



# City of Tacoma

## Charter Review Committee Minutes

March 21, 2024

5:30 p.m.

747 Market Street, Tacoma WA 98402, Conference Room 243

Dial: 253-215-8782 Meeting ID: 915 2560 1849

Webinar Link: <https://www.zoom.us/j/91525601849>

### Call to Order

Chair Wamback called the meeting to order at 5:34 p.m.

### Roll Call

**Present: 12** – Nicholas Carr, Silong Chhun, Patrick Fischer, Bryan Flint, Jason Gauthier, Andre Jimenez, Melissa Malott, Latasha Palmer, Andrea Reay, Rebecca Stith, Stephen Wamback, and Lok Yin Wu

**Absent: 3** – Katie Baird (excused), Maricres Castro, and Diamatris Winston

Committee Member Castro arrived at 5:35 p.m. and Committee Member Winston arrived at 5:50 p.m.

Committee Members Castro, Chhun, Jimenez, Palmer, Stith, Winston, and Wu participated virtually.

Committee Member Castro arrived here, at 5:35 p.m.

### Approval of Minutes

Committee Member Stith noticed the misspelling of her last name and asked that be corrected. The minutes for the March 4, 2024, meeting were approved.

### Public Comment

There was no Public Comment.

### Administration Subcommittee Report

#### City Attorney

At approximately 5:38 p.m., Carr presented for the Administration Subcommittee. The first recommendation is in Section 3.5 of the Charter, the topic of City Attorney to include additional accountability and independence. The Subcommittee proposes to add language giving the

Council more power in reviewing and appointing candidates, as well as terminating the City Attorney. The group's goal is to provide a little more independence to the City Attorney's Office.

Discussion ensued on models from other cities, potential unintended consequences if this model has never been done before, what happens to this section if the form of government changes, potential tension points, and different permutation of this structure depending on the form of government chosen.

**MOTION:** Gauthier moved to advance the recommendation to staff for legal review and drafting.

**SECONDED BY:** Reay

**ACTION:** Voice vote was taken and carried. The motion was declared adopted by majority consent with Reay and Chair Wamback voting against.

Committee Member Winston arrived here, at 5:50 p.m.

### **Climate Commission**

At approximately 5:50 p.m., Carr then presented the Subcommittee's second recommendation which is the creation of a Climate Commission in the Charter. The Climate Commission's purpose is to track and hold accountable the City's commitments to sustainability and climate goals. The Subcommittee crafted language, proposed location in the Charter, as well as possible membership structure.

Discussion ensued on the difference between this new Climate Commission and the Sustainable Tacoma Commission, empowering the Sustainable Tacoma Commission instead of creating a new commission, that climate issues may be taken a little more seriously if its mandated in the Charter, possible location in the Charter where this recommendation can be placed, making the recommendation more prescriptive, membership representation, is the Charter the right vehicle to highlight climate issues, Environmental Protection Agency and legal impacts, intent, if this issue has been brought to Council's attention before, who the commission reports to, and who this would increase accountability for.

**MOTION:** Carr moved to return the recommendation back to the Administration Subcommittee for further review and discussion.

**SECONDED BY:** Fischer

**ACTION:** Voice vote was taken and carried. The motion was declared adopted by unanimous vote.

## Form of Government Subcommittee Report

### Transition

At approximately 6:28 p.m., Malott presented the transition topic from the Form of Government Subcommittee. The Subcommittee attempted to answer three main questions to help the group tackle the issue of transition if a change in form of government is advanced. Those three questions are, transition timeline, Mayor's current seat on the City Council, and what would happen to the current City Manager position. The Subcommittee proposed transition could possibly start after the current Mayor's term in 2026, transition current Council members from nine to seven with the Mayor becoming the executive and only having two at-large positions on Council, and lastly converting the City Manager position to a Chief Administrative Officer (CAO) picked by and reports to the Mayor and Council.

Discussion ensued on internal mechanics and structure, maintaining continuity and scope of the work, if there is a model where the Mayor can break a tie vote of Council, concerns on CAO not appointed by the Mayor, using the 2014 change in form of government as reference, and transition timeline.

Discussion on the Committee's calendar and timeline came up, as well as the Subcommittee's strategy to tackle these issues effectively and efficiently. Chair Wamback emphasized the limited time the Committee has and the work still ahead of them.

### Break

The meeting recessed at 7:00 p.m.

The meeting reconvened at 7:15 p.m.

## Other Recommendations

### Section 3.8 – Planning Commission

At approximately 7:16 p.m., Chair Wamback turned to Sonja Hallum, Charter Liaison, to talk about the two versions of the Planning Commission language she volunteered to draft. Hallum started with a brief explanation of staff's proposed recommendation template. She then moved on to present the two Planning Commission language options she created, highlighting the differences, similarities, and mentioning what she personally added that was not discussed by the Committee. Committee members discussed the pros and cons of the options, which option they favor, and staff's proposed format.

**MOTION:** Gauthier moved to advance option two of the Planning Commission language.

**SECONDED BY:** Flint

**ACTION:** Voice vote was taken and carried. The motion was declared adopted by majority consent with Jimenez and Palmer voting against.

### **Full-Time Council**

At approximately 7:25 p.m., Chair Wamback then presented staff’s proposed language on the topic of making Council members full time and hire their own staff per the Committee’s request. The group discussed the drafted language, question on clarity in terms of who answers to who and the possibility of being more prescriptive on the personnel category.

Martha Lantz, Deputy City Attorney, offered a minor change to the language and proposed to add the word “or assist” between “advise” and “the Council.”

Discussion ensued on broad job descriptions and jurisdiction, question on whether this office will truly be independent if there’s no change in form of government, does it conform with labor laws and the City’s Human Resources Department policies, the issue of outside employment, employment classifications, and possible placement in the Charter.

**MOTION:** Carr moved to advance the recommendation with the addition of the words “report to” before “and advise” and “or assists” before “the Council.”

**SECONDED BY:** Fischer

**ACTION:** Voice vote was taken and carried. The motion was declared adopted by unanimous consent.

### **Salary Commission**

At approximately 7:45 p.m., Lantz presented Salary Commission draft language and explained she made minor changes by eliminating language that does not comply with State law. She then added verbiage from State law to the Charter to ensure alignment.

Discussion ensued on elimination of the last sentence, rationale for amendments, date importance, language inclusion if the expectation is for a full-time position, and possibly increasing the salary range.

**MOTION:** Flint moved to advance the recommendation as drafted, including the subtraction of the last sentence.

**SECONDED BY:** Gauthier

**ACTION:** Voice vote was taken and carried. The motion was declared adopted by unanimous consent.

### **Term Limits**

At approximately 7:55 p.m., Chair Wamback opened the conversation on term limits. Discussion ensued on consecutive years versus term year limits, reasoning behind the proposed term limit, partial term carry over, resign to run rule language option, language chosen in the amendment,

loophole in the process, Council vacancies in Section 2.7 and partial terms served, and alternative language options.

### **Other Subcommittee Reports and Discussion**

At approximately 8:22 p.m., Chair Wamback discussed Committee updates and populating the next meeting agenda with topics. Power of the People Subcommittee will be ready to present on four of their topics which are, initiatives, referendums, campaign finance, and Charter review. Police Accountability Subcommittee is still processing information. Administrative Subcommittee is waiting on legal review on the Humane Society portion in the Charter and Climate Commission. Miscellaneous Subcommittee can present on disposition of waterfront property.

### **Staff Update**

No update from staff.

### **Other Business and Homework**

No other business and homework.

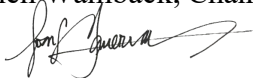
### **Adjournment**

There being no further business, the meeting was adjourned at 8:33 p.m.



---

Stephen Wamback, Chair



---

Joan Taverna, City Clerk's Office