

**TUMWATER GENERAL GOVERNMENT COMMITTEE  
MINUTES OF VIRTUAL MEETING  
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**CONVENE:** 8:00 a.m.

**PRESENT:** Chair Michael Althausser and Councilmember Leatta Dahlhoff.

Excused: Councilmember Joan Cathey.

Staff: City Administrator Lisa Parks, City Attorney Karen Kirkpatrick, Community Development Director Michael Matlock, Finance Director Troy Niemeyer, Water Resources, and Sustainability Director Dan Smith, Planning Manager Brad Medrud, and Land Use and Housing Planner Erika Smith-Erickson.

**APPROVAL OF MINUTES  
GENERAL  
GOVERNMENT  
COMMITTEE, MARCH 13  
2024:**

**MOTION:** **Councilmember Dahlhoff moved, seconded by Chair Althausser, to approve the minutes of March 13, 2024 as published. A voice vote approved the motion.**

**2025 COMPREHENSIVE  
PLAN PERIODIC  
UPDATE – COMMUNITY  
SURVEY RESULTS:** Manager Medrud reported the non-scientific survey was an initial effort as part of the Community Engagement Plan for the Comprehensive Plan Periodic Update process. Although the survey captured a wide variety of responses, the presentation will focus on important issues.

The Community Engagement Plan includes opportunities throughout the update process for both the community and individual stakeholders to participate in the update process. The plan identifies various tactics, strategies, and platforms to inform and consult with stakeholders throughout the update. Moving forward, the process will incorporate flexibility to ensure outreach occurs to members of the community.

The purpose of the survey was to inform the community about the update and ways to become involved. The survey provided an opportunity for staff to seek feedback on specific issues and elements, as well as to provide some insight as to how the community receives information. A postcard was mailed to 22,000 addresses in the City in late fall 2023 announcing the availability of the online survey. The survey opened in November 2023 and closed on February 14, 2024. The survey generated 975 responses compared to a similar survey in 2016 of only 120 responses.

Approximately 80% of the respondents reported living in the City

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with 25% living in the City less than five years. A majority of the respondents have lived in the City more than 11 years. A majority of the respondents live in a single-family home. Most of the respondents (68%) were homeowners, 10% are renters, and 20% did not answer the question or did not live in the City. Statistical data from Thurston Regional Planning Council's (TRPC) Profile reflects that 58% of the community owns their homes and 42% are renters. Survey responses were reflective of more homeowners and the need to improve outreach to renters. Staff is pursuing some strategies to improve outcomes.

Approximately 40% of the respondents work in the City, 10% reported owning a business in the City, and over 37% reported an annual household income of over \$125,000. The area median income for the City is \$102,000.

Manager Medrud reported more females completed the survey than males reflecting a higher percentage of females compared to TRPC statistical data. In terms of race and ethnicity, the results compared favorably to TRPC Profile statistical data. Most of the respondents were aged between 35 to 65 years with those less than 34 years old considerably less. Most of the respondents were married with both children and had no children. Respondents reporting as single were underrepresented compared to other City data. Results on education tracked closely with TRPC statistical data with a high number of college-educated community members living in the City.

Respondents were asked to provide feedback on how they receive information and personal preferences for receiving information. Basic questions asked respondents about the best times for engagement. Based on the survey results, staff plans to schedule open houses on Wednesday and Thursday evenings. As part of the work on the update of the Housing Element, staff is reaching out to individual stakeholders representing various groups, such as developers, housing service providers, and other important groups supporting affordable housing and reducing homelessness. It is likely different results will be generated. Staff also recognizes that scheduling one meeting in the evening would not meet the need for everyone, which speaks to seeking other outreach opportunities to attract as many different audiences as possible. Respondents reported their preferred ways to communicate with the City included email and telephone. A majority of the respondents preferred to attend virtual meetings versus in-person meetings. Respondents reported email as the primary source of learning about community information followed by other community members, the City's website, social media, direct mail and utility bill inserts, and newspapers.

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Manager Medrud reviewed the results of questions on City services, quality of life, critical issues facing the City, and the City's greatest assets. Respondents rated the City well in police and fire services with parks and recreation following. However, roads, sidewalks, and bicycle lanes were not rated as high. Because of the amount of construction occurring in the City and the frequency of interaction of those services by the community, the ratings were lower with other provisions of services rating average or better.

Councilmember Dahlhoff commented on the high number of "not sure" and whether it is possible to infer that the respondent did not have a need nor had experience with the subject. Manager Medrud said it is possible to infer that many respondents had no experience with permits or programs for seniors as well as whether those programs and permits were needed by the respondent at this time, or they were unaware of the services.

Respondents rated parks, police services, and fire services higher than roads, sidewalks, and bicycle lanes, which speaks to other comments conveyed to staff independent of the survey. The survey asked respondents to rate Tumwater on quality-of-life factors. In terms of shopping opportunities, housing options, and streets and roads, the response was overall average or less than the other quality of life questions. Other issues rated as high concern are critical areas, crime and public safety, housing costs and rent, and homelessness with jobs and the economy, racism, and equity rated lower as a concern.

Manager Medrud reported common themes from written responses on the City's greatest assets included:

- Parks, landscape, trees, proximity to recreation, community events
- Small town feel and central location
- Schools and community
- Police, fire, government, and crime prevention
- Not many homeless encampments
- Historical background

The survey included questions about quality of life now and in five years, housing, growth strategies, topics of greatest interest for the periodic update, top three priorities, and other comments and ideas that City leadership should hear about. The question on "How would you rate the overall quality of life in Tumwater today?" generated a response of 71.66% as excellent or good. Interestingly, the question on "Looking ahead 5 years from now, how do you expect to rate the quality of life in Tumwater?" generated a response of only 62.53% as excellent or good.

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A question on different growth strategies the City should pursue generated the following responses:

- 27.84% - Encourage development near transit services
- 45.85% - Provide more options to get around without a car
- 22.22% - Allow for higher density development
- 61.87% - Increase open space or green space in urban areas
- 49.47% - Support the development of affordable housing
- 68.19% - Encourage walkable and bikeable communities
- 57.78% - Protect environmentally sensitive areas
- 41.17% - Prepare for climate change
- 45.73% - Diversify & increase job and business opportunities

A question on topics of most interest generated the following responses:

- 48.45% - Affordable housing
- 31.96% - Climate and environment
- 44.67% - Economic development
- 34.02% - Transportation
- 14.78% - Utility services
- 24.57% - Other

The top three priorities ranked by respondents are (1) police, fire, and crime, and public safety, (2) housing, and (3) economic development. Comments included reducing homelessness, prioritization of public safety and reducing crime and drugs, hiring more firefighters, police, provide programs for the homeless, more programs for special needs or family needs, maintain a clean City, and improving schools.

Councilmember Dahlhoff asked whether the responses pertaining to improving schools could be shared with the Tumwater School Board. Manager Medrud affirmed the information would be helpful to share with the School Board. Additionally, staff is scheduling meetings with school staff and could share the responses at that time.

Responses for housing included:

- Reducing sprawl
- Keeping small town feel
- Having more affordable options for owning/renting
- Creating more middle housing
- Improving building permit process
- Creating affordable senior housing

Responses for economic development included:

- More local shops/restaurants
- Redevelop the brewery

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- Create a downtown
- Create a more uniform building code/theme
- Create more jobs
- Bring in and attract more employers and industries
- Diversify business
- Create more community spaces for events/venues

When asked how respondents believe the current housing situation is on a scale of 0 to 10, where zero is “not a problem and ten is “a crisis,” the average survey response was 5.5. The survey response does not match other survey results, such as affordable housing ranked as one of the most important things for the City to consider.

A number of the survey questions focused on housing, services (important components of the Comprehensive Plan update), and whether the City offers a mix of housing and services that encourages residents to continue living in the community at every stage. The responses ranged from Yes, No, No Opinion, or Not familiar with what Tumwater offers. Many of the respondents reported they were not aware of what Tumwater offers. Written responses provided more insight:

- Not enough housing for seniors, retirement homes, fixed income, or assisted/independent living
- Need more middle housing and mixed development – with options to buy duplexes/condo/smaller houses
- Not enough affordable housing – rent or owning. Rentals are too high priced, and people cannot save to buy houses
- Smaller more affordable single-family residences or multifamily units that could be purchased
- Concerns about homelessness and crime in public places/parks

Manager Medrud said the survey generated written comments about concerns of high-density housing, overcrowding of schools, lack of infrastructure to support growth (roads and utilities), and population growth. There were also concerns surrounding short-term rentals, and private companies purchasing housing and using them as rentals, as well as ideas for controlling the rental market and prices.

Councilmember Althauser referred to comments on controlling the rental market and prices, as some of the comments appear to reflect concerns that the City is not actively working to control rental prices or that possibly, the concerns reflect that the City is meddling by offering tenant protections to help control the rental market. Manager Medrud advised that based on responses to the survey, the feedback

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spoke more to rental prices with some concerns about the mom-and-pop rental markets and other issues. Most of the concerns surrounded rental costs.

Manager Medrud reported a number of comments that spoke to anti-growth and development, keeping single family and not building more apartments, and more housing would not solve homelessness. Other housing considerations addressed level of traffic, increasing impact fees, streamlining and creating a faster permitting process, halting the increase in property tax to incentivize more affordable housing, providing more behavioral health services and treatment centers, and concerns about housing affordability for all income and age groups.

Manager Medrud encouraged the committee to review the 227 survey responses to a question asked of respondents to provide additional comments or ideas they would like City leadership to hear. The responses were varied.

Manager Medrud said the response rate was much higher than anticipated. The survey was an online survey versus the 2015 survey, which required respondents to fill out a survey. The availability on the City's website likely generated a higher rate of responses. Staff was also pleased with the response rate, as the survey was lengthy. Some of the broader themes conveyed included homelessness and safety, preserving the small-town feel, reducing sprawl, preserving and creating open spaces, redevelopment of the brewery, creating a downtown area, providing more options for multimodal transportation, and more affordable housing options for different income groups and ages.

In comparing the demographic results of the Community Survey to the TRPC Community Profile, next steps for staff include more efforts to reach out to the following, among other groups:

- Renters
- Those making less than area median income
- The BIPOC community
- Eighteen to thirty-four years old
- Those single with no children at home

Next steps on the update of the Housing Element are outreach to non-profit groups, schools, realtors, renters, housing workgroups, and other potential groups to form a stakeholder group with better representation of the community when collecting input. Eight meetings have been scheduled with different groups. The meetings will serve to inform staff of other groups to include. Staff will work with the stakeholder group to serve as a sounding board as the update of the Housing Element progresses.

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Discussion ensued on recent actions by Regional Housing Council (RHC) to form two committees with positions on each committee assigned to either a resident or an employee within each partner jurisdiction. Chair Althauser noted that one of the two positions for Tumwater has not been filled. The RHC appointed a Tumwater resident to the Homeless Services Committee but has not appointed a Tumwater resident to the Affordable Housing Committee. A former appointee was unable to continue serving because of work commitments.

Councilmember Dahlhoff referred to the Council's strategic goals and priorities that speak to reviewing compensation for City boards and commissions. She inquired about the possibility of considering compensation for stakeholder groups. Chair Althauser advised that the RHC is compensating members of the two committees. Manager Medrud explained that in terms of the specific stakeholder group, staff does not have the capacity or the direction to provide compensation; however, it is subject to direction by the Council.

Manager Medrud reported on the joint City Council and Planning Commission tour scheduled on Tuesday, August 13, 2024 focusing on transportation. A number of Open Houses are scheduled in-person with a separate online component starting the day of the open house and remaining active for two weeks:

- Wednesday, May 29, 2024 – Housing
- Wednesday, July 31, 2024 – Climate
- Wednesday, October 2, 2024 – Development Code

The committee commented on how the information will be beneficial moving forward, verification of an entire spectrum of information at a given moment in time, and considering future opportunities to explore options for housing as many of the comments were contradictory. Some respondents were concerned about density while other respondents wanted to prevent rural sprawl. Members suggested the information would also benefit the Council and questioned the possibility of scheduling a similar review during a work session. Manager Medrud said staff has not scheduled a review but could if the committee believes it is important to share the information with the Council. In lieu of a work session, staff could provide the same presentation materials and survey results to the Council.

**2025 COMPREHENSIVE  
PLAN PERIODIC UPDATES  
– HOUSING TOUR  
FOLLOW UP:**

Chair Althauser reported the tour held the previous evening included the Council, Planning Commissioners, staff, and some members of the public. The tour visited different neighborhoods in Olympia and Tumwater to view different housing options to assist in the proposed

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changes to the Housing Element in the Comprehensive Plan. Several areas of interest included the triplexes on Tumwater Hill comprised of three-story units. The group walked through the housing complex to view that particular type of density. Although previously allowed to develop under the City's code, the state recently enacted changes that would allow that type of development in most areas of the City.

Manager Medrud affirmed the need for the City to update development regulations to reflect new state law.

Chair Althauser said the discussion also spoke to implementation of design guidelines adopted eight years ago. Many of the questions asked were about the applicability of design guidelines and how the guidelines differ for commercial development. Some members in his group were somewhat skeptical in terms of "missing middle" partly because of the public conversation that occurred in Olympia and strong feelings conveyed during that conversation. During the tour, he believes some of those concerns were alleviated to some degree.

Councilmember Dahlhoff shared that the themes conveyed by her group centered on the number of participants who have larger homes, and that downsizing was impractical because of the expense; however, many also spoke to the benefit of retaining their homes as their adult children returned home because of the cost of housing was unattainable. One participant shared that they were able to locate a starter home for over \$400,000. The group also considered accessibility in terms of multistoried units. The discussion focused on ways to retain community members with a quality of life in Tumwater regardless of their age while also meeting density goals.

Manager Medrud shared information on the intent to complete all Comprehensive Plan policies and regulations concurrently at the end of 2025. Staff discussed options to initiate discussions with acknowledgment of the need to provide examples before exploring changes in policies. He complimented Planner Smith-Erickson for her efforts in organizing and identifying the different areas during the tour.

**SERVICE PROVIDER  
AGREEMENT WITH EXP  
FOR THE CLIMATE  
ELEMENT OF THE 2025  
COMPREHENSIVE PLAN  
PERIODIC UPDATE:**

Manager Medrud reported the City received a grant from the Department of Commerce to fund a consultant to assist in the development of the Climate Element. The City completed the Request for Proposal process and selected EXP. The committee is requested to recommend placement of the service provider agreement on the April 16, 2024, City Council consent calendar.

**MOTION:**

**Councilmember Dahlhoff moved, seconded by Chair Althauser, to place the service provider agreement on the April 16, 2024, City**

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**Council consent calendar for consideration. A voice vote approved the motion.**

**SERVICE PROVIDER  
AGREEMENT WITH  
FEHR & PEERS FOR  
THE  
TRANSPORTATION  
PLAN OF THE 2025  
COMPREHENSIVE  
PLAN PERIODIC  
UPDATE:**

Manager Medrud reported the City received a grant from the Department of Commerce to help defray costs to develop the Transportation Plan. The City completed the Request for Proposal process and selected Fehr & Peers. The committee is requested to recommend placement of the service provider agreement on the April 16, 2024, City Council consent calendar.

Manager Medrud reviewed the funding sources of \$100,000 from the State Department of Commerce Periodic Update grant and \$100,000 from the State Department of Commerce Climate grant to support the 2025 Comprehensive Plan periodic update. The rest of the funding for the project is from the general fund. The total cost of the contract is \$ 304,925, with \$200,000 from grants.

**MOTION:**

**Councilmember Dahlhoff moved, seconded by Chair Althausser, to place the service provider agreement on the April 16, 2024, City Council consent calendar for consideration. A voice vote approved the motion.**

**ADJOURNMENT:**

**With there being no further business, Chair Althausser adjourned the meeting at 9:58 a.m.**

Prepared by Valerie L. Gow, Recording Secretary/President  
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