CITY OF TACOMA, WASHINGTON
OFFICE OF THE CITY COUNCIL
COUNCIL CONSIDERATION REQUEST

TO:	Mayor & City Council
FROM:	Council Member Joe Bushnell and Senior Council Policy Analyst Lynda Foster
COPIES TO:	Hyun Kim, Interim City Manager; Allyson Griffith, Deputy City Manager; Chris Bacha, City Attorney
SUBJECT:	**Ordinance – Public Utility Board Stipends – November 4, 2025**
DATE:	October 30, 2025

I ask for your support for an Ordinance establishing stipends for Public Utility Board Members.

LEGISLATIVE INTENT:
Establish an annual stipend of $19,152 per year to Public Utility Board Members, provided as a monthly stipend of $1,596.

Draft Code language:

1.12.157 Compensation of Public Utility Board Members

A. Each member of the Public Utility Board shall receive a stipend of $1,596 per month in performance of services or duties on behalf of the City as outlined in Article IV of the City Charter.

B. Members may also be entitled to reimbursement for expenses incurred in carrying out their official duties, other than those incident to attending board meetings held within the City of Tacoma.

C. Public Utility Board members are not entitled to City provided health and disability benefits, vacation leave, sick or paid time off leave accrual, nor shall they be entitled to membership in the Tacoma Employee Retirement System by virtue of their position as a Public Utility Board member.

D. Public Utility Board members shall be afforded the same legal protection against personal liability, subject, however, to the same limitations and obligations, as are provided for regular officers and employees under the terms of Sections 1.12.920 through 1.12.950; provided, however, that the determination as to whether they are within the scope of their assigned and authorized duties as provided in Section 1.12.940 shall be made by the City Attorney.

Background
Section 4.8 of the City Charter outlines the Public Utility Board to be composed of five members, appointed by the Mayor and confirmed by the City Council. Resolution outlines an interview process through the City Council Government, Performance and Finance Committee.

The duties of the Public Utility Board are outlined in TMC 1.06.490 and the City Charter. The Tacoma Public Utility Board holds significant responsibility in overseeing essential services that impact nearly every household and business in the region, including the management and strategic direction of Tacoma Power, Tacoma Water, and Tacoma Rail. Board members are tasked with making complex, high-stakes decisions about multi-million-dollar budgets, infrastructure

investments, environmental stewardship, rate structures, and long-term planning that directly affect the well-being and economic stability of the community. Due to the magnitude of these responsibilities, PUB members are expected to engage in high-level oversight involving technical, financial, environmental, and policy issues that significantly affect the quality of life and economic vitality of the region. This sets the PUB apart from other CBCs and underscores the need for board members with professional-level expertise and the capacity to manage complex strategic decisions for a multi-utility public agency.

The stipend amount is an average of reviewed Boards/Commissions that do similar work:

- Commissioners of public utility districts receive $1,800 per month (WAPUDA is comparable to the PUB's body of work)
- Parks Tacoma commission members receive $1,288 per month (Parks Tacoma is an example of a local stipend)
- Peninsula Light Company receives $1700 a month (PUD serving the Gig Harbor area. 32,000 electric customers, compared to our 180,000) BOD Director Position Description_2025.pdf

DESIRED ORDINANCE FIRST READING DATE: November 18, 2025.

COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT/ (CUSTOMER RESEARCH):
Recruitment efforts to bring in volunteers of different backgrounds to the Public Utility Board have daylighted barriers to volunteering. People who would have been valuable, qualified applicants have informed Council Members they'd be unable to take on a time-consuming role without additional support.

2025 STRATEGIC PRIORITIES:
Equity and Accessibility:
Socio-economic barriers are challenges rooted in an individual's financial and social circumstances that limit their ability to participate in activities such as volunteering. These obstacles are particularly prevalent in communities where systemic inequities, like poverty or a lack of access to resources, exist. These barriers disproportionately affect people of color, immigrants, and other marginalized communities.

Economy/Workforce: *Equity Index Score*: Moderate Opportunity
Increase the number of infrastructure projects and improvements that support existing and new business developments.
Increase positive public perception related to the Tacoma economy.

Civic Engagement: *Equity Index Score*: Moderate Opportunity
Increase the percentage of residents who believe they are able to have a positive impact on the community and express trust in the public institutions in Tacoma.
Increase the number of residents who participate civically through volunteering and voting.

Explain how your legislation will affect the selected indicator(s)?
Given this level of responsibility, serving on the Utility Board is far more than a ceremonial role. It requires a deep time commitment, ongoing study of technical and regulatory issues, and frequent engagement with staff and stakeholders to make informed decisions in the public interest. Without financial stipends, we risk limiting service on the board to only those with the economic privilege to volunteer their time without compensation. To ensure the Board reflects the full diversity and lived experiences of Tacoma's ratepayers, we must create equitable pathways for participation. Offering stipends honors the seriousness of the role, reduces economic barriers to service, and helps build a

more inclusive, representative board capable of stewarding our public utilities with accountability, transparency, and fairness.

ALTERNATIVES:

Alternative	Positive Impacts	Negative Impacts
1. Compare compensation to alternative Boards/Commissions	Could allow us to tailor compensation to match industry practices	May shift the review to less comparable volunteer positions.
2. Take no action	Preserve resources for other priorities	Limit support for a key volunteer role
3. Provide stipends for a broader range of Committee, Board, and Commission volunteers	Reduce barriers to volunteer participation across City priority areas	Limited financial resources available

EVALUATIONS AND FOLLOW UP:
Further discussion and review of PUB stipends should occur as part of the Government Performance and Finance Committee's regular review of TPU rates.

SPONSOR RECOMMENDATION:
Sponsors recommend passing this proposed Ordinance and providing stipends to PUB members.

FISCAL IMPACT:

The anticipated cost of direct stipends would be $95,760 per year. Funding for this proposal would come from the TPU budget. This expense is accounted for in TPU's current budget.

Compensation is aligned with Tacoma Public Utilities' biannual rate setting process, during which TPU staff review the overall needs of the utility and may have the opportunity to make recommendations to the City Council if they identify a need. City Council Members can initiate a discussion about compensation during the City's biannual budget process if they see a need for further review. These built-in processes ensure there are regular opportunities to evaluate and discuss compensation in the context of TPU's operational and financial priorities.

If you have a question related to the Council Contingency Fund Request, please contact Lynda Foster at 253.591.5166 or lfoster@Tacoma.gov.

SUBMITTED FOR COUNCIL CONSIDERATION BY: _____
Council Member Bushnell

SUPPORTING COUNCIL MEMBERS SIGNATURES

1. Victoria R. Woodards **POS#____Mayor_____**