



City of Tacoma

City Council Study Session Minutes

747 Market Street, Tacoma, WA 98402, Council Chambers

Dial: 253-215-8782 Meeting ID: 894 9617 1192

Webinar Link: www.zoom.us/j/89496171192 Passcode: 896569

January 24, 2023

12:00 PM

JOINT MEETING WITH THE PUBLIC UTILITY BOARD

Call to Order

Mayor Woodards called the joint study session to order at 12:00 p.m.

Roll Call

Present: 9 - Blocker, Bushnell, Daniels, Diaz, Hines, Rumbaugh, Ushka, Walker and Mayor Woodards

Public Utility Board Members:

Present: 5 - Bridges, Claus-McGahan, Cohen, O'Loughlin, and Watson

Joint City Council / Tacoma Public Utility Board Briefing Item

1. [23-0068](#) Tacoma Public Utilities' Customer Service Residential COVID Balance Recovery and Assistance

At approximately 12:02 p.m., Chair Watson provided opening remarks regarding Tacoma Public Utilities (TPU). Jackie Flowers, Director, TPU, provided further opening remarks and introduced Francine Artis, Interim Customer Services Manager, TPU. Artis presented an update on TPU's Customer Services residential COVID-19 balance recovery and assistance efforts, including a heat map displaying residential customer balances from mid-December 2022 to January 2023; residential balances and remaining debt; examples of the impact assistance had on households, noting those with large balances and income constraints; next steps, noting revised installment plan guidelines; and Bill Credit Assistance Plan enhancements and expansion, noting automatic and achievable credits.

Discussion ensued regarding appreciation for the TPU Customer Services team, monthly billing and budget billing options, future monitoring, and support for customers who continue to fall behind on their bills.

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The joint study session concluded at 12:25 p.m.

The regular study session convened at 12:26 p.m.

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City Council Briefing Item

2. [23-0069](#) State v. Blake - Summary and Tacoma Municipal Court Compliance Updates

At approximately 12:26 p.m., Mayor Woodards made opening remarks regarding the Washington Supreme Court's State v. Blake decision, including goals for today's discussion and next steps. Together, Sonja Hallum, Chief Government Affairs Officer, City Manager's Office, and City Attorney Bill Fosbre presented a review of Washington State drug possession laws, including an overview; the State v. Blake decision, noting history, impacts, legislative response, and the current state of enforcement; and a review of the controlled substance bills introduced in the 2023 legislative session.

Drew Henke, Judge, Tacoma Municipal Court, outlined the process after the Court receives a request to vacate a Blake conviction; introduced judges and staff; and outlined the therapeutic and mental health court program, noting available data, caseloads, and current and potential participants. Judge Henke concluded by reviewing outcome evaluations and impacts of other therapeutic courts in Washington State, including positive impacts, studies, and comments; and shared an example of the City's work.

Discussion ensued regarding Blake decision cases; equity and systemic racism, noting addiction, indigent clients, and equitable enforcement; negative impacts of incarceration; the roles of different court systems, noting the Pierce County drug court; details of the proposed laws, noting definitions, impacts on local governments, timelines, treatment programs, support, and likelihood of laws being passed; funding sources, noting local budgets, grants, the Mental Health and Substance Use Disorder sales tax, and diverting Pierce County funds; the difference between therapeutic and community courts; data collection and sources; appreciation for Tacoma Municipal Court judges and support staff; treatment services, noting geographic distribution, capacity, and funding limitations; community needs and awareness; and next steps and goals.

Other Items of Interest

3. [23-0070](#) Council Action Memorandum - Substitute Ordinance Relating to Public Ways

Council Member Ushka stated that she will propose as a substitute, Substitute Ordinance No. 28799, related to public ways, at the February 7, 2023, meeting; and outlined the purpose to address damage to sidewalks; the focus on education and voluntary compliance; and requirements, noting restrictions and permits.

Discussion ensued regarding the intent, construction projects, and community feedback.

3a. [23-0947](#) Letter in Support - House Bill 1111

Mayor Woodards stated that she, on behalf of the City Council, signed on to a letter in support of Washington House Bill 1111, regarding housing benefit districts, noting the purpose and benefits.

Discussion ensued regarding providing information to the community about the bill.

Committee Reports

There were no committee reports given.


Agenda Review and City Manager's Weekly Report

4. [23-0071](#) Weekly Report to the Mayor and City Council, January 19, 2023

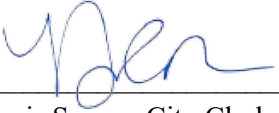
City Manager Elizabeth Pauli stated there are no ceremonials and no changes expected on tonight's meeting agenda, and that Community Forum will be held during tonight's meeting. She concluded by announcing that approval of payments will be included on the Consent Agenda per the Rules of Procedure of the Council of the City of Tacoma that were adopted last year.

Adjournment

On proper motion, the study session was adjourned at 2:41 p.m.



Victoria R. Woodards, Mayor



for
Doris Sorum, City Clerk