



City of Tacoma

City Council Action Memorandum

**TO:** Hyun Kim, City Manager  
**FROM:** Chris Bacha, City Attorney *CDB*  
Linnaea Jablonski, Human Resources Director *LJ*  
**COPY:** Council Member Sadalge  
**SUBJECT:** Resolution Publishing Unclassified Position Classification Flow Chart and Declining to Adopt Proposed Civil Service Rules  
**DATE:** May 21, 2026 (For the June 9, 2026 City Council Meeting)

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**SUMMARY AND PURPOSE:**

A resolution publishing a flow chart for assigning unclassified position classifications and disapproving amendments to Civil Service Rules as proposed by the Civil Service Board that would define terms set forth in Section 6.1 (d) of the City Charter and delegate ministerial and discretionary authority to the Civil Service Board to review and approve City Council actions determining which position classifications will be unclassified and to reclassify any position the Civil Service Board determines was improperly classified.

**COUNCIL SPONSOR:**

Council Member Sandesh Sadalge, Council Member John Hines

**BACKGROUND:**

The City Charter empowers the Civil Service Board to promulgate amendments to the City's civil service and personnel rules necessary to carry out and enforce the purpose of Article VI of the City Charter and to present such rules to the City Council for its approval, rejection, alteration, amendment or repeal. Pursuant to this authority the City Service Board at its May 7, 2026, meeting proposed amendments to Chapter 1.24 of the Tacoma Municipal Code. The City Council is required to take action within 45 days following submittal.

The proposed amendments would, among other things, amend TMC 1.24.920 to define the terms "principal officer" and "assistants to department heads" as those terms are used in Section 6.1 (d) of the City Charter and would add TMC 1.24.295. This new section would require determinations of unclassified positions under Section 6.1 of the City Charter to be reviewed and approved by the Civil Service Board for compliance with Article VI of the City Charter and empower the Civil Service Board to reclassify any position it determines to have been improperly designated as classified or unclassified.

The proposed amendments, if not rejected by the City Council, would delegate to the Civil Service Board (1) the ministerial duty under Sections 6.1 (a) – (c) and (e) – (i) of assignment of position classifications to the unclassified service, and (2) the discretionary authority granted to the City Council pursuant to Section 6.1 (d) of the City charter to determine which employee positions classifications constitute "principal officers" and "assistants to department heads" and which of those position classifications should be unclassified. These amendments would operate to delegate to the Civil Service Board authority over a ministerial function of the City and authority over discretionary decisions that are the sole responsibility of the City Council under the Charter. Additionally, while the Civil Service Board has proposed the amendments based upon its belief that clearly articulated criteria are not being used by the City to determine which employee position classifications should be unclassified, the proposed rules do not include any criteria limiting the exercise of discretion that would be granted to the Civil Service Board.



The Human Resources Department, in consultation with the City Attorney’s Office, prepares legislation for the City Council as unclassified position classification recommendations to be implemented by the City Council pursuant to Section 6.1 (a) – (i) of the City Charter. The current administrative process in which recommendations are made are based upon the process and consideration of the criteria described in Exhibit “A” (Flow Chart) of the proposed resolution. This exhibit articulates criteria consistent with the City Charter and the City Council’s authority and responsibility pursuant to the City Charter. The amendments proposed by the Civil Service Board would unnecessarily delegate authority over ministerial decisions and discretionary authority of the City Council under the City Charter to assign position classifications to the unclassified city service.

**COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT/ CUSTOMER RESEARCH:**

The Civil Service Board has conducted a public inquiry in the process for determining which position classifications are unclassified and presented proposed rules to the Government Performance and Finance Committee during the Committee’s open public meetings on September 16, 2025 and May 5, 2026. The City Attorney’s Office has provided legal advice to the Civil Service Board and the City Council regarding the proposed amendments.

**2025 STRATEGIC PRIORITIES:**

**Equity and Accessibility: (Mandatory)**

The proposed resolution would preserve the ministerial function under Section 6.1(a) – (c) and (e) – (i) of the City Charter establishing unclassified position classifications and the City Council’s discretionary authority under Section 6.1 (d) of the City Charter, ensuring the City’s ability to meet the needs of the community through decisions that align with the authority granted under the City Charter and that carry out the administration of the City government in support of services provided to all members of the public.

**Civic Engagement:**

Increase the percentage of residents who believe they are able to have a positive impact on the community and express trust in the public institutions in Tacoma.

**Explain how your legislation will affect the selected indicator(s).**

The proposed resolution provides transparency regarding the criteria and process applied to the exercise of the ministerial and discretionary authority granted under the City Charter to determine which position classifications are unclassified.

**ALTERNATIVES:**

Presumably, your recommendation is not the only potential course of action; please discuss other alternatives or actions that City Council or staff could take. Please use table below.

Alternative(s)	Positive Impact(s)	Negative Impact(s)
1.Approve the proposed amendments	Will provide definitions of terms undefined in the City Charter	Will delegate ministerial authority and the City Council’s discretionary authority to the Civil Service Board with no criteria or limitations upon the exercise of this authority
2.Alter and approve the proposed amendments	Preserve the discretionary authority of the City Council	Depending upon the amendments, may still



	while adding administrative process	delegate to the Civil Service Board ministerial and discretionary authority not reserved to the Civil Service Board.
3.		

**EVALUATION AND FOLLOW UP:**

The proposed action would provide transparency through inclusion of an exhibit describing the administrative process and criteria followed by the Human Resources Department when making recommendations to the City Council regarding those position classifications that should be unclassified.

**STAFF/SPONSOR RECOMMENDATION:**

The City Attorney’s Office and Human Resources Department recommend that the City Council adopt a resolution published the flow chart describing the process and criteria for assigning unclassified position classifications and declining to adopt the proposal amendments and clarifying the process and criteria for making recommendations for unclassified position classifications.

**FISCAL IMPACT:**

None

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

YES

**Will the legislation have an ongoing/recurring fiscal impact?**

NO

**Will the legislation change the City’s FTE/personnel counts?**

NO

Please enter Explanation.

The proposed resolution does not impact staffing.

**ATTACHMENTS:**

Exhibit A (Unclassified Position Classification Flow Chart)