City of Tacoma **City Council Action Memorandum**

TO: **Hyun Kim, City Manager**
FROM: **Bucoda Warren, Chief Policy Analyst**
COPY: **City Council and City Clerk**
SUBJECT: **A resolution amending rule 9 of the Rules of Procedure of the Council of the City of Tacoma related to Public Comment and Community Forum – Requested for June 2, 2026**
DATE: **May 20, 2026**

SUMMARY AND PURPOSE:

Request for a resolution amending rule 9 of the Rules of Procedure of the Council of the City of Tacoma related to Public Comment and Community Forum.

COUNCIL SPONSORS:

Mayor Anders Ibsen

BACKGROUND:

Mayor Ibsen in responding to commentary and feedback from peers and the public looked to address ongoing challenges with the format of Community Forum to improve them for both Council and the public. These initial conversations with the Operational Safety and Administrative Committee began in March 2026, and were first introduced at Study Session April 2026. During this time on March 10, 2026, Council adopted a motion to modify the agenda for the regular City Council business meetings to be held on March 24, April 28, and May 26, 2026, to temporarily remove community forum from the agendas while the City Council considers permanent amendments to the Rules of Procedure of the Council of the City of Tacoma (Council Rules).

Suggested redlined revisions to the Council Rules were shared with the City Council during Study Session on May 19, 2026. These revisions related to rule 9 regarding public comment and Community forum and are detailed in the table below.

Of the changes, some were to align to practices or clarify commitments such as language access, however a few proposals are intended to specifically address issues such as clear purpose and engagement during forum, disruptions, access, and speaking time. These changes increase the allowable time for speakers and Community Forum, while adjusting the frequency of the forums and providing the flexibility to have the forums in-district to engage new residents in conversation. Changes to Council responses and dialogue expectations are included, and additionally multiple changes are proposed to provide examples of disruptions, ability to recess or adjourn to address disruptions, and requiring topics to be named before speakers begin. This change in particular focuses on addressing virtual comment disruptions that have invited negative comments by allowing the chair to know what the speaker is referencing before they start speaking, and giving them the ability to but their time should they stry from their given topics.

Rule	Description of Change
9.A.2	Add “Comment time may not be added to/donated to other speakers” to clarify practice.
9.A.6	Include a new clause for language access to match recent practice. Includes an undefined increase to time for those using translation.
9.B	Add new section for disruptions to include examples that the presiding officer can enforce. Is not limited to specific examples but defined examples are helpful for direct reference.
9.C	Change frequency to once a month
9.C	Allow for Community Forum to be in Council, or in-district.

9.C	Amend the purpose of community forum to expand guidelines.
9.C	Change limit to total time for Community Forum to 2 hours
9.C	Change speaker time up to 3 minutes
9.C	Set a floor limit that the presiding officer cannot lower time below 2 minutes
9.C	Include reference to rules 9.A.2 and 9.A.6 that would then pertain to Community Forum.
9.C	Added language for suggested limitations to the topics of Community Forum, and language asking speakers to reference the topic they wish to speak to so the presiding officer can confirm it is within the scope and can keep them on topic. This would be the primary enforcement tool.
9.C	Include language that the Council will listen and may prepare responses at the end of forum before adjournment.
9.F	During Community Forum, give the presiding officer the authority to recess once for 10 minutes without a vote of the Council to address disruptions.
9.F	During Community Forum, give the presiding officer the authority to adjourn the meeting if disruptions persist or would be unaddressed by a recess.

COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT/ CUSTOMER RESEARCH:

Mayor Ibsen been hearing from the public through various meetings, coffee hours in the community, and through conversations with peers to develop potential changes to Rule 9 that would improve Community Forum. These conversations have provided many thoughts, opinions, and differences on approach and this proposal focuses on the low hanging fruit that allows for more rapid changes and clarity and allows for longer-term efforts to improve access based on feedback. All of which balances the many viewpoints to create a balanced proposal.

2025 STRATEGIC PRIORITIES:

Equity and Accessibility:

The proposed changes to the Community Forum process are intended to improve equity, accessibility, and meaningful public participation by reducing barriers to engagement and creating more inclusive opportunities for residents to be heard. Enhancements such as expanded language access, clearer participation guidelines, and opportunities for in-district meetings will help ensure that historically underrepresented communities, individuals with disabilities, working families, and residents with limited access to technology are better able to participate in civic processes.

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.

Representation at public meetings will reflect the diversity of the Tacoma community

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

Public Comment and Community Forum are intended to provide a space for community input that informs Council policy decisions, addresses service issues, supports civic education, and helps build trust between residents and their City Council. This directly supports the goals indicated above to increase residents who believe they can have an impact. The option to allow for different Community Forum formats also provides an opportunity to do them differently, target different audiences, and engage new residents to have a more representative audience for City business.

ALTERNATIVES:

Alternative(s)	Positive Impact(s)	Negative Impact(s)
1.Do not adopt changes to Council Rules	For those that see the current Community Forum as already working, rejecting any changes to it maintains a status quo they believe to be more positive.	Proposed changes aimed at improving Community Forum will not be adopted and Community Forum will continue in its current state.
2.Make changes to the proposed revisions	Any of the proposed changes can be modified or rejected, and new proposals can be brought by the City Council as amendments. These many options for changes could be seen as both positive and negative impacts on Community Forum depending on the implemented changes.	

EVALUATION AND FOLLOW UP:
Changes to Community Forum will be monitored for feedback and future amendments may be brought forward to bring forward new changes or amend these proposed changes that may not be having the desired impact in the future. The Council can bring forward changes to their rules at any time, and the Council's Operational Strategy and Administrative Committee has this as a regular item for review.

STAFF/SPONSOR RECOMMENDATION:
Amendments to the City Council Rules of Procedure require two readings of the City Council; first reading is planned for June 2, 2026. Mayor Ibsen recommends adoption of this resolution to address the need to improve Community Forum.

FISCAL IMPACT:
There is no direct fiscal impact to these changes to Council Rules. Should the City Council opt to hold Community Forums in-district there may be increased staffing and direct costs which will be included as proposals for the 2027-2028 biennial budget process.

ATTACHMENTS:
- Proposed revisions to Rule 9