



Dear City of Tacoma Residents,

The City of Tacoma is governed by a city charter. The current version of the Tacoma City Charter has been in place since 1953. The City of Tacoma is one of eleven cities in the State of Washington to operate under a city charter. Other cities include Seattle and Spokane.

A city charter serves as the organic law of the City establishing a basic set of rules for city government. Like the constitutions for the state and federal governments, the city charter establishes the form of city government and the branches, officers, and departments of city government. It defines their relationships and how they interact.

Tacoma's City Charter can only be changed by a vote of the people. Proposed changes can be initiated by the City Council or by a voter initiative petition. The Tacoma City Charter requires that a citizens' committee look at the charter at least once every ten years.

The Tacoma City Council appointed a 15-member Charter Review Committee in December 2023. The Committee held multiple meetings, took public testimony, and studied numerous proposed amendments. The Committee met from January to early May 2024 and then forwarded recommended changes to the City Council.

The Tacoma City Council chose to place six proposed Charter amendments on the ballot after review during thirteen public meetings and conducting a public hearing. On July 16, 2024, the City Council adopted the following resolutions, and on July 23, 2024, transmitted the proposed amendments to the City Charter to the Pierce County Auditor to be placed on the ballot for the November 5, 2024, General Election:

- Amendment No. 1 – Resolution No. 41476 – Providing for Equitable Access
- Amendment No. 2 – Resolution No. 41477 – Required Meetings of the City Council
- Amendment No. 3 – Resolution No. 41479 – Limitations Upon Sale or Transfer of Waterfront Property
- Amendment No. 4 – Resolution No. 41474 – Duties and Authority of Council Members
- Amendment No. 5 – Resolution No. 41475 – Composition of the Planning Commission
- Amendment No. 6 – Resolution No. 41473 – Changing Term Limits for Future Elected Council Members

To comply with state law (RCW 35.22.170), this pamphlet, which provides more detail regarding the amendments being placed on the ballot, is being inserted into Tacoma's daily newspaper for residents once a week for four weeks. You can also download an electronic copy at www.cityoftacoma.org/charterreview. The Pierce County Voters' Pamphlet contains explanatory statements as well as statements 'for' and 'against' each proposed amendment.

Contact the City Clerk's Office with questions at cityclerk@cityoftacoma.org or (253) 591-5505.

Nicole Emery
City Clerk

AMENDMENT NO. 1 – RESOLUTION NO. 41476

A RESOLUTION AND PROPOSITION to amend Article II, Sections 2.3, 2.19, 2.20, and 2.25, Article VI, Sections 6.3 and 6.7, and Article IX, Section 9.2, of the Tacoma City Charter related to equity of access.

BE IT RESOLVED BY THE COUNCIL OF THE CITY OF TACOMA:

Section 1. That Article II, Sections 2.3, 2.19, 2.20, and 2.25 of the Tacoma City Charter be amended to read as follows:

* * *

Section 2.3 – A ~~Citizen~~-Commission on Elected Salaries will determine the compensation and salary of the Mayor and each Council Member. The Commission shall set the salary and any salary changes for the Mayor and Council Members. The salary and any salary changes set by the Commission shall be adopted by the City Council.

* * *

Section 2.19 – ~~Citizens~~Residents of Tacoma may by initiative petition ask the voters to approve or reject ordinances or amendments to existing ordinances, subject to any limitation on topics in state law, by the following process:

- (a) The petitioners shall file an Initiative Petition with the City Clerk.
- (b) The City Clerk shall forward the petition to the City Attorney within one (1) working day of receipt.
- (c) Within ten (10) working days of receipt, the City Attorney shall review the petition and make contact with the petitioner as necessary, and if the petition is proper in terms of form and style, the City Attorney will write a concise, true, and impartial statement of the purpose of the measure, not to exceed the number of words as allowed under state law for local initiatives. The statement will be phrased in the form of a positive question.
- (d) The City Attorney shall file this concise statement with the City Clerk as the official ballot title.
- (e) The City Clerk shall assign an initiative number to the ballot title and notify the petitioner that the ballot title becomes final and signature gathering may begin in ten (10) working days if there is no judicial review. Notification of the ballot title shall be posted at City Hall and on the City's web page.
- (f) Persons dissatisfied with the ballot title prepared by the City Attorney may seek judicial review by petitioning the Pierce County Superior Court within ten (10) working days of the notification of the ballot title having been posted as required under (e). The Court shall endeavor to promptly review the statements and render a decision as expeditiously as possible. The decision of the Court is final.
- (g) Petitions must include the final, approved ballot title, initiative number, the full text of the ordinance, or amendment to existing ordinance, that the petitioners seek to refer to the voters, and all other text and warnings required by state law.
- (h) Petitioners have one hundred and eighty (180) calendar days to collect signatures from registered voters.
- (i) The number of valid signatures shall be equal to ten percent (10%) of the votes cast in the last election for the office of Mayor.
- (j) The City Clerk shall forward the signatures to the County Auditor to be verified. Based on the Auditor's review, the City Clerk shall determine the validity of the petition. If the petition is validated, the City Council may enact or reject the Initiative, but shall not modify it. If it rejects the Initiative or within thirty (30) calendar days fails to take final action on it, the City Council shall submit the proposal to the people at the next Municipal or General Election that is not less than ninety (90) days after the date on which the signatures on the petition are validated.

Section 2.20 – ~~Citizens~~Residents of Tacoma may ask that ordinances passed by the City Council, except for ordinances which take effect immediately as allowed in Section 2.13 of the Charter, or as otherwise prohibited by state law, be referred to the voters for approval or rejection by the following process:

- (a) The petitioners shall file a Referendum Petition with the City Clerk not later than ten (10) calendar days after the City Council approved the ordinance.
- (b) The filing of a Referendum Petition, and progression by the petitioners through the steps outlined as follows, causes the suspension of the effective date of the ordinance.
- (c) The City Clerk shall forward the petition to the City Attorney within one (1) working day of receipt.
- (d) Within ten (10) working days of receipt, the City Attorney shall review the petition and make contact with the petitioner as necessary, and if the petition is proper in terms of form and style, the City Attorney will write a concise, true, and impartial statement of the purpose of the measure, not to exceed the number of words as allowed under state law for local referendums. The statement will be phrased in the form of a positive question.
- (e) The City Attorney shall file this concise statement with the City Clerk as the official ballot title.
- (f) The City Clerk shall assign a referendum number to the ballot title and notify the petitioner that the ballot title becomes final and signature gathering may begin in ten (10) working days if there is no judicial review. Notification of the ballot title shall be posted at City Hall and on the City's web page.
- (g) Persons dissatisfied with the ballot title prepared by the City Attorney may seek judicial review by petitioning Pierce County Superior Court within ten (10) working days of the notification of the ballot title having been posted as required under (f). The Court shall endeavor to promptly review the statements and render a decision as expeditiously as possible. The decision of the Court is final.
- (h) Petitions must include the final, approved ballot title, referendum number, the full text of the ordinance that the petitioners seek to refer to the voters, and all other text and warnings required by state law.
- (i) Petitioners have thirty (30) calendar days to collect signatures from registered voters.
- (j) The number of valid signatures shall be equal to ten percent (10%) of the votes cast in the last election for the office of Mayor.
- (k) The City Clerk shall forward the signatures to the County auditor to be verified. Based on the Auditor's review, the City Clerk shall determine the validity of the petition. If the petition is validated, the City Council shall immediately reconsider the ordinance, and if it does not repeal the ordinance, submit the proposal to the people at the next Municipal or General Election that is not less than ninety (90) days after the date on which the signatures on the petition are validated.

* * *

Section 2.25 – The City Council shall commence a review of this charter no less frequently than once every ten years, by appointing ~~citizens~~ 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 City Council may accept, reject or modify the recommended amendments and may submit any recommended charter amendments to the voters in the manner provided in state law. The recommendations of a board of freeholders shall be placed before the voters in the manner provided in state law. Nothing in this section shall limit the right of ~~citizens~~ Tacoma residents to initiate amendments to this charter in any other manner allowed by state law.

Section 2. That Article VI, Section 6.3 of the Tacoma City Charter be amended to read as follows:

Section 6.3 – ~~No person shall be eligible for employment in the City service who is not a citizen of the United States; provided that, as to laborers, this requirement may be waived by the Human Resources Director when laborers who are citizens are not available.~~ No person shall be eligible to employment in the classified service who is not a resident of the City at the time of appointment, and all officers and employees of the City appointed after this charter takes effect shall reside within its corporate limits during their period of employment in the City service; provided, that the Civil Service Board may waive such residence requirements for employees in the classified service and the City Council may waive such residence requirements for appointive employees in the unclassified service

when such waiver is deemed to be for the best interests of the City for such reasons and under such conditions as may be prescribed in the personnel rules.

Section 3. That Article VI, Section 6.7 of the Tacoma City Charter be amended to read as follows:

Section 6.7 – No applicant for employment and no appointed officer or employee shall be discriminated against in any personnel decision on the basis of religion, race, color, national origin or ancestry, political affiliation, sex, gender identity, sexual orientation, age, familial status, honorably discharged veteran or military status, or the presence of any sensory, mental or physical ~~handicap~~disability; provided, however, that affirmative action may be used to remedy prior discrimination in the employment and promotion of City appointed officers and employees. The City Council shall periodically review, and amend as appropriate, the anti-discrimination ordinances applicable to City applicants and employees.

Section 4. That Article IX, Section 9.2 of the Tacoma City Charter be amended to read as follows:

Section 9.2 – All records and accounts of every office, department, or agency of the City shall be open to inspection by any ~~citizen requester, to include but not be limited to~~ any representative of ~~any citizen's~~ organization, or any representative of the press, at all reasonable times and under reasonable regulations established by the City Council, except records and documents the disclosure of which would tend to defeat the lawful purpose which they are intended to accomplish. All such records and accounts shall be City property and be kept as such by the proper officers and employees during their continuance in office, and then delivered to their successors.

AMENDMENT NO. 2 – RESOLUTION NO. 41477

A RESOLUTION AND PROPOSITION to amend Article II, Section 2.8 of the Tacoma City Charter to remove the prohibition upon meeting more than weekly and to increase the number of required regular meetings.

BE IT RESOLVED BY THE COUNCIL OF THE CITY OF TACOMA:

Section 1. That Article II, Section 2.8 of the Tacoma City Charter be amended to read as follows:

Section 2.8 – The Council shall meet at such times and places as it may determine, provided it shall hold regular ~~not oftener than once a week,~~ periodic meetings at least ~~forty-six~~ seventy (4670) times each calendar year. Special meetings shall be called by the City Clerk on the written request of the Mayor or any three Council members. Such request shall state the subject or subjects to be considered at such meeting, and no other subject shall be considered thereat. Each Council member shall be given such notice that may be required by State law, but in no event less than twelve hours' notice, of the time and place of such special meetings. All meetings of the council shall be public as prescribed by State law.

AMENDMENT NO. 3 – RESOLUTION NO. 41479

A RESOLUTION AND PROPOSITION to amend Article IX, Section 9.1 of the Tacoma City Charter to allow sale or other transfer of City-owned waterfront property only to other public agencies with a

guarantee that the property will stay in public ownership and be used only for park purposes, park structures, or open space in perpetuity.

BE IT RESOLVED BY THE COUNCIL OF THE CITY OF TACOMA:

Section 1. That Article IX, Section 9.1 of the Tacoma City Charter be amended to read as follows:

Section 9.1 – Except as otherwise provided in this charter or in state law, the sale, lease or conveyance of real or personal property belonging to the City shall be upon authorization of the Council; provided that machinery or equipment may be leased from day to day on written agreement therefore approved by the City Manager or Director of Utilities, as the case may be, and filed with the Director of Finance; provided further that, the lease of real or personal property for a term of less than a one year period without renewal options shall not require authorization of the Council. Any lease of real or personal property for a period longer than five (5) years shall contain provisions for adjustment of rentals at intervals not to exceed five (5) years. The City ~~shall never may~~ authorize the sale or disposition of any waterfront property belonging to the City solely to public agencies for the guaranteed purpose of perpetual public ownership and public access, to be used for park purposes, park structures, or open space in perpetuity and, subject to the provisions of state law, the City shall not lease waterfront property for a period longer than seventy-five years at any one time. All conveyances, contracts for sale of land owned by the City, and leases of such land for a term of longer than one year, including any renewal options, shall be executed by the Mayor and attested by the City Clerk.

AMENDMENT NO. 4 – RESOLUTION NO. 41474

A RESOLUTION AND PROPOSITION to add a new Section to Article II of the Tacoma City Charter to clarify the priorities and time investment necessary for Council Members to carry out their duties, and authorize the City Council to employ or contract for personnel who will directly report to and advise or assist the Council Members.

BE IT RESOLVED BY THE COUNCIL OF THE CITY OF TACOMA:

Section 1. That Article II of the Tacoma City Charter is amended by the addition of a new section, to be numbered by the City Clerk, and reading as follows:

Section XX – Council Members shall prioritize their City Council work and shall devote sufficient time to fully carry out their obligations and duties, and shall have the authority to employ or contract for personnel who will directly report to and advise or assist the Council Members.

AMENDMENT NO. 5 – RESOLUTION NO. 41475

A RESOLUTION AND PROPOSITION to amend Article III, Section 3.8 of the Tacoma City Charter relating to Planning Commission composition.

BE IT RESOLVED BY THE COUNCIL OF THE CITY OF TACOMA:

Section 1. That Article III, Section 3.8 of the Tacoma City Charter be amended to read as follows:

Section 3.8 – There shall be a Planning Commission, composed of ~~nine (9)~~ eleven (11) members, with such powers and duties as are provided by ordinance. The ~~nine-eleven (11)~~ members shall be residents of the City of Tacoma and be appointed and confirmed by the City Council for terms of three (3) years each. The Council must ensure the appointments provide for diversity of Planning Commission members. The diversity should include race, ethnicity, gender, backgrounds, experiences, and expertise and must not be over-represented in any areas of expertise or experience. The membership of the Commission shall include One member shall be appointed by the City Council for each of the five council districts. The Council shall appoint to the four remaining positions an individual from each of the following:

~~(a) the development community;~~

~~(b) the environmental community;~~

~~(c) public transportation, and~~

~~(d) a designee with background of involvement in architecture, historic preservation, and/or urban design.~~

A majority of the voting members of such Commission shall constitute a quorum for the transaction of business. The Commission shall be authorized to adopt rules for the transaction of business not inconsistent with this charter or ordinances of the City of Tacoma. ~~Said Planning Commission members shall serve without pay.~~

AMENDMENT NO. 6 – RESOLUTION NO. 41473

A RESOLUTION AND PROPOSITION to amend Article II, Section 2.35 of the Tacoma City Charter to expand the term limits for the Mayor and Council Members elected in or after year 2025 from 10 consecutive years to three consecutive full four-year terms; provided that, the new expanded term limits will not apply to the Mayor and Council Members holding office during the 2025 general election.

BE IT RESOLVED BY THE COUNCIL OF THE CITY OF TACOMA:

Section 1. That Article II, Section 2.35 of the Tacoma City Charter be amended to read as follows:

Section 2.35 – Commencing with any Mayor or Council Member first elected in 2025, No person shall be allowed to serve on the Council for more than ~~ten (10)~~ three (3) consecutive ~~years full~~ terms, either as a Council Member, Mayor, or combination thereof; provided that, no person holding elected office for the City at the time of the general election in 2025 shall be allowed to serve on the Council for more than ten (10) consecutive years, either as a Council Member, Mayor, or combination thereof.