



**Rules of Procedure
of the
Council of the
City of Tacoma**



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RULE 1 - MEETINGS

A. **Regular Meeting.** The regular meeting of the City Council shall be held at 5:00 p.m. on Tuesday of each week, at least forty-six weeks each year, in the Council Chambers, Tacoma Municipal Building, except:

1. If Tuesday of any week is a legal holiday, the regular meeting of that week shall be held at 5:00 p.m. on the next business day.
2. If Tuesday of any week shall fall on Christmas Eve or New Year's Eve, the regular meeting of that week shall be held at 5:00 p.m. on the next business day.

The Council, by a majority vote, may by motion continue any regular or special meeting to a time specified in the motion.

B. The Study Sessions of the City Council shall be held at 12:00 noon on Tuesday of each week, in Room 16, Tacoma Municipal Building North, subject to Rules A.1. and 2.

C. **Special Meetings.** Special meetings, or any change in the time or location of a regular meeting, shall be called by the City Clerk on the written request of the Mayor or by a majority of the members of the Council by delivering personally or by mail, by fax, or by electronic mail written notice to each member of the Council; and to each local newspaper of general circulation and to each local radio or television station which has on file with the City Clerk a written request to be notified of such special meeting or of all special meetings. Such notice must be delivered personally or by mail, by fax, or by electronic mail at least 24 hours before the time of such meeting as specified in the notice. The call and notice shall specify the time and place of the special meeting and the business to be transacted. Final disposition shall not be taken on any other matter at such meetings by the Council. Such written notice may be dispensed with as to any member who, at or prior to the time the meeting convenes, files with the City Clerk a written waiver of notice. Such waiver may be given by mail, by fax, or by electronic mail. Such written notice may also be dispensed with as to any member who is actually present at the meeting at the time it convenes. The notices provided in this section may be dispensed with in the event a special meeting is called to deal with an emergency involving injury or damage to persons or property or the likelihood of such injury or damage, when time requirements of such notice would make notice impractical and increase the likelihood of such injury or damage. (REF. RCW 42.30.080)

D. **Quorum.** Five Council Members shall be a quorum for the transaction of business, but in the absence of a quorum, the members present may adjourn the meeting to a later date.

RULE 2 - PRESIDING OFFICER - DUTIES

A. **Conduct of Meeting.** The presiding officer at all meetings of the Council shall be the Mayor, and, in the Mayor's absence, the Deputy Mayor, who shall conduct the business and deliberations of the Council under these rules. The Deputy Mayor shall be elected by a

majority of the Council Members at the start of the first Council meeting following the new year. If both the Mayor and Deputy Mayor are absent and a quorum is present, the Council shall, by motion, appoint one of its members to serve as presiding officer of the Council until the return of the Mayor or Deputy Mayor.

The presiding officer shall:

1. Preserve order and decorum in the Council Chambers;
2. Observe and enforce all rules adopted by the Council for its government;
3. Decide all questions on order, in accordance with these rules, subject to appeal by any member to the Council; and
4. Recognize members of the Council in the order in which they request the floor. No member shall be recognized and given the floor to speak on the same matter more than once until after all other members of the Council have had an opportunity to be recognized and be heard.
5. Retain the authority, during Public Comment and Citizens' Forum, to determine whether a speaker's remarks fail to comply with these Rules or exceed the scope of the designated forums, and the presiding officer shall have the authority to suspend such person's right to speak, subject to the Council's right to overrule such decision.

The presiding officer, as a member of the Council, shall have only those rights, and shall be governed in all matters and issues by the same rules and restrictions, as other Council Members.

- B. **Questioning.** Any member of the Council shall have the right to question any individual, including members of the staff, on matters germane to the issue properly before the Council for discussion.
- C. **Related Agenda Items.** When matters on the Agenda are placed under more than one classification, as defined by "Order of Business," and are closely related to the same subject matter, the presiding officer may, without the necessity of any vote, call for the related agenda items out of the prescribed "Order of Business."

RULE 3 - REMARKS AND DEBATES

- A. **Speaking to Motion.** No member of the Council shall speak more than twice on the same motion except by consent of the majority of the Council Members present at the time the motion is before the Council. After the motion is put and before the next item is read, a member shall be able to speak briefly to the previous motion.
- B. **Interruption.** No member of the Council shall interrupt or argue with any other member while such member has the floor.

- C. **Courtesy.** All speakers, including members of the Council, in the discussion, comments, or debate of any matter or issue, shall be courteous in their language and deportment and shall not engage in contemptuous or disorderly behavior, or discuss or comment on personalities, or indulge in derogatory remarks or insinuations in respect to any other member of the Council, or any member of the staff or the public, but shall at all times confine their remarks to those facts which are germane and relevant, as determined by the presiding officer, to the question or matter under discussion.
- D. **Transgression.** The Council has power under state law to impose punishment on its members, short of removal of office, for violation of state law or Council rules.

If a member of the Council shall transgress these rules, the presiding officer shall call such member to order, in which case such member shall be silent except to explain or continue in order. If the presiding officer shall transgress these rules or fail to call such member to order, any other member of the Council may, under a point of order, call the presiding officer or such other member to order, in which case the presiding officer or such member, as the case may be, shall be silent except to explain or continue in order. Additional consequences may include a verbal admonition, written reprimand, censure, expulsion from the meeting at which the conduct is occurring, removal of the Council member from the Council committee chair positions or committee memberships, or removal of intergovernmental duties. Expulsion for such behavior in the Council's presence shall require the affirmative vote of a majority of the Council, specifying in the order of expulsion the cause thereof.

- E. **Challenge to Ruling.** Any member of the Council shall have the right to challenge any action or ruling of the presiding officer, or member, as the case may be, in which case the decision of the majority of the members of the Council present, including the presiding officer, shall govern.
- F. **City Manager.** The City Manager shall have the right to enter into a discussion of any matter coming before the City Council.

RULE 4 - ORDER OF BUSINESS

- A. **Order of Business.** The order of business shall be as follows:
 - 1. Call to order.
 - 2. Roll call.
 - 3. Flag salute.
 - 4. Moment of silence.
 - 5. Items filed in the office of the City Clerk.

Consent Agenda:

6. Approval of the Consent Agenda, consisting generally of one or more of the following items:
 - a) Approval of minutes.
 - b) First reading of ordinances accepting gifts and donations.
 - c) Adoption of resolutions fixing dates for hearings, approving final plats, and other such actions.
 - d) Authorization of Community Development Block Grant program agreements with approved agencies.
 - e) Adoption of resolutions accepting grants.
 - f) Fixing date of hearings on appeals.
 - g) Ordinances and communications from the Hearing Examiner.
 - h) Interlocal Agreements, excepting those pertaining to cooperative purchasing.

Proclamations.

Public Comment.

Regular Agenda:

7. Announcements, presentations and appointments.
8. Communications.
9. Resolutions.
10. Final reading of ordinances.
11. First reading of ordinances.
12. Appeals. See Rule 11.
13. Public hearings. See Rule 11.
14. Unfinished business.
15. Reports by the City Manager.
16. Comments and committee reports of the City Council.
17. Citizens' Forum. See Rule 8.C.

18. Adjournment.
- B. **Resolutions and Ordinances under Consent Agenda.** Any Council Member may have a resolution or ordinance removed from the Consent Agenda for separate consideration under Resolutions or Ordinances, as appropriate.
- C. **Recess.** The Council may recess during any regular or special meeting by a majority vote of Council Members present.
- D. **Executive Session.** The Council may hold an executive session, upon announcement by the presiding officer, for a stated time and purpose during any regular or special meeting.

RULE 5 - PRECEDENCE OF MOTIONS

- A. **Precedence of Motions.** When a question is under consideration, no motion shall be entertained except as follows, such motions having precedence in order as stated:
 1. To adjourn. (Not debatable.)
 2. For a Call of the Council (to compel the attendance of unexcused absent members in order to obtain a quorum). (Not debatable.)
 3. To Remove an Item from the Agenda.
 4. To Lay on the Table. (Not debatable.)
 5. For the Previous Question. (The “previous question” shall be as follows: “Shall the main question be put?”, and, until such motion has been put and decided, all amendments or debate shall be precluded. The “main question” shall be on the passage of an ordinance, resolution, or motion, but, when amendments are pending, the questions shall be taken first upon such amendments, in their order.) (Requires two-thirds vote.)
 6. To Limit Debate. (Requires two-thirds vote.)
 7. To Postpone to a Certain Time. (Shall be decided without debate only in those instances where the effect of said motion is to postpone or continue a matter for less than 30 days from the time it first appeared on the Council Agenda.)
 8. To Amend.
 9. To Substitute.
 10. To Postpone Indefinitely.
 11. Main Motion.

12. To Take from the Table. (Not debatable.) A motion to “take from the table” having been put and lost, shall not, during the same Council meeting, be renewed either by the mover or by any other member of the Council. No matter shall be taken from the table after a period of two years from the date that it was laid on the table.
 13. Motion to Reconsider. No motion to reconsider a vote shall be in order except at the following meeting, and by a member who voted with the prevailing side. A motion to reconsider, having been put and lost, shall not be renewed either by the mover or by any other member of the Council. Any member of the Council, including the presiding officer, shall have the right to change his/her vote, in order to be on the prevailing side, at any time before final action is taken on the next ensuing item of business taken up by the Council.
- B. **Vote.** The procedural motions above enumerated shall be decided by a majority vote of Council Members present at the meetings, except as otherwise indicated. Ordinances and resolutions require the affirmative vote of at least five Council Members for passage; six for emergency. (Charter Section 2.12)
- C. **Debate.** The motions above enumerated are debatable except where designated otherwise.

RULE 6 - SUSPENSION OF RULES

No rule shall be suspended except by a majority vote of Council Members present at the meeting, and a motion to suspend a rule is not debatable. Vote on the motion may be by voice vote of the Council, or by roll call if requested by a member of the Council.

RULE 7 - ORDINANCES - RESOLUTIONS

The name of a Council Member shall not appear as a sponsor on any ordinance or resolution considered by the Council except at the Council Member’s request. Sponsorship on any ordinance or resolution shall be limited to four Council Members, except as expanded by request of any Council Member in open session.

No ordinance or resolution shall be read until reviewed as to form and legality by the City Attorney.

Reading of ordinances and resolutions at all Council meetings shall be deemed sufficient by the reading of a brief synopsis of the title of the ordinance or the purpose of the resolution, and the reading in full of the same shall not be required unless the full reading of any particular ordinance or resolution be requested by any member of the Council, in which event said request shall be complied with if a majority of the Council Members present concur in the request.

RULE 8 - MISCELLANEOUS

- A. **Agenda.** The City Clerk, under the direction of the City Manager, shall prepare the Agenda for each session of the Council in regular order in accordance with these rules,

which order shall not be departed from for any purpose, except as provided for in these rules. Such Agenda shall include all resolutions, ordinances, and matters requested by any Council Member, including the Mayor, or by the City Manager. No item shall be deleted from the Agenda, except as provided for in Rule 5 of these rules.

- B. **Robert's Rules of Order.** On all questions of practice or procedure not provided for by these rules, the practice and procedure set forth in *Robert's Rules of Order Newly Revised* shall prevail.
- C. **Amendments to Rules.** Amendments to these rules shall be made by resolution and shall require two readings.
- D. **Public Requests for Proclamations.** It is the policy of the Council to consider requests to proclaim certain events or causes when such proclamations pertain to a Tacoma event, person, organization, or cause with local implications. The Council will consider requests that are timely, have potential relevance to a majority of Tacoma's population, and either forward positive messages or call upon the support of the community.

The following guidelines and requirements apply to requests for consideration of proclamations:

1. The person(s) or organization making the request must submit a completed Application Requesting a City Proclamation and submit a copy of the proposed proclamation.
 2. The request should be made at least two weeks in advance of the requested Council meeting.
 3. The Mayor, City Manager and/or staff designee will determine if the proposed proclamation meets the intent of this policy. When there is uncertainty in making this determination, the Mayor will consult with the City Council Committee of the Whole for its guidance.
 4. The Council will not make more than two proclamations at one Council Meeting.
 5. The City retains the right to modify, edit, or otherwise amend the proposed proclamation to meet its requirements, needs, or policy determinations.
 6. The City retains the right to decide if the proclamation will or will not be issued.
 7. Once approved, the proclamation will be included on the appropriate Council agenda.
 8. If not approved, the applicant will be notified of the decision and the reason(s) for the decision.
- E. **Public Requests for Presentations.** It is the policy of the Council to consider requests for presentations of certain events or causes when such presentations pertain to a Tacoma event, person, organization, or cause with local implications. The Council will consider

requests that are timely, have potential relevance to a majority of Tacoma's population, and either forward positive messages or call upon the support of the community.

The following guidelines and requirements apply to requests for consideration of presentations:

1. The person(s) or organization making the request to make the presentation must submit a completed Application to Make a City Council Presentation.
2. The request should be made at least two weeks in advance of the requested Council meeting.
3. The Mayor, City Manager and/or staff designee will determine if the proposed presentation meets the intent of this policy. When there is uncertainty in making this determination, the Mayor will consult with the City Council Committee of the Whole for its guidance.
4. The presentation shall not exceed five minutes in length and the Council will not entertain more than two presentations at one Council Meeting.
5. The City retains the right to decide if the presentation will or will not be permitted.
6. Once approved, the presentation will be included on the appropriate Council agenda.
7. If not approved, the applicant will be notified of the decision and the reason(s) for the decision.

RULE 9 – PUBLIC COMMENT/PUBLIC FORUM

- A. **Public Comment.** The City Council appreciates hearing from citizens about items on its agenda, and desires to set aside time at the start of each Council business meeting for Public Comment. All comments must be limited to items on the agenda. Speakers are asked to identify the specific agenda items they wish to address.

To ensure equal opportunity for the public to comment, a speaker's comments shall be limited to up to five minutes per person, per meeting. Where necessary, due to the number of persons who want to address the Council, the presiding officer shall retain authority to limit all persons' remarks to an equal period of less than five minutes. To further ensure equal opportunity for the public to comment, each person may address the Council only one time during the Public Comment portion of the meeting. Comments may be made on resolutions as well as first and final readings of ordinances. Comments shall not be accepted on ordinances forwarded to the Council by the Hearing Examiner for which a public hearing has been held. Written comments submitted prior to Council action shall be considered in the same manner as oral comments. When the Council suspends its rules to include a new resolution or ordinance on the agenda, public comment will be taken at the time the Council considers the resolution or ordinance. Where an ordinance has been substantially changed at its final reading, subject to the consent of the Council, a person

may speak to the changes. Public comment sign-up forms will be available at the back of the Council Chambers for use by those persons wishing to address the Council. All remarks will be addressed to the Council as a whole.

- B. **Courtesy.** All speakers during Public Comment or Citizens' Forum, in the discussion, comments, or debate of any matter or issue, shall be courteous in their language and deportment and shall not engage in or discuss or comment on personalities, or indulge in derogatory remarks or insinuations in respect to any member of the Council, or any member of the staff or the public, but shall at all times confine their remarks to those facts which are germane and relevant, as determined by the presiding officer, to the question or matter under discussion.
- C. **Citizens' Forum - First Tuesday.** On the first Council meeting of each month, time shall be reserved for citizens' comments. The purpose of this forum is to assist the Council in making policy decisions; therefore, items of discussion shall be limited to matters over which the City Council has jurisdiction. A speaker's remarks shall be limited to up to three minutes per person, per Citizens' Forum. Where necessary, due to the number of persons who want to address the Council, the presiding officer shall retain authority to limit all persons' remarks to an equal period of less than three minutes. To further ensure equal opportunity for the public to comment, each person may address the Council only one time during the Citizens' Forum portion of any meeting. Argument shall not be made in support of or opposition to an ordinance or resolution on the Council Agenda for which the time for public comment has passed.
- D. **No Use of Public Comment or Citizens' Forum for Campaigns.** No person may use public comment or Citizens' Forum for the purpose of assisting a campaign for election of any person to any office or for the promotion of or opposition to any ballot proposition. Further, any direct mention of a candidate's candidacy or a ballot proposition shall constitute grounds for immediate suspension of such person's right to speak at that Council meeting.
- E. **No Use of Public Comment or Citizens' Forum for Advertising.** No person addressing the Council may use Public Comment or Citizens' Forum for the purpose of advertising. Advertising is defined as "promoting by making known, proclaiming publicly, drawing attention to, or making conspicuous any item, product, service, or thing, for profit or otherwise." This does not prevent or preclude any person addressing the Council from expressing his or her views or opinions on matters over which the Council has jurisdiction. Also, this does not prohibit individuals or organizations from promoting public events or causes through public requests for proclamations and presentations as provided in Subsections 9 and 10 below.
- F. **Transgression.** The presiding officer shall retain authority to determine whether a speaker's remarks fail to comply with these Rules or exceed the scope of the designated forum, and the presiding officer shall have the right to suspend such person's right to speak, subject to the Council's right to overrule such decision.

RULE 10 - COUNCIL CONFERENCE ROOM

During any recess of a regular or special meeting of the Tacoma City Council, the Council Conference Room shall be reserved solely for the use of members of the City Council and selected staff personnel and employees of the City of Tacoma, and no other person or persons shall have access thereto, whether they be members of the press, radio, television, or members of the public at large.

RULE 11 - CITY CLERK - DUTIES

- A. **Record Votes.** As a part of said permanent proceedings, the Clerk shall record all votes taken. In those instances where a roll call vote is taken pursuant to a requirement or request, the Clerk shall call the name of each and every member of the Council present, including the Mayor, and shall duly record said member's vote as either an aye, nay, or abstention, whichever may be appropriate. Roll call votes of the Council shall be called alphabetically, except for the vote of the presiding officer, whose vote shall be called last, commencing with the first roll call vote of the Council, and in subsequent roll call votes member names shall be rotated, excluding the presiding officer, until the entire Council has been called, at which time the procedure will begin again.
- B. **Maintain Record.** The Clerk shall cause to be recorded electronically all of the regular and special meetings of the Tacoma City Council and each and every part thereof, and shall maintain the same for a period of six years consistent with state law, RCW Ch. 40.14.
- C. **Prepare Minutes.** At the conclusion of each special or regular meeting of the Tacoma City Council, the City Clerk shall prepare brief and concise minutes and submit the same to the City Council for its approval.
- D. **Verbatim Transcript.** No individual member of the Tacoma City Council, nor any member of the administrative staff of the City of Tacoma, shall be authorized or empowered to require the Clerk to insert in said official minutes any verbatim transcript of all or any part of the proceedings. Verbatim transcripts of any part or portion of the proceedings shall be made a part of the minutes only when authorized by a majority vote of the entire Council made at the meeting wherein such request for a verbatim report is made.

RULE 12 - PUBLIC HEARINGS AND APPEALS

- A. **Time of Hearings.** The time for commencing a public hearing or appeal shall be noted in the Council meeting Agenda. The presiding officer may modify the order of business under Rule 4 in order to conduct the hearing or appeal at or about the designated time.
- B. **Quasi-Judicial Body.** In hearing appeals, the Council sits as a quasi-judicial body. It shall conduct the hearing on an appeal in accordance with provisions of the Tacoma Municipal Code¹ and these rules, as applicable.

¹ See TMC Chapter 1.23.

- C. **Time Limits for Oral Argument.** At the time an appeal is heard by the City Council, each side shall be afforded a maximum of ten minutes for oral argument. In the event there are multiple appellants or respondents, each side shall divide its ten-minute time limit between or among the appellants or respondents, or, if agreement cannot be reached, as directed by the Mayor. Request for additional time must be submitted in writing to the City Clerk at least seven days prior to the appeal hearing and such request shall be considered as the first issue of the hearing. (TMC Section 1.70.030)

RULE 13 – CONFIDENTIALITY

Council Members shall keep confidential all written materials and verbal information provided to them during Executive Sessions to ensure that the City’s position is not compromised, and to comply with RCW 42.23.070(4) and Tacoma Municipal Code 1.46.030(G), relating to disclosure of confidential information.

RULE 14 – COMMITTEE OF THE WHOLE

All Council Members are members of the Committee of the Whole. The Council shall sit as a Committee of the Whole primarily for the purpose of considering current problems of the City and coordinating the work of the standing committees of the Council.

RULE 15 – STANDING COMMITTEES

- A. **Standing Committees.** There are established the following standing committees of the Council that shall consist of four members each. The Mayor shall annually appoint and the Council shall confirm the membership of each committee. Each standing committee shall elect a chair and vice-chair.
1. Appointments.
 2. Economic Development.
 3. Environment and Public Works.
 4. Government Performance and Finance.
 5. Neighborhoods and Housing.
 6. Public Safety and Human Services.
- B. **Function and Purpose.** The identification of the scope of work of the individual committees, meeting schedules, and meeting locations shall be accomplished by a process of discussion and consensus among the committee members. Committee action on any proposed resolution or ordinance is strictly advisory to the Council. The standing committees shall have no power or authority to commit the City or to take any binding action on behalf of the whole Council.

- C. **Quorum.** Three voting members shall constitute a quorum.
- D. **Reports.** Following each committee meeting, a report from the standing committees shall be submitted by the committee chair or vice-chair orally or in writing. Recommendations to the Council on proposed resolutions or ordinances shall indicate one of the following:
- Do Pass
 - Forward Without Recommendation
 - Do Not Pass

Minority reports may be shown on committee reports with the dissenting votes reflected.

- E. **Removing of Matters from Committee.** Any Council Member, during a regular Council meeting, may make a motion to remove a matter from a committee. Said motion, if seconded, shall require a majority vote of the Council. Alternatively, any four Council Members may cause any matter to be removed from a committee by signing an “Ordinance or Resolution Removal” form. When the four signatures are obtained, the proposal shall be released from the committee and shall be placed on the next available Council agenda for appropriate action.
- F. **Public Comment.** Standing committees shall allow public comment at committee meetings. The committee chair may invite persons to the committee table for the purpose of providing information necessary to committee business, and explain to those in attendance the reasons for inviting people to the committee table.
- G. **Staff Assignments to Committee.** The City Manager shall designate staff for each standing committee, who shall prepare the agenda, provide proper notice, prepare minutes, and prepare a record of attendance for every meeting.

Adopted Resolution No. 24877 03/14/78

Amended

Resolution No. 25171 07/25/78
Resolution No. 25226 08/29/78
Resolution No. 25300 09/26/78
Resolution No. 26209 01/22/80
Resolution No. 26387 05/06/80
Resolution No. 26591 08/26/80
Resolution No. 26998 06/02/81
Resolution No. 27594 10/05/82
Resolution No. 27847 05/03/83
Resolution No. 28108 11/22/83
Resolution No. 28315 04/24/84
Resolution No. 28527 10/30/84
Resolution No. 32400 11/23/93
Resolution No. 32554 03/29/94
Resolution No. 33129 (Substitute No. 2) 09/19/95
Resolution No. 33345 04/09/96
Resolution No. 33398 (Substitute) 06/11/96
Resolution No. 35482 04/09/02
Resolution No. 35568 07/16/02
Resolution No. 35664 10/22/02
Resolution No. 35951 09/30/03
Resolution No. 36083 02/10/04
Resolution No. 36273 (Substitute) 08/10/04
Resolution No. 36686 11/01/05
Resolution No. 36796 03/21/06