



TO: Elizabeth Pauli, City Manager
FROM: Council Member Bushnell; Joseph Franco, Interim Council Policy Assistant, City Manager's Office
COPY: Government Performance and Finance Committee Chair; Andy Cherullo, Director, Finance; Ted Richardson, Senior Management Fellow, CMO
PRESENTER: Councilmember Joe Bushnell
SUBJECT: A request to determine the Tacoma City Council as a Full-Time Council
DATE: June 7, 2022

PRESENTATION TYPE:

Other: A request and discussion related to the determination of the City Council as a Full-time Council.

SUMMARY:

Currently, there is nothing in the City Charter, City Code (outside of medical, dental, and vision benefits, in which TMC 1.19.010 defines Council members as prorated part-time City employees), or Title 35 RCW (under either First Class cities, miscellaneous, and council-manager form of government) that sets the Tacoma City Council as part-time or full-time serving members. This memorandum serves as an overview of the options for defining a full-time Council and a foundation for an introductory policy development discussion on an ordinance to formally determine Tacoma City Council Members as full time employees.

BACKGROUND:

According to the 2022 City of Tacoma Community Satisfaction Survey, government confidence is down 12%, with the percentage of respondents who rated their level of confidence with the Municipal Government as excellent or good dropping from 54% to 42% overall. Overall satisfaction with municipal services is also trending down to 75% from 79% in 2020. Additionally, only 28% of survey respondents have made an inquiry to the City in the 2022 survey down from 29% in 2020. Out of the 55% of people that did not file an inquiry, 41% shared that the lack of City of Tacoma response and previous negative experience with the City were main drivers in their reason to not file an inquiry.

Additional City of Tacoma information:

- The [Tacoma City Charter](#) Article II, The Legislative Branch Section, explains qualifications and compensation of Council Members. Section 23 explains how the Citizen Commission on Elected Salaries determines salaries.
- The [Tacoma City Charter](#) Article II Section 2.8 covers required meetings.
- The [Tacoma City Charter](#) Article II Section 2.9 says the Council shall establish its own rules and order of business.
- [City Council Rules of Procedure](#) includes information on standing Council committees.
- The Tacoma Citizen Commission on Elected Salaries recommendation on 2022 salaries can be [found online here](#).

Formal responsibilities:

- Attending Study Session, City Council, Virtual Forum, and Committee of the Whole meetings (Charter & Council Rules of Procedure)
- Attending Council appointment meetings, last defined in [Resolution 40902](#)

**Informal responsibilities (not defined in TMC or rules of procedure):**

- Constituent relations
- Attending neighborhood meetings (such as neighborhood councils, safe street groups, business districts, and others)
- Attending events on behalf of the City
- Reviewing meeting materials in advance of various meetings
- Briefing meetings with staff to learn about policies
- Media inquiries
- Official boards and commissions, local, regional, and national
- Policy research and development

ISSUE:

Community trust and level of confidence in the Tacoma City Council is down, and lack of City response and negative experiences with the City are damaging the relationship between the community and local government. Many Council members must supplement their income by working another job to meet the demands of living in the area, which affects the time they are able to give toward their City Council duties. If Council members are defined as part-time, secondary jobs and roles take away time they could dedicate to their position to help move forward the goals of their specific district. This raises concerns about meeting the Tacoma 2025 goals of civic engagement as well as goals around equity and access. Council members may struggle to meet the level of engagement that their constituents demand and provide the access to their local government that the community expects. The lack of access reduces the Council's goal of belief and trust in local government. A full-time Council would give Council members the opportunity to be more involved overall and additionally represent the City on committees and regional boards and commissions.

ALTERNATIVES:

Other jurisdictions offer examples of a variety of options for determining full or part time that the Council may consider:

- **Salary is set by salary commission or similar entity at a rate comparable to a full-time position.** Several municipalities do not clarify in their Charter or code if they are full- or part-time positions (Denver, Seattle). Their documents will list roles and responsibilities, that may or may not make it clear. In these cases, clarity is determined by practice and salary. Requirements for a salary commission or similar entity are determined by individual states.
- **Explicitly prohibit other employment.** Multiple cities explicitly prohibit other employment, some specifying this includes honorariums and other sources of funds (Lynnwood – for Mayor, Cleveland, Los Angeles, San Diego). Some have exemptions for military service (such as national guard) and others for limited employment. These charters/codes may not explicitly state the positions are full-time, but they do prohibit other sources of salary.
- **Salary linked to another profession in code.** Several cities define a full-time salary by linking it to another public service profession's salary (Los Angeles, San Diego, Pierce County). The salary is set at what would be considered full-time.



- **Roles and responsibilities specify an expectation of the number of hours worked.** There is one example of this (Spokane) that sets roles and responsibilities that establish the expectation of 30-50 hours a week of work. However, this is not attached to salary.

The Council also retains the option to take no action. While additional Council members may have other sources of income, no action would result in some Council members continuing to work a separate job or have an additional paid role on top of their Council work. Because of the full-time hours that Council members dedicate to their work, it is difficult for Council members to take on additional jobs or supplemental income.

FISCAL IMPACT:

In addition to potential salary implications for City Council members, if the Council is determined to be a full-time Council, additional staff members will likely be needed to support Council policy work and to meet policy priorities set by the City Council. More specific fiscal impacts would need to be explored with additional policy discussion, fiscal analysis and Council guidance on the preferred approach.

RECOMMENDATION:

Councilmember Bushnell is requesting an ordinance stating that City Council members are full-time employees and that this duty ought to be their primary responsibility. As per the City Charter, the Tacoma Citizen Commission on Elected Salaries will determine at what rate that work will be compensated.