



OBSERVER REPORT

**Tacoma City Council Special Meeting
February 25, 2020, 3:00 pm**

Observer: Lydia Zepeda

Present: John Hines, Robert Thoms, Lillian Hunter, Conor McCarthy, Kristina Walker
Absent: Victoria Woodards, Keith Blocker, Catherine Ushka, Chris Beale

Strategic Planning work session to identify priorities for the coming year.

Over 20 people watched the facilitated discussion of the council members present discussing three strategic priorities in Tacoma: Health, Civic Engagement, and Perceptions of Safety/Quality of Life.

Three other priorities (jobs, access to housing and transportation) were discussed at a prior meeting. The housing discussion focused on affordable housing and subsidized housing, there was no discussion of shelter space.

The priorities will be presented at a March 2 directors meeting, and will be incorporated into planning and budget priorities at a March 17 meeting.

The following are the goals discussed at this meeting:

1. Health: improve health outcomes and reduce inequities
 2. Problems identified by the Council include:
 - a. lack of access to food, jobs, transportation, education, (inequities) and perceptions of safety
 - b. violence and its effects
 - c. environmental quality - poor air and reducing contamination in Puget Sound, dealing with ramifications of past decisions SARCO, EPA, Clean Air Agency, Neighborhoods
 - d. limited access to quality healthy care/hospitals/clinics - opioids, mental health
 3. Counselor Thoms stated that no one lacks of access to medical care, but there is not enough mental health and opioid treatment.
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2. Civic engagement: the goal is to have Tacoma residents believe they can have a positive impact and trust public institutions
 - a. Problems identified by the Council include:
 - b. There are a lack of understanding of the processes, lack of trust, lack of transparency, and accessibility to information and
 - c. There are barriers that limit participation, e.g. the structure, timing, and location of council meetings do not support diverse representation, the young in particular are underrepresented
 - d. There is a lack of trust and a belief that participation is not meaningful e.g. due to racism and failure to acknowledge that lack of representation is a problem

3. Perceptions of safety and quality of life: the goal is to improve perceptions about Tacoma. The facilitator noted that Homelessness was the highest rated issue in the community survey, but the priorities of the Council do not address it directly but in pieces within the 6 different priorities

Problems identified by Council members included:

- a. Tacoma crime rates are not high by national standards but it is perceived as having a crime problem. Furthermore, perceptions of neighborhood safety within Tacoma are not tied to actual crime rates by neighborhoods.
- b. Property crime is high, often related to drug use
- c. There is insufficient police presence and response
- d. Homelessness is linked to trash and filth on streets, and negatively impacts the business district, parks and neighborhoods. Street camping is a problem.
- e. There is a lack of safe community design: lack of Safe Routes to schools, blight/lack of curb appeal.
- f. There are poor perceptions of quality of life in neighborhoods: a lack of a vibrant economy, lack of amenities and retailers, and problems retaining college graduates.

Council members were then asked to identify their priorities:

John Hines:

- Improve understanding of processes and government
- Improve perceptions of government
- Improve access to food, health, jobs, education

Robert Thoms:

- Implement safety plans
- Create safe pathways off the streets
- (unable to understand because he was not speaking to the audience)

Lillian Hunter:

- Shorten timelines for government processes
- Simplify initiatives to engage community
- Find out where opioids are coming from

Conor McCarthy

- Increase/adapt shelter capacity
- Install safe infrastructure in schools
- Increase air monitoring

Kristina Walker

- Every neighborhood should have a grocery store within walking distance
- Increase access to government processes
- Eliminate barriers to participating in council meetings

The facilitators will work with the other four Council members to identify their priorities.
Then work with Directors to create a plan to achieve indicators in coming year.
The Directors will use these priorities to formulate the budget asks.

March 17 meeting - present a plan for the Council to discuss.