



City of Tacoma

City Council Action Memorandum

TO: Elizabeth Pauli, City Manager
FROM: Nicole Emery, City Clerk
COPY: City Council and City Clerk
SUBJECT: A resolution placing proposed Charter amendment 7B on the November 5, 2024, General Election ballot – Requested for July 16, 2024
DATE: July 10, 2024

SUMMARY AND PURPOSE:

A resolution placing proposed Charter amendment 7B on the November 5, 2024, General Election ballot.

BACKGROUND:

On October 17, 2023, Resolution No. 41282 was adopted creating a Charter Review Committee (CRC), consisting of 15 citizens (residents), to review the existing Charter of the City of Tacoma and make such recommendations to the City Council for charter amendments as the committee may deem necessary and proper to improve the manner of operation and efficiency in conducting the affairs of the City. On December 19, 2023, Resolution No. 41324 was adopted appointing members to the CRC. Starting January 11, 2024, CRC members begin to meet to review the City Charter and develop recommendations.

On May 6, 2024, the City Council received the final report from the Charter Review Committee and a presentation on their recommendations. Starting May 7, 2024, the City Council reviewed the recommendations, brought forward new recommendations, and refined recommendations for consideration for the November 5, 2024, general election ballot. At the July 9, 2024, meeting City Council Members made motions to refer recommendations to the July 16, 2024, meeting for title drafting and final consideration to place on the ballot and redirected some amendments to other policy processes.

This recommendation would amend the City Charter to add a new section to clarify the priorities and time investment necessary for Council Members to carry out their duties, and authorize the City Council to employ or contract for personnel who will directly report to and advise or assist the Council Members.

The proposed 7B amendment language reads:

“Council Members shall prioritize their City Council work and shall devote sufficient time to fully carry out their obligations and duties, and shall have the authority to employ or contract for personnel who will directly report to and advise or assist the Council Members.”

COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT/ CUSTOMER RESEARCH:

The City Charter requires the City Council to commence a comprehensive review of the City Charter no less frequently than once every ten years by appointing citizens to a Charter Review Committee (CRC). The CRC met between January and May of 2024. They took comment at public meetings and held two extended public comment meetings with opportunities to comment in English, Spanish, Vietnamese, and Khmer. On May 6, 2024, the CRC presented final report to the City Council. The City Council reviewed every proposal from the CRC, in addition to creating new proposals for consideration. All materials were published in advance of the City Council’s public hearing on July 2, 2024.



2025 STRATEGIC PRIORITIES:

Equity and Accessibility:

This amendment aims to enhance the City Council’s ability to serve their constituents by directing Council Members to prioritize Council work and authorizing the Council Members to hire their own staff (e.g., a chief of staff, policy advisors, and legal advisors). Providing Council Members with the opportunity to employ or contract their own staff may also enable them to hire candidates that align more closely with their specific goals.

Civic Engagement: *Equity Index Score: Moderate Opportunity*

Increase the number of residents who participate civically through volunteering and voting. Elected officials, boards, commissions, and volunteer leadership will reflect the diversity of the Tacoma community.

ALTERNATIVES:

Alternative	Positive Impacts	Negative Impacts
Do not advance this resolution.	Council Members continue to serve their constituents and maintain their current staff.	Council Members would need to submit a budget request to hire additional staff through the City Manager’s Office.

EVALUATION AND FOLLOW UP:

If approved, this Charter amendment will be placed on the ballot for voters in the November 2024 election.

RECOMMENDATION:

None.

FISCAL IMPACT:

Staff in the Office of Management & Budget (OMB) provided Fiscal Notes during City Council review of proposed amendments. OMB reviewed all proposed amendments and provided fiscal impacts on amendments may require investments above \$50,000 to implement. Attached is the Fiscal Note from that review. The cost to place amendments on the ballot will be captured in the combined resolution brought forward on July 23, 2024.

Are the expenditures and revenues planned and budgeted in this biennium’s current budget?

N/A

Are there financial costs or other impacts of not implementing the legislation?

N/A

Will the legislation have an ongoing/recurring fiscal impact?

There is no ongoing fiscal impact for passing the resolution to place this amendment on the ballot. If approved by voters, further analysis and budget appropriations may be required for implementation.

Will the legislation change the City’s FTE/personnel counts?

There is no change to the City’s FTE/personnel counts for passing the resolution to place this amendment on the ballot. If approved by voters, further analysis and budget appropriations may be required for implementation.

ATTACHMENTS:

Fiscal Note

*For additional context on Fiscal Memos, refer to
“Considerations for Charter Review Fiscal Memorandums”
found towards the beginning of this binder*

Charter Review Fiscal Note

Proposed Amendment 7

Sec. 2.xxx Council – Full-Time; Staff; and Investigative Authority¹

City Council

New Section 2.XX provides that City Council members “shall” serve on a full-time basis. Pursuant to Tacoma City Charter Section 2.3, the compensation and salary for the Mayor and Council is determined by the Citizen Commission on Elected Salaries. Designation of the Council as full-time in the City Charter could result in an increase in the salaries for Councilmembers.

Salary and benefits as of May 2024 for the Mayor, Deputy Mayor, and Council Members are as follows:

City Council Salary and Benefits				
Current Personnel Costs (as of 5/24)	Quantity	Salary	Benefits	Annual Cost
Mayor	1	\$117,000	\$47,000	\$164,000
Deputy Mayor	1	\$70,000	\$38,000	\$108,000
Council Members	7	\$63,000	\$37,000	\$700,000
Total Staffing	9			\$972,000

The estimated range for the salary and benefit total for Mayor and Council Members based on this proposed amendment is **\$972,000 - \$1,721,000**. The low end of the scale represents current costs and assumes no increase, and the upper end represents a doubling of the salary (similar to the current salary for the Seattle City Council), and a proportionate increase to benefits. This represents an increase of **\$749,000** over the current costs for Mayor and Council salaries.

Council Staff

New Section 2.XX Provides that City Council members “shall have the authority to employ or contract for personnel who will directly report to and advise or assist Council Members.”

Currently staffing support for Mayor and Council consists of 7 FTEs with a total salary and benefit cost of **\$1,026,000**, depicted in the following:

City Council Support Staff Salary and Benefits				
Current Personnel Costs (as of 5/24)	Quantity	Salary	Benefits	Annual Cost
Policy Analyst (City Council)	1	\$113,000	\$47,000	\$160,000
Senior Policy Analyst (City Council)	1	\$121,000	\$48,000	\$169,000
Senior Policy Analyst (Mayor)	1	\$121,000	\$48,000	\$169,000

¹Updated to reflect Ordinance 28459 which referenced that benefits are set assuming that Council serves as 0.9 FTE and updated Deputy Mayor salary projection.

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 found towards the beginning of this binder*

Senior Community Services Analyst (Constituent Services)	1	\$105,000	\$45,000	\$150,000
Office Administrator (City Council)	2	\$85,000	\$41,000	\$252,000
Office Administrator (Mayor)	1	\$85,000	\$41,000	\$126,000
Total Staffing	7			\$1,026,000

The estimated fiscal impact of adding hiring authority to the City Council ranges from no impact (\$0.00 additional cost), if the staffing level does not change, to **\$1,368,500** under a model that would retain existing staff positions and add 6 new staff members assigned to Council members and 1 Chief of Staff. This total includes one-time costs of \$9,500 and on-going costs of \$20,000. To allow consideration of alternative staffing models, the cost per position is outlined as follows:

Position	Salary	Benefits	Ongoing Costs (approx.)	One-Time Onboarding Cost	Total Cost
Chief of Staff	\$147,000	\$55,000	\$20,000	\$9,500	\$202,000
Policy Analyst	\$113,000	\$47,000	\$20,000	\$9,500	\$189,500
Senior Policy Analyst	\$121,000	\$48,000	\$20,000	\$9,500	\$198,500
Senior Community Services Analyst	\$105,000	\$45,000	\$20,000	\$9,500	\$179,500
Office Administrator	\$85,000	\$41,000	\$20,000	\$9,500	\$155,500

Investigative Authority

New Section 2.XX provides that the Council, or Council committees may “audit and make other investigations ... and may retain special counsel...”

The estimated fiscal impact of this proposed amendment is a range of **\$350,000 to \$550,000** audit and/or investigation based on recent experience with audit costs, management studies (such as the TPU management study) and hiring of outside legal counsel. This range is highly dependent on the nature, length, and complexity of any investigation.