



City of Tacoma City Council Minutes

Center for Urban Waters - Commencement Bay Conference Room
326 East "D" St, Tacoma, WA 98412

May 17, 2024
9:00 AM

SPECIAL MEETING

Call to Order

Mayor Woodards called the special meeting to order at 9:17 a.m.

Present: 8 - Bushnell, Daniels, Diaz, Hines, Rumbaugh, Scott, Walker and Mayor Woodards

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The City Council held a moment of silence in honor of Council Member Catherine Ushka.

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Amendment Consideration Process and Panel Speakers

1. [24-0549](#) Charter Review Timeline for Council Process

At approximately 9:22 a.m., Mayor Woodards provided opening remarks and explained the timeline for touch points and discussion, amendments, and possible pathways.

Discussion ensued regarding the timeline, process, and panelists and experts who met with the Charter Review Committee (CRC).

Together, they further reviewed and discussed panelists and expertise needed regarding form of government, noting past or present council from the City of Spokane, and their City Attorney; policing accountability, noting the City of Louisville and the National Association for Civilian Oversight of Law Enforcement; and elections and rank choice voting, noting Pierce County Elections.

Council Proposed Amendments Deadline and Format

At approximately 9:45 a.m., Mayor Woodards discussed the timeline and process for Council proposed amendments, including critical deadlines, the ability to bring forward amendments at any point, and providing information in advance for peer review.

City Manager Elizabeth Pauli reviewed the binder contents, including process timeline, CRC final report, recommendation summaries, Council rules of procedure, current Charter, and available space for future Council proposed amendments.

Discussion ensued throughout regarding the process for bringing amendments forward, assistance from policy staff, information required to be in the Charter, and future Council proposed amendments.

Discussion on Council Proposed Amendments

2. [24-0550](#) (C1) Regular Council Meetings

At approximately 10:10 a.m., Mayor Woodards reviewed the first proposed Council amendment regarding Section 2.8. She stated this amendment relates to Council regular meetings to allow more flexibility around meeting frequency to account for holidays, conferences, and events.

Discussion ensued regarding the history of how 46 meetings was originally selected; defining regular meetings, special meetings, and study sessions; State law; language regarding meetings in the Council rules of procedures; and process to amend any amendments.

Discussion on Charter Review Committee Recommended Amendments

3. [24-0551](#) (12) City Council “Purpose of Inquiry”

City Manager Pauli reviewed the CRC amendment related to “purpose of inquiry” including the CRC amendment and the possible limited nature of the proposed language.

Discussion ensued regarding City Council interactions with staff; language proposed; defining "inquiry" versus "direction", "Council" as a whole versus Council members as a single person, and "timely"; if this amendment solves a

current concern; how amendments could enhance the language; and relationships.

Together, they further reviewed the amendment and suggested modifying language regarding "relative" and "timely", as well as expressing that individual Council members are permitted to make direct inquiries.

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The City Council special meeting recessed at 11:15 a.m. and reconvened at 11:32 a.m.

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4. [24-0552](#) (13) City Attorney

City Manager Pauli reviewed the proposed Charter amendment regarding the City Attorney, including fiscal impact, Tacoma Municipal Code (TMC) language, clarifying process around hiring, special counsel, ethical obligations, and State law.

Discussion ensued throughout regarding the City Attorney position working for the City Manager, possible need for special counsel and their specialized subject matter, who the City Attorney represents, second legal opinions, providing feedback to the City Manager, adding language to include the Council in the hiring and firing process, conflicts versus desiring another legal opinion, fiscal impact and budgeting, and possible violation of State law and requirements to hire counsel.

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MOTION: Council Member Walker moved to recess the special meeting.

SECONDED BY: Deputy Mayor Hines.

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

Ayes: 8 - Bushnell, Daniels, Diaz, Hines, Rumbaugh, Scott, Walker and Mayor Woodards

The City Council special meeting recessed at 12:09 p.m. and reconvened at 12:54 p.m.

5. [24-0553](#) (2) Term Limits

City Manager Pauli reviewed the Charter amendment related to term limits as proposed by the CRC and that no additional fiscal impact or legal opinion is provided.

Discussion ensued regarding Council's experience with term limits, appointments to fill a vacancy, length of terms for Council and Mayor, moving through the City Council to other elected positions, adding a break between serving as a Council Member and then serving as Mayor, differences between the roles, expertise learned while working on the City Council, length of time projects and policies can take, consecutive language, clarifying structure of total years, stepping off the City Council to run for Mayor, aligning the term of Mayor with a presidential term, municipal elections, when these changes would go into effect, and criteria to run for office.

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The City Council special meeting recessed at 1:51 p.m. and reconvened at 2:09 p.m.

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6. [24-0554](#) (7) New Section - Council; full-time; staff; investigative authority

City Manager Pauli reviewed the Charter amendment related to a full-time City Council, noting fiscal impact.

Discussion ensued regarding the public's belief that Council is already full-time, outside financial resources, salary-based benefits, amending the Charter versus adding language to other locations like the TMC, matching pay to expected hours to be worked, duties and expectations of Council members and the Mayor, cost of living increases, TMC provisions, working multiple jobs, 2014 Charter Review recommendations, additional staff to support the Council and staff to complete additional policy workload, and the wide variety of hours the job may require.

Clarify Leads on Amendments, Additional Information Needed, and Next Steps

Mayor Woodards concluded by stating that Tuesday, May 21, 2025, study session will be a joint meeting with the Public Utility Board and will include review of CRC proposed topics related to utilities.

Adjournment

On proper motion, the special meeting was adjourned at 2:58 p.m.



Victoria R. Woodards, Mayor



Nicole Emery, City Clerk