



TO: Mayor and City Council
FROM: Jim Dugan, Tacoma Permit Advisory Task Force Chair
COPY: Elizabeth Pauli, Peter Huffman, Philip Kao, Terry Forslund, Chris Johnson, Lynda Foster
SUBJECT: Recommendation to City Council to transition the Tacoma Permit Advisory Task Force transition into an Advisory Group
DATE: March 16, 2022

SUMMARY:

The Tacoma Permit Advisory Task Force recommends the Tacoma City Council passes a resolution to change the Tacoma Permit Advisory Task Force to the Tacoma Permit Advisory Group.

BACKGROUND:

The Tacoma Permit Advisory Task Force (TPATF) was created when the City Council adopted [Resolution 39894](#) which formally established the TPATF in December 2017. In December 2019, City Council adopted [Resolution 40531](#), removing member restrictions from the Tacoma Permit Advisory Task Force to allow the City Manager flexibility in appointing representatives as appropriate.

The duties and responsibilities of the Task Force are:

1. **Make Permit System Recommendations:** Meet monthly with City staff to review, discuss, and provide recommendations to City Manager and City Council for the improvement of City policies, codes, and procedures for the issuance of residential and commercial permits. Review best practices in peer communities. Monitor implementation progress and recommend adjustments.
2. **Review City Policies Under Consideration:** Review and provide recommendations to the City Manager and City Council regarding proposed City policies and laws which affect the permitting system.
3. **Consult on Customer Problems:** Consult and advise on customer issues that arise in the permitting process.
4. **Establish Guiding Principles:** Establish guiding principles to guide policy and best practice recommendations made by task-force.

The Tacoma Permit Advisory Task Force members are appointed by the City Manager, and will generally be representative of a broad base of permit applicants who regularly apply to the City for permits.

ISSUE:

The City of Tacoma describes a Task Force as: A task force is a body appointed by the City Council to study or work on a particular subject or problem. The formal definition indicates that a task force is "a temporary grouping under one leader for the purpose of accomplishing a definite objective." Often a task force will cease to exist upon completion of its charge as given by the City Council.

The Tacoma Permit Advisory Task Force has evolved to do continuous work in collaboration with City staff. In addition to reviewing specific practices and policies related to City of Tacoma permitting, they are asked for advice on upcoming legislation and changes at the City. This broader scope is beyond the role of a Task Force.

ALTERNATIVES:

The City of Tacoma facilitates a number of volunteer groups. [The City of Tacoma's Committees, Boards, and Commissions Handbook](#) (Handbook), describes the role of Committees, Boards, and Commissions, (frequently referred to as CBCs). The City also facilitates groups not defined by this Handbook, including engagement groups and advisory groups.

The characteristics of individual CBCs are described in this Handbook. Some general characteristics:

- Recruitment and application logistics are run through the City Clerk's office. Applications are accepted on a set annual schedule, with on-boarding occurring quarterly. A press release announces openings, applicants can apply via [this application](#), CBC staff and volunteers do additional outreach as capacity allows.
- Review of applicants: most CBCs have applicant interviews at a Council Committee, with Council Members interviewing and making recommendations. Some CBCs are appointed by the Mayor and approved by full Council.
- Appointments are to fill specific terms, folks may be appointed mid-term to complete a term.

There are three operating Advisory groups at the City: The Transit Oriented Development Advisory Group (potentially transitioning from a limited timeframe to a permanent group), the Parking Technical Advisory Group (PTAG) and the Bike and Pedestrian Technical Advisory Group (BPTAG). Some general characteristics of these groups:

- Membership is designed to recruit professionals with technical knowledge within the topic area covered by the Advisory Group. Emphasis is placed on including diverse perspectives that represent the City of Tacoma.
- Recruitment is done through Advisory Group staff. Applications are accepted as needed. Press release may be used to announce open positions. Applicants must fill out a more simple application form ([PTAG](#) example). Advisory Group staff and volunteers do additional recruitment and outreach as capacity allows.
- Review of applicants: interviews are conducted with Advisory Group Chair or Co-Chair and staff, formal recommendation is made after interviews to the City Manager who formally appoints members.
- Appointments are for a set period of time, such as two years, and the term begins when appointed.

Of note: all volunteer groups at the City of Tacoma will incorporate policy recommendations in response to Resolution 40622, passed in 2020 by the City Council, directing the City Manager to create an Equitable and Anti-Racist Tacoma. This may lead to changes in CBC and other volunteer group structures.

FISCAL IMPACT:

Current staff support to TPATF is provided by the Planning & Development Services Department and the Tacoma City Manager's Office. As needed, the task force works closely with representatives from Tacoma Public Utilities and City staff, including Planning and Development Services, Public Works, Environmental Services, and Legal. At this time there is not additional funding needed to provide staff support. Staffing structures should be considered in future biennium budgets.

RECOMMENDATION:

The TPATF discussed this recommendation at the January, February and March 2022 TPATF meetings. Their recommendation is that the City Council sponsor a resolution to transition the Task Force into an Advisory Group. The Advisory Group model maintains desired flexibility and adaptability, while creating a structure that is designed to be long-term and sustainable. The structure outlined below is modeled after existing advisory groups at the City of Tacoma.

Membership:

- The Advisory Group would consist of 18 members, under the following categories:
 - At-large stakeholders (8)
 - Development stakeholders (10)
 - Hospitality
 - Retail
 - Healthcare
 - Public Sector
 - Residential Contractor/Developer
 - Commercial Contractor/Developer
 - Land Use Attorney
 - Urban Design
 - Architect
 - Civil Engineer
- Each member will be appointed for a 2-year term, for a maximum of three terms (six years total)

Recruitment, application and selection:

- Information on how to apply to join the advisory group would be included on the group's website. The application would be a simplified process run by advisory group staff instead of the clerk's office. When positions become available, the City of Tacoma would issue a news release. Additional outreach would be performed by advisory group volunteers and staff as capacity allows. Staff should work with the intent to add diversity and enhance equity in the current membership.
- Application materials would be reviewed by the advisory group chair, co-chairs, and staff, with the potential for candidate interviews, culminating in a recommendation to the City Manager for appointment. The City Manager would have final authority to appoint members.
- New members would serve for a two-year term. They would have an on-boarding meeting with Task Force staff and would be required to complete public disclosure training.

The duties and responsibilities of the Advisory Group will be:

1. **Make Permit System Recommendations:** Meet monthly with City staff to review, discuss, and provide recommendations to City Manager and City Council for the improvement of City policies, codes, and procedures for the issuance of residential and commercial permits. Review best practices in peer communities. Monitor implementation progress and recommend adjustments.
2. **Review City Policies Under Consideration:** Review and provide recommendations to the City Manager and City Council regarding proposed City policies and laws which affect the development code and the permitting system.
3. **Establish Guiding Principles:** Establish guiding principles to guide policy and best practice recommendations made by the Advisory Group.