



TO: Elizabeth Pauli, City Manager
FROM: Anita Gallagher, Assistant to the City Manager, City Manager’s Office
COPY: City Council and City Clerk; Director of Public Utilities
SUBJECT: Resolution – Government Relations Harmonization Enhancements – December 10, 2019
DATE: November 19, 2019

SUMMARY:

The requested Resolution would formalize recent coordination improvements in the City’s government relations operations and set forth additional structural actions to enhance the harmonization of government relations efforts across General Government and Department of Public Utilities.

COUNCIL SPONSORS:

Council Members: Blocker, Hunter, Ibsen, and Mello

STRATEGIC POLICY PRIORITY:

The requested Resolution aligns with the following City Council strategic policy priority:

- Encourage and promote an efficient and effective government, which is fiscally sustainable and guided by engaged residents.

BACKGROUND:

The City of Tacoma has certain policy advocacy needs with various levels of government. Government relations efforts are carried out by professional staff and contractor resources and rely upon subject matter expertise of departmental staff. Recent improvements in the collaboration of government relations efforts led by the City Manager and Director of Public Utilities include regular coordination on city-wide legislative policies, City Council adoption of the legislative agendas approved by the Public Utility Board, and joint staff presentations on legislative priorities by General Government and Department of Public Utilities staff to policymakers. These recent improvements have enhanced the harmonization and effectiveness of government relations efforts undertaken by and across the City of Tacoma.

ISSUE:

While there have been recent improvements in the harmonization of government relations work between General Government and Department of Public Utilities, the City Manager and Director of Public Utilities recommend that the City of Tacoma build upon the recent success of these efforts and implement structural enhancements to promote the goal of government relations synergy that would be adopted by both the Public Utility Board and City Council via companion Resolutions.

ALTERNATIVES:

The City Council could choose not to pass the requested Resolution outlining specific actions to enhance the government relations structure, in which case there would be no change to the City’s government relations operations.

A second alternative would be to launch a standalone department of Government Relations that would consolidate these functions. Such an action would likely have impacts to legislative advocacy efforts—some of those impacts are unknown at this time. Staff does not recommend this option given the small number of full-time (FTE) staff that perform government relations work.



RECOMMENDATION:

Staff recommends the adoption of Resolutions by both the City Council and Public Utility Board that would include provisions directing the City Manager and Director of Public Utilities, respectively, to implement systematic changes to enhance the coordination of government relations, to include joint presentations to the City Council and Public Utility Board on the legislative agenda and amendments to the City’s Legislative Policy Statement. Additionally, it is recommended that an ex officio, non-voting, membership position for the Chair of the Public Utility Board be added to the Government Performance and Finance Committee of the City Council. Lastly, it is recommended that metrics relating to the coordination of government relations efforts between General Government and Department of Public Utilities be added to the performance review criteria for both the City Manager and Director of Public Utilities. The City Manager and Director of Public Utilities will collaborate with policymakers on developing those metrics in time for their next performance reviews. They will also identify methods in which the City Council and Public Utility Board are apprised of emerging issues that require policymaker direction and that updates on government relations activities are provided to the Mayor, City Council, and Public Utility Board on a regular basis.

The Government Performance and Finance Committee passed a motion at its meeting on August 20, 2019, to advance this Resolution to include formalization of the recent improvements in government relations and the recommended enhancements to the full City Council for adoption and for an identical Resolution to be considered by the Public Utility Board. The Public Utility Board will consider a resolution at their December 4, 2019 meeting.

FISCAL IMPACT:

There is no fiscal impact.