



City of Tacoma

City Council Action Memorandum

TO: Hyun Kim, City Manager
FROM: Mayor Anders Ibsen and Bucoda Warren, Chief Policy Analyst to the Mayor
COPY: City Council and City Clerk
SUBJECT: A resolution appointing Sergio Flores to fill the vacant judicial position as municipal court Judge for Department No. 2 effective January 1, 2026 through December 31, 2026 until a successor can be elected during the general election in 2026. – Requested for January 6, 2026
DATE: January 2, 2026

SUMMARY AND PURPOSE:

A resolution appointing Sergio Flores to fill the vacant judicial position as municipal court Judge for Department No. 2 effective January 1, 2026 through December 31, 2026 until a successor can be elected during the general election in 2026.

COUNCIL SPONSORS:

Mayor Anders Ibsen

BACKGROUND:

On Friday, November 21, 2025, Municipal Court Judge Drew Henke announced her retirement effective December 31, 2025. This would leave the Department No. 2 seat vacant with an unexpired term ending December 31, 2026.

Washington State law allows the City to determine what process it wants to use to fill a vacant judicial position, and list qualifications an appointment must have. The individual must be an attorney and live in Pierce County on the date of appointment. There is currently not an established process for appointing a judge to the Tacoma Municipal Court, and only twice before has the City Council made this appointment. Once in 1994 the Council passed Resolution No. 32834 asking the local bar association to review the candidates and make recommendations. The full Council then interviewed the finalists and made a selection. In 2022 the City Council passed resolution No. 40923 in which a quicker process was proposed by Mayor Woodards to consider a current Commissioner of the Municipal Court with vast experience for the vacant position rather than a prolonged process.

For this appointment, Mayor Woodards had asked the Council to go through a process in December of 2025 to be proactive and have a candidate to consider for the first Council meeting following the formal vacancy in the position. The process asked those interested in the position to submit application materials to the City Clerk who then compiled candidates and sent them to the Government Performance and Finance Committee for interviews and selection of 2-3 candidates for the Mayor's consideration. Mayor Woodards interviewed two finalists for the appointment, and after reviewing materials and meeting with candidates has forwarded Sergio Flores for consideration for this appointment.

Mr. Flores has extensive and well-rounded experience as both a prosecutor and judge pro tempore. Mr. Flores has served as a Judge Pro Tempore in Tacoma Municipal Court since September 2022 and in Pierce County District Court since January 2023, where he has demonstrated a calm demeanor, strong command of the law, and a consistent commitment to fair and just outcomes. Previously, as a Prosecuting Attorney with the City of Auburn, he was instrumental in the creation of the Auburn Community Court which is now a model for jurisdictions across the region, including Tacoma, showing particular strength in therapeutic and problem-solving court approaches. Over the past three years, Mr. Flores has presided over all Tacoma Municipal Court dockets, including therapeutic courts, and is fully prepared to assume the responsibilities of Department 2 on the first day of his appointment.



If appointed, he would begin as soon as possible and serve through the fall until the general election process concludes and the new Judge takes office.

COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT/ CUSTOMER RESEARCH:

Applications were solicited publicly for those interested in being considered for this appointment. During the recruitment process Mr. Flores also included letters of support from current judges, regional leaders, and more indicating broad support for his nomination and confidence in his service to the Municipal Court.

2025 STRATEGIC PRIORITIES:

Equity and Accessibility:

Appointing someone to this seat supports continued operation of the court and service to those that need it. Mr. Flores' experience in particular will continue to support and enhance our therapeutic court operations which benefit our justice involved communities which often are disproportionately those communities of color or economic disadvantage.

ALTERNATIVES:

Alternative(s)	Positive Impact(s)	Negative Impact(s)
1.Do not appoint	NA	The court will be short staffed until a replacement can be appointed or elected.
2.Appoint someone else	NA	Would require time to find a new appointee and conduct a process.

EVALUATION AND FOLLOW UP:

The election will be the public's opportunity to retain or elect a new municipal court judge that can continue to serve Tacoma.

STAFF/SPONSOR RECOMMENDATION:

Staff recommends appointing Sergio Flores to the Tacoma Municipal Court Department No. 2 position effective January 1, 2026 through December 31, 2026 until a successor can be elected during the general election in 2026 as identified through the Council's recruitment process.

FISCAL IMPACT:

What Funding is being used to support the expense?

SALARY AND OTHER COMPENSATION IS AVAILABLE FOR THIS POSITION IN THE MUNICIPAL COURT BUDGET.

Are the expenditures and revenues planned and budgeted in this biennium's current budget?

YES

Are there financial costs or other impacts of not implementing the legislation?

NO

Will the legislation have an ongoing/recurring fiscal impact?

YES



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Will the legislation change the City's FTE/personnel counts?
No