



City of Tacoma

City Council Action Memorandum

TO: Hyun Kim, Interim City Manager
FROM: Mayor Victoria Woodards and Chief Policy Analyst Bucoda Warren
COPY: City Council and City Clerk
SUBJECT: A resolution directing the City Manager to bring a review of past Charter Review processes and facilitate a conversation on updates timelines and process with the City Council at least two years ahead of the 2034 Charter Review – Requested for December 9, 2025
DATE: November 19, 2025

SUMMARY AND PURPOSE:

A resolution directing the City Manager to bring a review of past Charter Review processes and facilitate a conversation on updates timelines and process with the City Council at least two years ahead of the 2034 Charter Review.

COUNCIL SPONSORS:

Mayor Victoria Woodards

BACKGROUND:

Section 2.25 of the City Charter states that The City Council shall commence a review of this charter no less frequently than once every ten years, by appointing Tacoma residents to a charter review committee, or by the election of a board of freeholders in the manner provided in state law. Any freeholders shall be nominated and elected by position and by district. The charter review committee, which shall be provided with sufficient staff and budget to perform a comprehensive review, shall report any recommended amendments to the City Council. The last review of the City Charter was in 2024, meaning the next review must take place in 2034 or earlier.

During the 2024 Charter Review process, there was a recommendation to extend the review timeline and ensure our volunteers receive training and education and are given the resources and time to complete a thorough review will enhance support for decision making for future Charter reviews. The intent was that additional time will allow them to do fiscal and legal analysis to better understand the impacts of implementation and work more closely with the City Council to understand the issues facing the City. This could also give the City Council more time to follow up on recommendations before choosing what to send forward to voters. This conversation was referred to an alternative process for additional study and evaluation by resolution 41497 on July 30, 2024.

This conversation was assigned to the City Council's Operational Strategy and Administrative Committee for review and development of a recommendation. However, the focus on the committee turned to the City Manager recruitment process with City Manager Elizabeth Pauli's retirement in mid-2025. This left the Charter Review conversation unfinished. This resolution ensures the conversation will continue at a future date closer to the next review to ensure a proactive approach while incorporating any new priorities and impacts that may occur in the future closer to the review.

COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT/ CUSTOMER RESEARCH:

The recommendation to improve the Charter Review process came from the 2024 Charter Review Committee and was referred to alternative processes by the City Council for discussion and review.



2025 STRATEGIC PRIORITIES:

Equity and Accessibility:

A review of the City's Charter Review Process before the next scheduled 10-year cycle presents an important opportunity to ensure that Tacoma's foundational governance structures are shaped through processes that are equitable, accessible, and reflective of the full community. Historically, participation in charter review has tended to be limited to individuals with prior civic experience, significant time availability, or familiarity with government systems. Without intentional design, these barriers can result in underrepresentation of residents most affected by structural decisions.

Evaluating and adjusting the Charter Review Process proactively will allow the City to identify and remove participation barriers, strengthen pathways for inclusive public engagement, ensure committee recruitment and selection practices reflect Tacoma's demographics and lived experiences, and that there is sufficient time, training, and resources available for both volunteers and future City Councils to properly review our City Charter.

Civic Engagement: *Equity Index Score*: Select Index Score.

Increase the number of residents who participate civically through volunteering and voting.

Elected officials, boards, commissions, and volunteer leadership will reflect the diversity of the Tacoma community.

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).

a well-designed process that considers the barriers and impacts to communities not typically engaged in the Charter Review and the resources and time available for the process can help to ensure future Councils are bringing more people into the process who have not been engaged previously, improve the representation of future Charter Review Committees, and build stronger trust in government from volunteers and the public.

ALTERNATIVES:

Alternative(s)	Positive Impact(s)	Negative Impact(s)
1.Do not adopt		There is not a directed trigger for future conversations which might mean future priorities push this conversation beyond a reasonable proactive timeline for future improvements.
2.change timing of conversation	By moving the conversation up further there is more time to plan and design a robust Charter Review process.	By moving the conversation up it may be too far in advance of the actual review, and may miss out on relevant impacts of that time period.

EVALUATION AND FOLLOW UP:

The City Manager's Office or designee will maintain the record of this resolution and at least two years of ahead of the next review will schedule a comprehensive conversation with the City Council on the history and prospective future of the Charter Review process.



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STAFF/SPONSOR RECOMMENDATION:

We recommend adoption of this resolution to ensure there is a planned conversation for future Councils on the Charter Review process and timeline and there is opportunity for proactive engagement on the process.

FISCAL IMPACT:

While there is no direct fiscal impact of having this conversation directed in the future, any changes to timeline, process, or resources for future Charter Review processes will require staff commitment and financial resourcing. Future processes and conversations should include financial needs and impacts to guide development of future processes.