



**CITY OF TACOMA, WASHINGTON
OFFICE OF THE CITY COUNCIL
COUNCIL CONSIDERATION REQUEST**

TO: Mayor & City Council
FROM: Council Member John Hines and Christina Caan, Policy Analyst
COPIES TO: Hyun Kim, City Manager; Chris Bacha, City Attorney
SUBJECT: **Resolution – Council contingency fund request to sponsor a City Flag Competition.**
DATE: August 12, 2026

We ask for your support for a Council contingency fund expenditure of \$6,000 to sponsor a City Flag Competition.

LEGISLATIVE INTENT

Council Contingency Fund Request: We ask for your support for a Council contingency fund expenditure of \$6,000 to sponsor a public competition to foster community engagement and civic pride by designing a new City flag. The design of the current City of Tacoma flag violates the basic principles of flag design, leaving the City without a widely recognizable flag that reflects the ethos of Tacoma and unifies our community.¹ Specifically, the current flag is overly complicated with a large gold City seal amid a blue background. In fact, vexillologists—people who study flags—have used the current Tacoma City flag as an example of poor flag design.² This competition would enable community members to share their civic pride in a fun community engagement and provide the public with a chance to help choose their favorite design for a new unifying City flag.

Entries in the flag competition would need to abide by the five principles of flag design, drawn from the classic vexillology resource, *“Good” Flag, “Bad” Flag*. Designs that are “so simple a child could draw it from memory” are encouraged.³ The five principles of flag design include:

- Keep it simple
- Use meaningful symbolism
- Use 2-3 basic colors
- No lettering or seals
- Be distinctive or use similarities to show connections

All ages would be welcome to participate, including students, and current residency in Tacoma is not required.⁴ However, all participants must have a connection to Tacoma and be able to share how their time in the city influenced their design. Participants would upload their entries to a free Submittable platform managed by the City of Tacoma and include a written statement about the inspiration for the design and the participant’s connection to Tacoma that is no longer than 200 words. Any entry or caption deemed inappropriate or politically divisive as determined by the staff

¹ [Why city flags may be the worst-designed thing you've never noticed | TED Talk Embed](#)

² [“American city flag redesign: a welcome change” ICV27-A3-Kaye.pdf](#)

³ [Good Flag, Bad Flag - North American Vexillological Association; Municipal Flag Design Preferences of United States Residents](#)

⁴ [Lessons-from-American-City-Flag-Redesign-Efforts-Vexillum_no4_2018-pp-18-23_497214181.pdf](#)

of the City of Tacoma will be removed from the contest. While participants are welcome to use any available tool to produce their design, the competition requests entries that come from the mind and heart of a human rather than Artificial Intelligence.

- The competition will be judged in three phases. First, a Flag Commission composed of experts and community members will narrow all entries down to the top ten. Second, the public will narrow the top ten down to the top three designs. Finally, the City Council will vote for the winning design out of the top three.
- The winner of the competition will receive a \$2000 award, and the remaining top two finalists will receive an \$1000 award each. All winners must agree to an unlimited license for the City's use of their design on City flags.

The competition to redesign the City flag would advance multiple City Council goals. First, the flag competition would nurture Tacoma's artistic community and inspire creative work, helping to bolster Tacoma's reputation as an arts city and spread joy through design. In addition, people from across the city, region, and possibly the world would spend time reflecting on and learning about Tacoma's culture and heritage, fostering civic pride and helping to showcase Tacoma's values. By having the public play a role in selecting the flag design, the competition also fosters greater community engagement with local government and pride in our City flag. Finally, Tacoma would have a new flag that is based on vexillographers' principles, making it recognizable and clear at a distance and more likely to be adopted broadly as a unifying symbol.

- The City's sponsorship of the Flag Competition would enable the following items: 1) monetary awards for finalists; 2) the creation of new flags with the winning design; and 3) advertising materials for the competition. The competition will be overseen by Council Member John Hines, with minor technical support from the Arts and Cultural Vitality Division.

FUNDING REQUESTED: \$6,000

DESIRED RESOLUTION DATE: August 25, 2026

COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT

Council Member John Hines has engaged with local government officials from other Washington cities that have held flag competitions, including Spokane, to learn about their process. Council Member Hines also met with the Tacoma Arts Commission to discuss the parameters of the competition. When discussing the idea for a flag competition with community members, many have expressed strong support and excitement about flag design. Arts and Cultural Vitality has also shared feedback.

2025 STRATEGIC PRIORITIES

Equity and Accessibility: The flag competition is free to enter and would be advertised citywide to ensure broad knowledge of the competition. In addition, by providing awards for the finalists and the use of their design, the competition can ensure that participation is accessible to all.

Civic Engagement: *Equity Index Score:* Moderate Opportunity

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.

Livability: *Equity Index Score:* Moderate Opportunity

Increase positive public perception of safety and overall quality of life.

ALTERNATIVES

Alternative	Positive Impacts	Negative Impacts
Do not support the flag competition.	Council would preserve the full amount of contingency funding for other priorities.	The City would miss a unique opportunity to nurture civic pride and create a new unifying City flag.
Support the flag competition at a higher amount.	The flag competition might be able to attract a larger number of entries with higher funding for awards.	Providing a higher amount would further deplete contingency funds for other City Council priorities.

EVALUATIONS AND FOLLOW UP

Council Member John Hines will work with City Council to create a Flag Commission and will manage the competition steps.

SPONSOR RECOMMENDATION

Sponsors recommend providing \$6,000 in Council contingency funds to sponsor the City Flag Competition.

FISCAL IMPACT

\$6,000 from Council contingency funds.

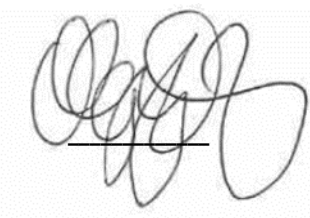
If you have a question related to the Council contingency fund request, please contact Christina Caan, Policy Analyst, at (253) 219-0679 or ccaan@tacoma.gov.

SUBMITTED FOR COUNCIL CONSIDERATION BY:


Council Member John Hines

SUPPORTING COUNCIL MEMBERS SIGNATURES

1.  POS#__3__

2.  POS#__7__

Mayor Initials: 