



**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: **Ordinance to amend Title 17 of the Municipal Code to add clarifications regarding the definitions of adequate care, adverse environmental conditions, and proper shelter, as well as the requirements for the humane restraint and confinement of an animal.**
DATE: April 14, 2026

We ask for your support for an ordinance to amend Title 17 of the Municipal Code to add clarifications regarding the definitions of adequate care, adverse environmental conditions, and proper shelter, as well as the requirements for the humane restraint and confinement of an animal.

LEGISLATIVE INTENT

Ordinance Request: Tacoma’s animal control code lacks robust definitions regarding adequate care, adverse environmental conditions, and proper shelter for animals, as well as clear guidelines for the humane restraint or confinement of an animal. As a result, community members are frustrated and concerned that Animal Control officers are not well equipped to consistently manage situations that could pose a danger to an animal’s welfare.

- Common definitions of animal welfare stress that the concept includes both the physical and mental wellbeing of an animal.¹ The American Veterinary Medical Association (AVMA) adds that animal welfare is not just an issue of providing water, food, and health care, but also creating “an environment appropriate to their care and use, with thoughtful consideration for their species-typical biology and behavior.”² The American Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals also specifically notes that animals should have “freedom from fear and distress by ensuring conditions and treatment which avoid mental suffering.”³
- Failing to provide for the physical and mental wellbeing of an animal can result in a range of medical issues, including malnourishment or dehydration, and produce behavioral issues, such as anxiety or aggression.⁴ These issues can in turn lead to serious injury or death for the animal or other animals and people in the vicinity. In addition, animals that have

¹ [What Is Animal Welfare And Why Is It Important? | International Fund Animal Welfare](#); [Animal welfare | American Veterinary Medical Association](#); [Guiding Principles | ASPCA](#)

² [Animal welfare principles | American Veterinary Medical Association](#)

³ [Guiding Principles | ASPCA](#)

⁴ [Understanding Animal Neglect: Consequences and How to Help](#)

physical and behavioral issues are likely to be at a higher risk of abandonment or euthanasia.

Updating Title 17 of the Municipal Code would help ensure Tacoma’s standards of care better align with our understanding of animal welfare. The proposed ordinance suggests the following changes:

- Update definitions in 17.01.010 regarding adequate care, adverse environmental conditions, and proper shelter to better meet current humane standards; and
- Update 17.01.0165 to clarify and expand restrictions regarding the use of a tether for restraining animals to ensure humane care and prevent dangerous conditions; and
- Update 17.02.070 to limit the number of animals that can be confined in a stationary vehicle, clarify the requirements for how they are confined, and set limits on the amount of time of the confinement to ensure humane care and prevent dangerous conditions.

DESIRED FIRST READING DATE: April 28, 2026

COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT

Council Member John Hines met with community members who shared concerns about the welfare of animals that are kept tethered and experiencing prolonged confinement in a vehicle without adequate care, particularly during adverse environmental conditions. Council Member Hines also met with Tacoma Police Department Animal Control officers to better understand their ability to address tethered animals and the prolonged confinement of animals in vehicles, as well as their guidance for effective restrictions on these issues. Animal Control officers also helped to provide clarity for updating definitions regarding adequate care, adverse environmental conditions, and proper shelter.

2025 STRATEGIC PRIORITIES

Equity and Accessibility: Updating Title 17 to provide more detail and clarity would help pet owners better protect the health and wellbeing of their animals and enable Animal Control officers to address violations consistently across neighborhoods and circumstances. The resources pet owners may need to provide adequate care and proper shelter are widely available for free or low-cost in our community and would not create barriers for pet ownership.

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 update any definitions or requirements in Title 17.	Tacoma would continue to have a range of legal requirements aimed at helping to enforce animal welfare.	Animal Control officers and the broader community would lack clarification on key issues regarding animal welfare, potential resulting in dangerous situations for the physical and mental wellbeing of Tacoma’s animals.

Prohibit any tethering or confinement of an animal in a stationary vehicle.	Animals would be more robustly protected from potentially dangerous conditions.	Such a sweeping prohibition would be difficult to enforce with current resources and could result in some pet owners abandoning animals.
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EVALUATIONS AND FOLLOW UP

If approved, these code updates would be published on City websites and shared with relevant departments and animal shelters.

SPONSOR RECOMMENDATION

Sponsors recommend advancing this ordinance to a vote of the City Council.

FISCAL IMPACT

All proposed code changes can be implemented and enforced with existing resources.

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# 2



2. _____ POS# 7

Anders Ibsen

Mayor initial: _____

Attachments: Proposed TMC Chapter 17 Code Updates