



City of Tacoma

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COUNCIL STANDING COMMITTEE PROCESS MANUAL

Council Standing Committees
(Revised November 2022)

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Table of Contents

<u>Topic</u>	<u>Page</u>
Legislative Process.....	3
Council Committees Overview	4
Council Standing Committees	5
Community Vitality and Safety Committee.....	6
Economic Development Committee	7
Government Performance and Finance Committee	8
Infrastructure, Planning, and Sustainability Committee	9
Roles and Responsibilities of Standing Committee Staff	10
Other Meetings/Forums.....	11
Committee of the Whole.....	11
Study Session Purpose.....	11
Weekly Report Purpose	12
City Council Agenda Process Introduction.....	13
Appendix A: City Council Presentation Guidelines	16
Appendix B: Study Session Presentation Guidelines	17
Appendix C: Committee, Boards and Commission Alignment.....	18

1

Legislative Process

The first step in the legislative process for staff requests is to determine whether the issue is policy-related or administrative. Administrative issues do not require Council deliberation and are not necessary to bring forward to committee or study session. Following is a table that delineates some policy and administrative matters. For counsel, please consult the appropriate standing committee liaison in the City Manager's Office.

Policy vs. Administration (Examples)

Policy	Administration
Enact a budget.	Propose budget. Spend within budgetary limits.
Define the powers, functions and duties of officers and employees.	Fill positions consistent with local ordinances, etc.
Fix the compensation of officers and employees.	Administer payroll consistent with budget and compensation plan adopted by council.
Establish retirement and pension systems.	Administer pension and retirement plan.
Adopt ordinances regulating local affairs.	Implement and enforce ordinances.
Set fines and penalties for violation of ordinances.	Collect fines and enforce penalties.
Enter into contracts above a certain dollar amount.	Propose, manage and enforce contracts. Enter into contracts below a certain dollar amount.
Regulate the acquisition, sale, ownership and other disposition of real property.	Negotiate terms of acquisition and sale of real property; carry out acquisitions and sales.
Decide which governmental services will be provided; adopt budgets for their provision.	Oversee the day-to-day operation of programs and services.
Establish public utilities.	Manage provision of utility services.
Grant franchise for the use of public rights-of-way.	Enforce terms of franchise agreements.
Set tax rates and user fees consistent with state laws.	Collect taxes and user fees.
Approve claims against the city above a certain dollar amount.	Settle claims below a certain monetary threshold; propose settlement of claims; pay claims.
Enter into agreements to accept grants and gifts.	Propose grant agreements and carry out terms.

Note: Adapted from Municipal Research and Services Center, <http://www.mrsc.org>.

2 Council Committees Overview

As reflected in the Council Rules of Procedure, the Council Standing Committees will consist of four members and an alternate. The Mayor shall annually appoint and the Council shall confirm the membership of each Committee. Each Standing Committee elects a chair and vice-chair. The Standing Committees do not have power or authority to commit the City or to take any binding action on behalf of the whole Council. Standing Committee reports are made on a rotating basis at the Council's regular business meetings on Tuesday evenings on a schedule set by the City Clerk's Office at the beginning of each year. Discussions of upcoming topics may also take place at the Committee of the Whole meetings or at study session as requested by Council and/or staff liaisons.

Functions and Purpose of Council Standing Committees:

- ▷ The Council Standing Committees shall provide a link between the Council and City departments and other bodies responsible for the implementation of Council policies and plans.
- ▷ The Council Standing Committees shall provide a means for monitoring the implementation of Council policies and plans, and for identifying needs for new policies.
- ▷ Council Standing Committees express their actions as recommendations to the Council as a whole. No activity of a Council Standing Committee may serve to limit information reaching the Council in a timely way, or to substitute its judgment for the actions of the Council as a whole.
- ▷ Council Standing Committees shall review proposed ordinances and resolutions referred to them and make recommendations regarding their adoption to the City Council.
- ▷ Receive briefings from assigned Committees, Boards and Commissions and work toward aligning the work of these entities with that of City Council Strategic Goals and Priorities.
- ▷ Review and forward applications for Committees, Boards, and Commission seat vacancies, as listed in Appendix C, to City Council for appointment.

3 Council Standing Committees

As reflected in the Council Rules of Procedure, the Council Standing Committees will consist of the four committees listed below. The Standing Committees, as noted below, have specified legislative oversight responsibilities, but do not have power or authority to commit the City or to take any binding action on behalf of the whole Council.

- ▷ Community Vitality and Safety Committee Page 6
- ▷ Economic Development Committee Page 7
- ▷ Government Performance and Finance Committee..... Page 8
- ▷ Infrastructure, Planning and Sustainability Committee Page 9
- ▷ Roles and responsibilities of Standing Committee Staff Page 10

Community Vitality and Safety Committee

The purpose of the Community Vitality and Safety Committee is to vet and develop policy and provide recommendations to enhance the living standards and safety of residents of Tacoma.

Policies, issues, programs and services may include, but are not limited to:

- Police services including but not limited to:
 - crime prevention
 - traffic safety and enforcement
 - community policing
 - gang reduction, and
 - homeland security
- Fire services including but not limited to:
 - fire safety and suppression
 - emergency medical services
 - emergency management & preparedness, and
 - South Sound 911
- Code compliance and community based services including but not limited to:
 - neighborhood improvement initiatives
 - mental health services and delivery systems
 - adult and youth social service program delivery systems and facilities issues
 - civil and human rights compliance
 - homelessness prevention services
 - community health services and initiatives (Tacoma-Pierce County Health Department)
 - domestic violence, and
 - crime free housing initiatives
- Education programs, services and initiatives, including but not limited to:
 - regional university and college partnership(s) and planning, and
 - Tacoma public/private school(s) partnership(s) and planning
- Human Services
- Homelessness
- Affordable Housing
- Neighborhood councils
- Municipal Court
- Public libraries

Council Membership, Meeting Times/Locations, and Staffing Information can be found:

[Community Vitality and Safety - City of Tacoma](#)

Economic Development Committee

The purpose of the Economic Development Committee is to vet and develop policy and provide strategic direction to leverage the city's unique assets and resources to foster economic vibrancy and employment for residents of Tacoma.

Policies, issues, programs and services may include, but are not limited to:

- Economic development and redevelopment issues and opportunities including but not limited to:
 - arts and cultural access
 - business climate policies and processes
 - business recruitment and retention
 - international affairs, trade and development
 - City owned and managed venues including Greater Tacoma Convention Center, Tacoma Dome, Cheney Stadium, Pantages & Rialto Theaters, and Theater on the Square
 - Multi-Family Housing Limited Property Tax Exemption Program, and
 - military and veteran affairs related to economic development
- Investment and development climate issues including but not limited to:
 - permitting process improvements related to economic development
 - mixed use development
 - tourism, and
 - hospitality
- Workforce development
- Job creation
- Capital projects planning and development (not right of way)
- Parking
- Events, festivals and special events
- Port of Tacoma
- Foss Waterway Development
- Neighborhood Business Districts

Council Membership, Meeting Times/Locations, and Staffing Information can be found:

[Economic Development - City of Tacoma](#)

Government Performance and Finance Committee

The purpose of the Government Performance and Finance Committee is to vet and develop policy and provide strategic direction to ensure quality, equity, sustainability, accountability and efficiency in government services.

Policies, issues, programs and services may include, but are not limited to:

- Financial management and policies, including but not limited to:
 - government performance, accountability, process improvements
 - municipal integrity and transparency, and
 - compensation and benefits
- Taxes, rates and fees, including but not limited to:
 - utility rates, financing, and bonding – Tacoma Public Utilities and Environmental Services
 - fees charged by City departments (e.g. permitting fees, fire inspection fees)
 - city business licenses
 - tax related issues including exemption, deductions and credits, and
 - franchise fees, agreements, and issues with pole attachments
- City employment standards – paid leave and minimum wage
- Audit related issues including entry and exit conferences
- City workforce development
- Risk management
- Information technologies
- For-hire transportation regulations
- Customer Support Service

Council Membership, Meeting Times/Locations, and Staffing Information can be found:

[Government Performance and Finance - City of Tacoma](#)

Infrastructure, Planning, and Sustainability Committee

The purpose of the Infrastructure, Planning and Sustainability Committee is to vet and develop policy and provide strategic direction to improve the transportation systems and natural and built environment of Tacoma.

Policies, issues, programs and services may include, but are not limited to:

- Transportation related matters, including but not limited to:
 - planning of the city's transportation network infrastructure
 - public transit systems
- Neighborhood-based infrastructure issues, including but not limited to:
 - traffic calming
 - sidewalks, and
 - streetlights
- Environmental sustainability issues and plans, including but not limited to:
 - open space habitat management
 - urban forestry and critical areas
 - environmental matters related to Tacoma Public Utilities, and Environmental Services Utilities
 - climate change
- Planning issues including but not limited to:
 - growth management
 - historic preservation
 - building codes, and
 - land use and zoning
- Infrastructure funding programs, plans and City facilities
- Parks and recreational facilities
- Environmental matters related to Environmental Services
- Local Improvement Districts (LIDs)

Council Membership, Meeting Times/Locations, Staffing can be found:

[Infrastructure, Planning, and Sustainability - City of Tacoma](#)

ROLE	RESPONSIBILITIES
Executive Liaison	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Pre-meeting: monthly calendar review with committee chair and Staff Support; review presenters' materials • During meeting: track issues requiring administrative action or follow-up; advise on process and procedure as appropriate • Post meeting: ensure questions raised at committee are answered and information is distributed to all committee members and staff
Staff Support	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Pre-meeting: track committee scheduling; Pre-meeting: gather materials from presenters; coordinate with clerical staff to assemble meeting agenda and advance materials; distribute committee advance materials • During meeting: coordinate display of presentations; record committee member questions and follow up tasks • Post meeting: coordinate with Executive Liaison to provide any follow-up Information or materials • Monthly: prepare committee report out to the City Council per the committee report rotation schedule; distribute to chair • End of year: assemble the committee annual report • Maintain City of Tacoma webpage for Standing Committee
Clerical Support	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Pre-meeting: ensure public meeting notification; publish materials to Legistar; gather and set up presentations; prepare scripts for motions and other actions • During meetings: take notes and minutes; provide technical support • Post meeting: assemble meeting minutes for approval; • As needed: Committee, Boards and Commissions (CBC) candidate interview coordination; notify CBC applicants of their application status

4

Other Meetings/Forums

Committee of the Whole Purpose

The purpose of the City Council Committee of the Whole is to serve as an opportunity for Council to discuss systemic, City-wide issues in a less formal setting, as well as to share activities of the Council standing committees. The Committee of the Whole will meet as a Special Meeting of the Committee as necessary and publicly noticed. The Committee of the Whole will not hear staff reports except as requested by Council Members as part of a standing committee report.

Citywide issues assigned to Committee of the Whole include but are not limited to:

Budget and Finance <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Biennial Budget• Financial & Budget Policies• Tax Policies	Planning <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Strategic Plan• Comprehensive Plan (regional planning, Growth Management Act)	Labor Negotiations, Contracts, Benefits & Compensation and Retirement Benefits	Utility Rates and System Wide Issues
Policy Review	Policy Issue Assignments	Federal and State Legislative Policy	City Charter Issues
Rules of Procedures of the City Council	Legislative Acts of the Council		

Study Session Purpose

The purpose of the City Council study session is to provide a forum for information sharing and discussion. Issues appropriate for study session include but are not limited to initial introduction of the system-wide topics above, which may then be followed by a Committee of the Whole discussion, assignment of the topic for policy analysis to a standing committee, or request by Council for further discussion or alternative action. Issues may be scheduled for study session by staff request to the City Manager's Office (subject to approval) or by Council request. Presenters may include staff members and other organizations. A study session worksheet (Appendix A) needs to be completed by staff members at least 16 working days prior to the scheduled date, or similar information provided to the City Manager's Office for the Weekly Report and study session calendar.

Weekly Report Purpose

The Weekly Report to the City Council from the City Manager is distributed each Thursday unless suspended by the City Manager for scheduling issues such as a holiday. The City Manager’s Executive Assistant prepares the report or “weekly letter” as some call it. In the report, staff provides information on ongoing agenda issues—such as substitute ordinances or continued items; responds to council inquiries; provides a “heads up” and opportunity for input on non-Council committee issues; notifies council of various meetings and other communiqué. The report also includes weekly updates to the study session and Council Forecast Schedule.

5

Agenda Process

City Council Agenda Process Introduction

The business conducted by the City Council at its regular meetings is the formal process by which policies and procedures are enacted. Therefore, the material contained in the agenda must be accurate, complete, understandable, and timely.

The following information is intended to assist staff with the preparation of the items to be included on the agenda which are considered by the City Council at City Council meetings. As staff prepares a significant number of items for the City Council's consideration, it is imperative that there be a thorough understanding of the significance of this process.

The City Council meets Tuesday at 5:00 p.m. The City Charter requires that the City Council hold regular meetings at least 46 times each year; therefore, a total of 6 meetings per year may be canceled by the City Council (Section 2.8). Special meetings may also be held by the City Council (Section 2.8).

Note: The most up-to-date agenda process, form, instructions and timelines can be found on the City's Sharepoint at [City Council Resources - Home \(sharepoint.com\)](#), Documents, Policies and Procedures or under Standard Documents.

Agenda Definitions

Agenda Coordinator(s): Individuals designated and supported by the Department Director to prepare City Council Agenda materials in coordination with other departmental staff, track department's items through the process as necessary, see that draft material is reviewed in a timely manner, and be the initial contact for any questions that may develop prior to the item being placed on the Agenda. These individuals must work closely with their Department Director and departmental staff, as well as staff from the Finance Department, the City Clerk's Office, the City Attorney's Office, and the City Manager's Office.

Consent Agenda: The Consent Agenda contains routine items which are not controversial in nature and which do not need further discussion. The Consent Agenda may include: approval of City Council meeting minutes; Resolutions setting dates for hearings, approving final plats, and other similar actions. See Rules of Procedure of the City Council.

Executive and Closed Session: That portion of a City Council meeting from which the public may be excluded so that the City Council may discuss certain areas specifically excepted from the Open Public Meetings Act relating to litigation, property, or personnel matters.

Ordinance: A legislative enactment of a municipality that has general application within the community. An Ordinance may impose a tax or fees, amend the Code, appropriate budget, or enact a citywide

regulatory requirement. An Ordinance becomes effective 10 days* following publication by the City Clerk.

Emergency Ordinance: An Ordinance in which the City Council declares that an emergency exists, requiring that the Ordinance takes effect immediately upon publication, and needing at least six City Council Member votes for passage.

Public Hearings: Public hearing dates are set by Resolution. A brief description of the hearing, outlining the purpose and specific information relative to the hearing, must be submitted to the City Clerk's Office by the Thursday, 8 working days preceding the hearing. This description will appear in the Agenda.

Quasi-Judicial Action: A matter which determines the legal rights, duties, or privileges of a specific party in a hearing or other contested case proceeding, as opposed to a legislative or policy-making action. These actions generally involve land use matters. Council Members are not allowed to discuss quasi-judicial actions with the parties outside a City Council meeting, as they are serving as judges in these matters.

Resolution: A Resolution is an expression of the will of the City Council or an authorization to engage in certain conduct, such as authorizing the City Manager to sign a contract. It does not directly affect or impose a requirement on the entire community. The City Council must approve all contracts over \$200,000, or any amendment that causes a contract to exceed \$200,000. Resolutions become effective immediately upon passage. If there is a question as to whether an Ordinance or Resolution is necessary, please contact the City Attorney's Office before assembling Agenda materials.

Standing Committees: The Council created standing committees to explore new policy recommendations for consideration by the full City Council. Each Council Committee is composed of four Council Members and one alternate as confirmed by a resolution of the Council.

Study Sessions: The City Council Study Sessions are held every Tuesday at noon. During Study Sessions, the City Council hears reports by staff and other invited guests and provides an opportunity for the City Council to ask questions and discuss the issue presented. A study session request form should be completed when requesting a date to make a staff presentation (see Appendix A). Read Appendix C, Staff Presentation Guidelines, for presentation tips.

City Council (sharepoint.com)

Agenda Preparation

Upon approval of the Department Director, the process to submit an item for the Agenda is begun. Agenda Coordinator shall:

- Work with departmental staff to begin the process with the preparation of a City Council Action Memorandum
- Include all backup material relative to the request. This information assists the Legal Department in preparing the appropriate Resolution/Ordinance. In addition, some of the material may be printed in the Agenda with the Resolution/Ordinance (e.g., maps, exhibits, Weekly Report item).
- Obtain a signature from the Department Director once the request and backup materials are complete and ready to leave the department.
- Enter the City Council Action Memorandum and all backup material into Legistar.

Appendix A: Presentation Guidelines

City Council Meeting

Give a frank, honest and concise presentation.

- Focus on the facts.
- Keep sentences to about 12 to 15 words long whenever possible.
- Keep the entire presentation to approximately 2 - 4 minutes long.
- Avoid jargon and acronyms. Since you are speaking in a sense to the television viewing audience, which may not know anything about your topic, try to use clear and simple language.
- Read out full names instead of relying on acronyms that aren't in common language.

Use a simple three-part format.

- Greet the Council and state your name and department.
- Briefly summarize the action (see below for tips on possible items to cover).
- End with an offer to answer questions.

Briefly summarize the action.

- **State the purpose of the legislation in simple terms.** Explain what the resolution or ordinance would do. Describe its practical effects. **Do not re-read the resolution or ordinance title**, which would repeat what the city clerk has already read.
- **Describe prior Council reviews.** Recap what information the Council has received—the City Manager's Report to the Council, study session presentations or other reports that show that the Council has been studying the issue at length.
- **Provide context/purpose.** What is driving the need for the legislation? Is it state-mandated? Part of a larger project? A continuation of an initiative started years ago? An improvement to an existing program or a new one? Were other options explored? If so, why did you choose this option/approach?
- **Explain budget impacts, if any.** Where does the money come from—which funds? Is this within previously allocated costs?
- **Describe changes, if any.** Briefly share any changes made to the resolution or ordinance during the process and the purpose of those changes.
- **Predict the end results.** What outcomes do you expect as a result of this legislation? How will it affect community members or businesses? If it's an improved or new service, how many people will be served? If it's a building or other project, when will it start and conclude?

Appendix B: Presentation Guidelines

Study Session

- Keep presentations to **30 minutes** per issue if you're sharing a study session with one other topic or an hour on a longer topic to allow sufficient time for Council discussion.
- Begin by stating **why you are presenting**. There are four primary possibilities—upcoming Council action on the issue/project, Council request for information, need for Council direction and staff-generated general informational update.
 - ⇒ Is there a Council **action** pending? When will that come before the Council?
 - ⇒ Did a specific Council Member **request** the study session topic? Does it relate to a specific issue of interest the Council is exploring?
 - ⇒ Is it primarily an **informational update** for the staff to keep the Council posted on the status of an issue or project?
 - ⇒ Will you request Council **guidance or action** on a staff recommendation(s)?
- Cover the essentials in your presentation including, as appropriate:
 - ⇒ **Context/purpose**. What is driving the need for the legislation? Is it state-mandated? Part of a larger project? A continuation of an initiative started years ago? An improvement to an existing program or a new one? If so, why did you choose this option/approach?
 - ⇒ **Alternatives**. Were other options explored? What are the pros and cons of the option(s) being presented?
 - ⇒ **Community interest**. What has the community shared about its concerns or support? How did you capture public input? Are there community partners?
 - ⇒ **Budget impacts**. Where does the money come from? Is this within previously allocated costs?
 - ⇒ **Policy impacts**. Were other options considered? What are the impacts of any policy changes on other programs? Are there intergovernmental issues or ramifications?
 - ⇒ **End results**. What outcomes do you expect? If it's an improved or new service, how many people will be served? If it's a building or other project, when will it start and conclude?
- **Elaborate on PowerPoint text slides**. You should not simply read off what the audience members can read themselves.
- **Keep number of lines on slides** to seven. Overburdened slides are harder to read. You can use short, three- to four-word phrases and lists instead of full sentences.
- **Provide handouts**. If possible, provide a cover sheet that summarizes main points: Summary of the topic, timeline, next steps, and options before Council, etc.

APPENDIX C: List of Committees, Boards, and Commissions by Recommended Standing Committees

<p>Community Vitality and Safety</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none">•Community's Police Advisory Committee•Human Rights Commission•Human Services Commission•Tacoma Area Commission on Disabilities•Tacoma Community Redevelopment Authority•Commission on Immigrant and Refugee Affairs•Tacoma Housing Authority* (Mayoral appointment)•Tacoma Public Library Board* (Mayoral appointment)
<p>Economic Development</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none">•Arts Commission•City Events and Recognitions Committee•Tacoma Creates Advisory Board•Equity in Contracting Committee•Greater Tacoma Regional Convention Center Public Facilities District * (Mayoral appointment)
<p>Government Performance & Finance</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none">•Audit Advisory•Board of Ethics•Civil Service Board•Public Utility Board
<p>Infrastructure, Planning, and Sustainability</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none">•Board of Building Appeals•Landmarks Preservation Commission•Planning Commission•Sustainable Tacoma Commission•Transportation Commission