

## League of Women Voters of Tacoma-Pierce County Observer Corps

Name of Agency: Tacoma City Council Date: August 14, 2018  
Observer Reporting: Carol Rikerd \_\_\_\_\_ \*Length of Meeting: 2 3/4 hours  
Members Present/Absent: Councilwoman Hunter joined by phone, Mayor Woodards presiding  
Others Present (i.e., media, public): \_\_\_\_\_

**Content (What is being discussed):** i.e., *Did they approve some **action**? Does anything **relate to League priorities or positions**? If so, **do you recommend** local league action? Was **access** to materials for certain agenda items limited or excluded from you? Was background material available to the public?*

Agenda, meeting details and video are available online at:

<https://cityoftacoma.legistar.com/MeetingDetail.aspx?ID=582825&GUID=66D8600E-034C-4920-8773-43E0E3F503D3&Options=&Search=>

### Public Comments:

Speaker asked for a no vote on resolution 40085, because mitigation of development by corporations is not equally applied. Specifically the speaker cited lack of mitigation of impact of emergency services being considered when developments such as NW Detention Center are in the planning phases.

Speaker noted the new sustainability infrastructure plan lacked full access for wheelchair dependent bus and transit users. Specifically there are no plans for marked road spaces, where no sidewalks exist, for electric chair users who need demarcated lanes to get to public transit or may need to be mobile after dark.

These 2 speakers were off topic for this meeting, but were allowed to speak. Council Member asked that comments be limited to agenda resolutions.

Three speakers addressed Resolution 40086, requesting an amendment that new housing developments being built under the 12-Year Limited Property Tax Exemption be forbidden to limit wireless services in new developments to a single provider, specifically Comcast. Speakers testified that Comcast was undermining the ability of residents in apartment buildings to choose their service, and that this is a widespread problem in apartment buildings. Speakers said free choice of provider was critical to them, considering the city developed wireless/cable system is preferred by many. Speakers cited an example of an ordinance passed in California that addressed this problem, asking the Council to adopt it.

### Resolutions of interest:

RES40086 Presentation made explaining 12 unit market rate and affordable housing project to be built under the 12-Year Limited Property Tax Exemption Agreement. Three of the 12 units would remain at affordable rate over time rather than market rate.

Mayor Woodards asked the City Attorney about the request for an amendment to forbid exclusive wireless contract with one vendor. He stated that the agreement with the developer met the existing legal requirements with this plan and the Council could not amend the plan at this point. The Attorney also explained current state property law does give the property owner the right to exclude multiple wireless providers to install equipment on their property. He explained the legal issues which would need to be addressed. A Councilman asked about the three affordable rate units, and how many must be maintained over time, and the enforcements in place to maintain this rate.

The documents about the affordable rates are on the website, under the agenda for Aug. 14. The current affordable rate listed in these documents is \$950 per month. (Note – Federal SSI Disability payment for 2018 is \$750, with a possible state supplement of \$40.) see \* below

### Citizens' Forum:

Mayor Woodards read and explained the rules for speaking.

One commenter asked for a change in the council meeting process, asking that people who wanted to address a specific agenda item be allowed to speak timely as that item is reached in the meeting.

Five speakers asked the Council to work on legislation to prevent a landlord or multi-family building from signing an exclusive wireless contract with one provider. Several stated that building owners or managers had taken kickback payments from Comcast.

Six commenters spoke against the LNG plant, most citing safety concerns, several asking the interim regulations in place for the sub-area planning group to be extended to stop development. One commenter from PNG spoke about the safety of the plant design.

Twenty-two people spoke about the mass eviction of residents at the Merkle Hotel on Pacific Avenue in downtown Tacoma. The building has been sold to a developer who intends to upgrade the building to market rate housing.

The cost of monthly rent at the Merkle has been about \$400. The stories of the tenants and their representatives highlight the lack of resources for relocation. Each asked the city for help. Council members listened with sympathy, and empathy. None were able to respond with suggestions for resources or financial help. The city may have no more funds available after helping the displaced in the mass eviction of the Tiki building, sold for renovation to market rate housing earlier this year.

**The contrast of the closing of the Merkle, losing housing affordable by the poorest among us, with a tax exempt new building citing “affordable” units at \$950, offers a stark explanation of the origins of homelessness in Tacoma and Pierce County.**

**One commenter pointed out that while anyone** leaving a dog unattended in any space where heat, cold, or lack of water could harm them is an offense under state law, there is no legal penalty for evicting a tenant into homelessness. Several commenters stated awareness of suicides in the building since the eviction notices. One person spoke to the issue of social justice, that she and others were being removed to allow the new owner to move in ‘another class of people’. **This testimony is highly pertinent to the LWV Homelessness study.**

**Public Meetings of interest to League** – i.e., *Were there any public meetings announced that you think League members may be interested in attending and/or becoming involved with the issue?*

**Process & Protocol (Observations about participants, conduct, and procedures of the meeting, and appropriate accommodations for disabled in sight hearing and physical):**

i.e., Did the members appear to have done their “homework”? Were members courteous to each other and the public? How does the group respond to your presence?

The Council was very courteous to speakers. The Mayor and a Council Member both addressed the audience about courtesy when listening to speakers expressing opinions differing from their own. One person became disruptive at the end of the meeting, and was verbally shut down with as much civility as possible under the circumstances.

The Mayor also told speakers, who had thanked the Council for being allowed to speak, that the Council was appreciative of citizens talking about their concerns at the Public Forum meeting and thanked them for speaking.