



TO: Elizabeth Pauli, City Manager
FROM: Council Member John Hines and Policy Assistant Claire Goodwin
COPY: Government Performance and Finance Committee; Andy Cherullo, Director, Finance;
Ted Richardson, Management Fellow, City Manager's Office
PRESENTER: John Hines, Chair, Government Performance and Finance Committee
SUBJECT: Metrics for In-Person Public Meetings
DATE: September 27, 2021

PRESENTATION TYPE:
Informational Briefing

SUMMARY:

This memo proposes recommendations on holding in-person study sessions per Mayor Woodards' Emergency Rule No. 4. The recommendations were presented to the Government Performance and Finance Committee (GPFC) Members at the September 21 meeting regarding establishing guidelines and metrics to be used to determine when Council can meet in a hybrid format. At the September 21 GPFC meeting, Committee Members approved of the proposed metrics and guidelines contained in this memo, and requested supplemental information on how other elected bodies in Pierce County are addressing in-person meetings. Among the seven jurisdictions researched, four are meeting in hybrid format and three in virtual format.

BACKGROUND:

On August 19, 2021, Mayor Woodards implemented Emergency Rule No. 4 that directed GPFC to develop guidelines for potentially holding hybrid study sessions. The Emergency Rule states:

"Effective August 19, 2021, City Council and Public Utility Board study sessions and business meetings, and any other public meetings of the City of Tacoma, will be held in virtual format only. I am also directing the Government Performance and Finance Committee ("GPFC") to develop proposed guidelines to potentially allow certain study sessions to be done in hybrid format. The guidelines should be presented to the City Council by the end of September and must be consistent with current COVID-19 guidelines and staff safety protocols."¹

The following metrics are proposed to be used to trigger a discussion at City Council to potentially hold in-person or hybrid-format study sessions – metrics shall use Pierce County data:

- **7-day rate of new COVID-19 hospitalizations per 100,000 population is less than 5**
 - Justification: This was a metric used by the State of Washington to allow counties with a population over 50,000 people to move into Phase 3 reopening. Phase 3 allowed gatherings with no more than 50 people; resumed non-essential travel; and restaurants could open at less than 75% capacity.²
- **14-day average case rate is under 200**

¹ https://www.cityoftacoma.org/in_the_news/proclamation_of_emergency_rule_no_4

² <https://coronavirus.wa.gov/sites/default/files/2020-05/PhasedReopeningChart.pdf>



- Justification: This was also one of the metrics used by the State of Washington to allow counties with a population over 50,000 people to move into Phase 3 (see additional details in justification above).

The metrics are proposed to be used to trigger a discussion at City Council so all Council Members can evaluate their comfort level on returning to in-person meetings and provide input on the final decision.

- **After discussion at City Council on whether to return to in-person or hybrid meetings, if the two metrics are maintained for six weeks in Pierce County, City Council would automatically return to holding in-person or hybrid public meetings, unless otherwise directed by the Mayor.**
 - Justification: Waiting six weeks attempts to account for a potential rebound in case numbers to avoid a back-and-forth of returning to in-person meetings only to revert to exclusively virtual meetings. The 14-day average case rate from the periods May 12, 2021-May 25, 2021 to July 13, 2021-July 26, 2021 was below 200. However, the 14-day average case rate beginning in the period July 14, 2021-July 27, 2021 crept above 200 and has remained there ever since.³

Safety protocols for any in-person meeting shall use the current guidelines which apply to all City of Tacoma employees and established in the Covid-19 Safety Protocols Directive.⁴

Those currently include, but are not limited to:

- All employees, regardless of vaccination status, must wear a face covering while indoors, or while in outdoor spaces where physical distancing is not possible. When employees are working alone in segregated spaces, they may remove their face covering.
- Occupancy limitations will require a minimum physical distancing of 6 feet or more, not to exceed a maximum of 50% occupancy.

Other Elected Bodies: The Committee requested information on how other elected bodies in Pierce County are addressing in-person public meetings. The following information is provided in response:

- Pierce County: Pierce County Council is meeting in-person with the public able to attend virtually or in-person (aka “hybrid” format).⁵
- City of Puyallup: City Council meetings are being held in person as well as virtually.⁶
- City of Lakewood: City Council meetings are being held virtually.⁷
- City of University Place: As of September 20, 2021, the Council had held two hybrid Council Meetings with one Council Member hosting in-person while the others attended virtually. Public comment was accepted by phone, in-person, and by email.⁸
- City of Fife: As of September 14, 2021, City Council meetings were held in hybrid format with both Council Members and the public attending virtually and in-person.⁹

³ <https://www.doh.wa.gov/Emergencies/COVID19/DataDashboard>

⁴ [http://cityweb/Gnet/Departments/HR/SiteAssets/Pages/Information-for-Employees-on-Coronavirus-\(COVID-19\)/Covid-19%20Safety%20Protocols%20Directive.pdf](http://cityweb/Gnet/Departments/HR/SiteAssets/Pages/Information-for-Employees-on-Coronavirus-(COVID-19)/Covid-19%20Safety%20Protocols%20Directive.pdf)

⁵ <https://www.piercecountywa.gov/99/Pierce-County-Council>

⁶ <http://www.cityofpuyallup.org/827/Agendas-Minutes-and-Videos>

⁷ <https://cityoflakewood.us/calendar/#MEETINGS>

⁸ <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ThoCYrNwAGA>

⁹ <https://www.cityoffife.org/454/Watch-Now?clientID=4845477838&eventID=2021091000>



- City of Fircrest: City Council meetings are being held virtually.¹⁰
- City of Gig Harbor: City Council meetings are being held virtually.¹¹

ISSUE:

This Committee has been directed by Mayor Woodards' Emergency Rule No. 4. to develop recommendations on holding in-person study sessions.

ALTERNATIVES:

Proposed alternatives are welcome for discussion by the GPFC Members.

FISCAL IMPACT:

There is no fiscal impact to the proposal.

RECOMMENDATION:

The following metrics are recommended to be used to trigger a discussion at City Council to potentially hold in-person or hybrid-format study sessions:

- 7-day rate of new COVID-19 hospitalizations per 100,000 population is less than 5
- 14-day average case rate is under 200

After the initial discussion at City Council, if the established metrics used to trigger the conversation are maintained for at least six weeks, City Council would automatically return to in-person or hybrid public meetings, unless otherwise directed by the Mayor. Safety protocols for any in-person meeting shall use the same guidelines which apply to all City of Tacoma employees and established in the Covid-19 Safety Protocols Directive.

¹⁰ <https://www.cityoffircrest.net/government/city-council/ccagenda-minutes/>

¹¹ https://www.cityofgigharbor.net/AgendaCenter/ViewFile/Agenda/_09272021-155?html=true