



## City of Tacoma

Mayor Victoria Woodards

December 19, 2023

Dear Chair Wamback and Members of the Charter Review Committee,

The Tacoma City Council would like to extend our sincere gratitude for the invaluable service each of you are dedicating to the Charter Review Committee. Your commitment to civic duty and the review of our City's Charter is commendable, and the City owes a debt of gratitude to each member for the time, effort, and expertise invested in this critical undertaking.

As you organize your work plan for the coming months, the City Council has identified several topics of particular interest that we would like you to explore. We ask that you consider looking deeper at these topics and developing recommendations that address them when you give us your final report. These topics are included as attachments to this letter.

Once again, thank you for your dedication to the City of Tacoma and stepping up to give your time to review the City Charter. We look forward to your thorough examination of the City Charter and the thoughtful recommendations.

Should you require any further information on the topics we have shared or would like to discuss these topics in more detail, please do not hesitate to contact the executive liaison assigned to support you, Sonja Hallum, at [shallum@cityoftacoma.org](mailto:shallum@cityoftacoma.org).

Yours in service,

[Mayor and Council Signatures to be added upon approval]

Attachments:

- City Council Recommendations for Charter Review Committee Consideration by Article Section
- City Council Recommendations for Charter Review Committee Consideration by Category

# CHARTER OF THE CITY OF TACOMA

## City Council Recommendations for Charter Review Committee Consideration

### By Category

#### 1. Council and Mayor

##### Creations and Composition of City Council

- a. Sec. 2.1 / Sec. 5.3 - Number of Council districts (adding districts)

##### Qualifications and Compensation of Council Members

- b. Sec. 2.3 - Review salary commission to ensure there is not a conflict with state law
- c. Sec. 2.35 – Council term limits (2 requests)
- d. Sec. 2.35 – Consider disconnecting the allowable time served as a Council Member from the amount of time served as the Mayor
- e. Expectations for a full time council

##### Mayor

- f. Sec. 2.4 - Review term limits for council, particularly the Mayor's role – we want experienced CM's to be able to run for Mayor

##### Procedure of the Council

- g. Sec. 2.8 – The number of mandated council meetings – (5 requests)

#### 2. Initiatives

- a. Sec. 2.18, 2.19, 2.20 - The citizens' initiative process, including best practices such as the number of required signatures
- b. Sec. 2.18 – Sec 2.25 – Review how the Charter allows the use of initiatives to change City ordinances, including the possibility of a third party review similar to the Attorney General review of State initiatives
- c. Sec. 2.25 - Replace “freeholder” with appropriate language such as ‘steward’ or as otherwise defined in state law

#### 3. Administrative Branch

- a. Review the inclusion of boards and commissions in the charter, including a review of the Landmarks Preservation Commission, Tacoma Humane Society, and the Planning Commission. The review should include consideration of state law requirements

##### Council-Manager Relationships

- b. Sec. 3.2-3.4 - Form of Government– (2 requests)

#### City Attorney

- c. Section 3.5 – Appointment of the City Attorney (2 requests)

#### City Planning Commission

- d. Section 3.8 - Planning Commission representation from certain communities/ industries/vocation of interest
- e. Section 3.8 – Planning Commission. Consider adding a note indicating ‘one or more’ planning commissions to allow consideration of tiers of Planning Commissions or ways to triage and prioritize work between two commissions in the TMC in order to allow for more timely review of planning issue

#### Administrative Organization

- f. Sec. 3.12 - Review boards defined in the charter, to include parameters to remove board members for dereliction of duties

### **4. Public Utilities**

#### General Powers Respecting Utilities

- a. Sec. 4.1 - Clarifying internet as a Utility

#### The Public Utility Board

- b. Sec. 4.8 – The Public Utility Board and all other sections related to their powers and duties
- c. Sec. 4.8 – TPU membership and barriers to serving on the TPU Board - (2 requests)
- d. Sec. 4.9 - Compensation for TPU board members – (2 requests)

#### Powers and Duties of the Public Utility Board

- e. Sec. 4.17 – Shared services/ Duplication of services, including the structure of the public utility as a separate entity- (2 requests)

### **5. City Personnel and Boards**

#### Eligibility for Employment

- a. Sec. 6.3 - Employee residency requirements– the city cannot enforce this; it limits some hiring pools and it cannot be enforced
- b. Sec. 6.3 - requires that COT employees be citizens – this should be removed
- c. Sec. 6.3 – Eligibility for employment

#### Discriminatory Actions

- d. Section 6.7 - Discriminatory actions/update classes
- e. Broaden discrimination statement or change charter to require a predicted regular update to this statement or reference the Tacoma Municipal Code that will allow for more frequent updates

Civil Service Board

- f. Sec. 6.11 - Review Civil Service Board term limits

Personnel Rules

- g. Sec. 6.14 - Review rules related to how long employment list should be kept (under civil service) as this charter requirement is in conflict with best and successful hiring practices and may be in conflict with equity goals

**6. All Sections**

- a. All – ensure gender neutral language throughout
- b. All – incorporate disability-related equity principals
- c. All – examine subsets of the City Government and make sure the City Council has oversight over public funds allocated by the City

# CHARTER OF THE CITY OF TACOMA

## City Council Recommendations for Charter Review Committee Consideration

### By Article Section

#### Article Section

##### I. Incorporation and General Powers

Incorporation and Boundaries .....1.1

General Powers of the City .....1.2

##### II. The Legislative Branch

Creation and Composition of the City Council .....2.1

- Sec. 2.1 / Sec. 5.3 - Number of Council districts (adding districts)

Qualifications and Compensation of Council Members ..... 2.2 – 2.35

- Sec. 2.3 - Review salary commission to ensure there is not a conflict with state law
- Sec. 2.35 - Length a person may serve consecutively on Council; consider current term limits - (2 requests)
- Sec. 2.35 – Consider disconnecting the allowable timed served as a Council Member from the amount of time served as the Mayor
- Expectations for a full time council

The Mayor .....2.4

- Sec. 2.4 - Review term limits for council, particularly the Mayor’s role – we want experienced CM’s to be able to run for Mayor

Removal from or Forfeiture of Office .....2.5 – 2.6

Council Vacancies .....2.7

Procedure of the Council .....2.8 – 2.10

- Sec. 2.8 – The number of mandated council meetings – (5 requests)

Legislation .....2.11 – 2.15

Compilation and Codification of Ordinances .....2.16

Penalties for Non-compliance with Ordinances .....2.17

Powers of the People .....2.18 – 2.25

- Sec. 2.18, 2.19, 2.20 - The citizens’ initiative process, including best practices such as the number of required signatures
- Sec. 2.18 – Sec 2.25 – Review how the Charter allows the use of initiatives to change City ordinances, including the possibility of a third party review similar to the Attorney General review of State initiatives
- Sec. 2.25 - Replace “freeholder” with appropriate language such as ‘steward’ or as otherwise defined in state law

**III. The Administrative Branch**

- Review the inclusion of boards and commissions in the charter, including a review of the Landmarks Preservation Commission, Tacoma Humane Society, and the Planning Commission. The review should include consideration of state law requirements.

**The City Manager .....3.1**

**Council-Manager Relationships .....3.2 – 3.4**

- Form of Government – (2 requests)

**City Attorney ..... 3.5 – 3.6**

- Section 3.5 – Appointment of the City Attorney ( 2 requests)

**City Clerk .....3.7**

**City Planning Commission .....3.8**

- Section 3.8 - Planning Commission representation from certain communities/ industries/vocation of interest
- Section 3.8 – Planning Commission. Consider adding a note indicating “one or more” planning commissions to allow consideration of tiers of Planning Commissions or ways to triage and prioritize work between two commissions in the TMC in order to allow for more timely review of planning issue

**Tacoma Public Library .....3.9**

**Tacoma Humane Society .....3.10**

**Administrative Organization .....3.11 – 3.12**

- Sec. 3.12 - Review boards defined in the charter, to include parameters to remove board members for dereliction of duties

**Landmarks Preservation Commission .....3.13**

**IV. Public Utilities**

**General Powers Respecting Utilities .....4.1**

- Sec. 4.1 - Clarifying internet as a Utility

**Power to Acquire and Finance .....4.2**

**Rates .....4.3**

**Diversion of Utility Funds ..... 4.4 – 4.5**

**Disposal of Utility Properties ..... 4.6**

**Franchises for Water or Electric Utilities .....4.7**

**The Public Utility Board ..... 4.8 – 4.9**

- Sec. 4.8 – The Public Utility Board and all other sections related to their powers and duties
- Sec. 4.8 - TPU Board membership and barriers to serving on the TPU board (2 requests)
- Sec. 4.9 - Compensation for TPU board members – (2 requests)

**Powers and Duties of the Public Utility Board ..... 4.10 – 4.17**

- Sec. 4.17 – Shared services/ Duplication of services, including the structure of the public utility as a separate entity- – (2 requests)

**Administrative Organization .....4.18 – 4.22**

**Location and Relocation of Utility Works ..... 4.23**

**V. Nominations and Elections**

**Application of State Election Laws ..... 5.1**

**Filing and Certification of Candidates .....5.2**

**Election of Council Members – Numbered Positions ..... 5.3**

- Section 2.1 / Section 5.3 - Number of Council districts (adding districts)

**Election Contests ..... 5.4**

**Other Provisions ..... 5.5**

**VI. City Officers and Personnel**

**Unclassified Service .....6.1**

**Classified Service ..... 6.2**

**Eligibility for Employment ..... 6.3**

- Sec. 6.3 - Employee residency requirements– the city cannot enforce this; it limits some hiring pools and it cannot be enforced
- Sec. 6.3 - Requires that COT employees be citizens – this should be removed

- Sec. 6.3 – Eligibility for employment

**Oath of Office ..... 6.4**

**Surety Bonds .....6.5**

**Pecuniary Interest .....6.6**

**Discriminatory Actions ..... 6.7**

- Section 6.7 - Discriminatory Actions/update classes
- Broaden discrimination statement or change charter to require a predicted regular update to this statement or reference the Tacoma Municipal Code that will allow for more frequent updates

**Political Activity ..... 6.8**

**Compensation of Officers and Employees .....6.9**

**Employee Welfare Benefits ..... 6.10**

**Civil Service Board ..... 6.11**

- Review Civil Service Board term limits

**Powers and Duties of the Civil Service Board ..... 6.12**

**Human Resources Director ..... 6.13**

**Personnel Rules ..... 6.14**

- Review rules related to how long employment lists should be kept (under civil service) as this charter requirement is in conflict with best and successful hiring practices and may be in conflict with equity goals

**Special Provision Relating to Examinations ..... 6.15**

**Status of Existing Employees .....6.16**

**Arbitration ..... 6.17**

**Status of New Employee Groups ..... 6.18**

**VII. General Finance**

**Fiscal Year .....7.1**

**The Budget ..... 7.2**

**Budget Control .....7.3**

- Investment of Funds .....7.4**
- Department of Finance .....7.5**



**Receipt, Custody, and Disbursement of Funds ..... 7.6 – 7.9**

**Purchasing and Contracts ..... 7.10 – 7.13**

**Independent Audit ..... 7.14**

**Taxation and Indebtedness ..... 7.15**

**Public Sale of Bonds ..... 7.16**

**VIII. Franchises ..... 8.1 – 8.7**

**IX. Miscellaneous Provisions**

**Disposition of City Property ..... 9.1**

**Public Records ..... 9.2**

**Claims Against City ..... 9.3**

**Parks ..... 9.4**

**Separability Clause ..... 9.5**

**X. Succession in Government**

**Continuance of Ordinances and Vested Rights ..... 10.1**

**Continuance of Departments and Officers ..... 10.2**

**Transfer of Functions and Personnel ..... 10.3**

**Preliminary Meetings of the Council ..... 10.4**

**Transfer of Records, Property, and Funds ..... 10.5**

**Effective Date of Charter .....10.6**

**All Sections**

- All – ensure gender neutral language throughout
- All – incorporate disability-related equity principals
- All - examine subsets of the City Government and make sure the City Council has oversight over public funds allocated by the City