public Comment or Community Forum for Campaigns.

No person may use public comment or Community Forum for the purpose of assisting a campaign for election of any person to any office or for the promotion of or opposition to any ballot proposition. Further, any direct mention of a candidate's candidacy or a ballot proposition shall constitute grounds for immediate suspension of such person's right to speak at that Council meeting.

E. No Use of Public Comment or Community Forum for Advertising.

No person addressing the Council may use Public Comment or Community Forum for the purpose of advertising. Advertising is defined as "promoting by making known, proclaiming publicly, drawing attention to, or making conspicuous any item, product, service, or thing, for profit or otherwise." This does not prevent or preclude any person addressing the Council from expressing their views or opinions on matters over which the Council has jurisdiction. Also, this does not prohibit individuals or organizations from promoting public events or causes through public requests for proclamations and presentations as provided in Rule 8, Sections D and E.

F. Transgression and Enforcement.

The presiding officer shall retain authority to determine whether a speaker's remarks fail to comply with these Rules or exceed the scope of the designated forum, and the presiding officer shall have the right to suspend such person's right to speak, subject to the Council's right to overrule such decision.

Should disruptions or conduct render Community Forum unable to continue then the presiding officer may call for a recess of no more than 10 minutes. This can be done without a vote of the Council once. Any further recesses require approval by motion.

If disruption of Community Forum continues or the Presiding Officer determines a recess will not abate the disruption, the Presiding Officer may adjourn the meeting immediately.