

What MYCT Achieved in Our First Official Year of Existence

June 2019–June 2020

Prepared by Chair Rosemary Sissel and Vice Chair Yasmin Aref

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Dear Mayor and Council,

It is with great enthusiasm and gratitude that I present the first annual MYCT report! With your unanimous vote, we were established this year as an official City of Tacoma commission, the first of its kind in Tacoma history. Vested this power by the city, we have enthusiastically represented, uplifted, and fought for youth voices in all we do—highlights of which are detailed below.

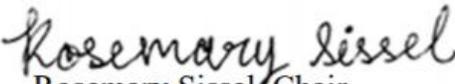
Thank you all so much for sanctioning our existence. Now, I get the great honor of encouraging further support. Mayor, you've been very involved with us, attending many meetings, making space for our ideas, hyping us up indefinitely, but to you and the Council: this next year, we would love even more! Do not tokenize us or take us for granted. Email our admin. Ask how you can be involved. Help us work towards our goals. We have gotten a lot done so far, but this is only the beginning. With your active backing, our youth power can enrich even more projects, conversations, and revolutions.

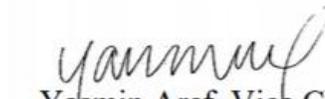
Before you read the bullet-pointed list of all we got done below, I will showcase just a few of my favorites. Our Instagram is one of our key forms of outreach, and it is very active, full of updates and information about what is going on with us and in Tacoma. Youth create all our posts and stories, and—with the approval of our adult staff—we have curated a feed that is completely by youth, for youth. We have formally given our youth input through many letters, on such topics as Black Lives Matter, Youth Homelessness, and the Climate Crisis. We have created and published a zine to help include youth in the narrative of this historic COVID-19 time. And we have done so much more (see below)!

As the inaugural Chair of the Mayor's Youth Commission of Tacoma, I was entrusted with something precious. It is no small task to be the first ever to speak for a commission that speaks for all youth in Tacoma, and it has been a challenge, an honor—and spectacularly glorious! I've been empowered by the youth I've worked with, inspired by our potent energy, and energized by our power.

In closing, I would like to extend my heartfelt gratitude to all the youth who powered this commission—every member who was involved, in any capacity they were able, every member of our courageous inaugural admin team, and my irreplaceable vice chair, Yasmin Aref. In gratitude to all those who made it possible, I submit this annual report to document our achievements this founding year, and I challenge you to help next year's commission achieve more.

Submitted with Sizable Pride by your Inaugural Chairs of The Mayor's Youth Commission of Tacoma,


Rosemary Sissel, Chair


Yasmin Aref, Vice Chair

Group Projects

This is what we achieved as a whole commission!

1. Black Lives Matter Initiative
 - a. Outraged by police brutality that erupted across the nation during BLM protests, [our Vice Chair wrote a petition](#) which has since been signed by over 39,000 people
 - b. Harnessing this energy, we wrote a powerful letter to the Mayor, and then to Governor Inslee (delivered by the Mayor herself), about the need for peaceful police presence during BLM protests, as demonstrated by Tacoma police
2. COVID-19 Youth Zine
 - a. We gathered diverse youth voices from all across Tacoma, sharing their experiences during COVID-19, and published them in a 20 page printed youth zine and in [an extended online version](#)
 - i. It includes a diverse array of artwork styles...
 1. Painting, poetry, metal work, collages, digital art
 - ii. ...from a wide range of artists
 1. From preschool to first year of college-aged youth
 2. From all sorts of Tacoma schools—public, private, and assisted learning facilities
 - iii. All the artwork in the zine is by youth, and it was created, publicized, curated, edited, and all that by youth, too
 - iv. We partnered with Grit City Magazine, who included our zine as an insert in their summer edition
 - v. We will also be passing out this zine at summer meals sites across Tacoma in partnership with Metro Parks
 - vi. We also reached out to and were publicized by a variety of Tacoma organizations, including Greentrike, Graduate Tacoma's Summer Learning Collaborative Action Network, Oasis Youth Center, Tacoma Art Museum, Tacoma Public Library, schools across Tacoma, and more
3. Student Government Day
 - a. We helped the City develop the events on student government day and helped to lead conversations through the whole day, including at the mock councils
 - b. We received an official proclamation and recognition by the Mayor and City Council for our hard work during Student Government Day—thanks, Mayor!
4. Housing Grant Letter
 - a. We wrote an impassioned letter that was included as a part of the grant application package sent to the US Housing and Urban Development Department by Tacoma Housing Authority (THA) applying for a federal grant from the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) that would help address youth homelessness in Tacoma
5. Climate Emergency Letter
 - a. We supported Councilmember Mello's request of the declaration of a state of climate emergency in a fiery letter to the city council
6. Shifting Leadership and Liaison Letter
 - a. Our adult support staff changed throughout this founding year and we learned to work with lots of different people, always being ultimately led by our youth power

Committee Projects

Our 4 different committees focused on different projects, inspired by the diversity of youth goals, so that we could achieve more as a commission.

16. Safety & Justice

- a. We created Know Your Rights materials for youth and published them
 - i. They featured topics such as what to do when you are stopped by the police and what rights you have in school
- b. We connected with the Institute for Community Leadership and sought to create a police dinners program similar to one they've helped run in Oakland
 - i. Several members of MYCT attended the ICL's summer civic engagement tour as well, learning about how we can shift systems, making them value youth voices

17. Education, Arts & Culture

- a. We partnered with Metro Parks on their pivotal Gas Station Park remodel, doorbelling in the neighborhood, presenting at a public neighborhood meeting, and engaging in ongoing discussions about how to involve the community in this process

18. Social & Environmental Health

- a. Concerned by the lack of full-time nurses in most Tacoma schools, we researched this public health crisis, interviewed many nurses, and looked into how we could suggest change to the school district through conversations with appointed and elected leadership

19. Outreach and Budget

- a. We spread the word about a variety of youth issues [through our Instagram](#), including...
 - i. Climate Change (including climate strikes that we attended and spoke at publically)
 - ii. The Census (and making sure everyone is counted)
 - iii. Community Events (that we hosted, and also those we supported/wanted to uplift)
 - iv. The COVID-19 Blood Shortage (and challenging others to give)
- b. We also summarized every general assembly meeting and most admin meetings in Instagram posts (and emails) to include everyone, even if they couldn't attend in person
- c. With the support of Bucoda, we learned and implemented Robert's rules of order to expend funds from our budget and operate in an official way

Normal Function

This is how we worked on a day-to-day basis!

20. Admin Meetings — We ran our own admin meetings, during the school day (once a month before COVID, and twice a month after) doing things like...

- a. Receiving equity training and engaging in dialogue about Tacoma's racist history
- b. Learning about grants and how to apply for them
 - i. Also learning about the complexities of government money allocation
- c. Exploring the processes involved with passing referendums and making proclamations
- d. Voting on official business and positions as well as spending funds for youth projects

21. General Assembly Meetings — We ran our own general assembly meetings, on weekends, once a month before COVID, and twice a month after, doing things like...

- a. Reviewing the Council forecasts and commenting on items going before the City Council

- b. Having big youth conversations about relevant current events and engaging in community action based on the ideas we produce
 - c. Holding youth forums with adults throughout our community such as city leadership and community leaders to learn more about changing Tacoma for the better
 - d. Meeting new members and helping them get engaged in our committee work, and commission training and discussions with Tacoma leaders
22. Establishing MYCT
- a. We created our by-laws and approved our logo and were established as an official City of Tacoma commission on December 10, 2019 - the first ever youth commission in the history of Tacoma government
 - b. We are still evolving as a commission to this day, we have surveyed our members and have had discussions about how we could change our subcommittee structure and organization to become ever more representative of the youth voice in Tacoma
 - c. We formalized our partnership with the Foundation for Tacoma Students (Graduate Tacoma) to increase the staffing to the commission and increase youth influence through other collaborative action networks
23. Elections
- a. We held a celebratory last 2019-2020 MYCT meeting to decide upon and welcome our new leadership team, honor our unconventionally graduating Seniors, and hear inspiring words about leading change from...
 - i. Elizabeth Bonbright of the Tacoma School Board, Dana Coggon, a community activist, Bethany 'B.Lyte' Montgomery, a poet and activist, Kristin Ang of the port of Tacoma, and Mayor Woodards!
 - b. We also thoroughly transitioned our admin team, offering training to those running for positions before and after they were elected
 - i. This guidance took the form of meetings, texts, emails, and some telepathy
24. COVID-19
- a. We transitioned online really smoothly during the beginning of the COVID-19 crisis, shifting our meetings to be shorter but more frequent, and continued function as normal throughout the pandemic, dealing with issues that are relevant to youth regardless of any challenges in our way
25. Conflict Resolution
- a. Whenever conflicts among members came up, they were dealt with in a mature manner, involving lots of safe discussion and openness allowing all to be heard and issues to be resolved for the betterment of the commission

Thank you for reading this long list! If you have any questions, please do not hesitate to reach out—we love involved adults!