CALL TO ORDER, PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE, AND ROLL CALL

Mayor Nikki Bufford called the special meeting to order at 6:00 P.M. and led the Pledge of Allegiance. Councilmembers David M. Viafore, Shannon Reynolds, Brett L. Wittner, Hunter T. George, and Joe Barrentine were present.

Councilmember Mauer-Smith was absent and excused.

Councilmembers Viafore, Reynolds, and George attended the meeting virtually.

PRELIMINARY 2027 BUDGET – 1st BUDGET WORK SESSION

Finance Director Deskins presented the 2027 Preliminary Budget General Fund overview and highlighted significant changes, including increased property tax and EMS levy revenues, sales tax collections, utility taxes, municipal court fees, investment interest, and state assistance.

Councilmember George requested additional information regarding EMS levy revenues and their contribution toward the Tacoma Fire/EMS contract.

Finance Director Deskins highlighted General Fund revenue changes, noting increases in the property tax line, retail sales tax, and other tax revenues. Finance Director Deskins highlighted anticipated increases in retail sales tax revenues and decreases in building permit revenues relating to the Whittier Elementary School Replacement Project.

There was a brief discussion on the non-compete fees with the City of Tacoma.

City Department Directors provided a brief overview of their 2026 departmental accomplishments and 2027 budgetary changes.

- City Manager Masko stated that there are no major changes to the Administration budget and highlighted full staffing levels.
- Court Administrator Olivarez reported anticipated changes associated with the photo enforcement program. There was a brief discussion on potential increases in court caseloads, additional staffing needs, and establishing a special revenue fund for photo enforcement revenues and expenditures.
- City Manager Masko reported on the Legislative budget and highlighted that there were no major changes.
- Finance Director Deskins reported that Finance will continue with a status quo budget and no new projects or staffing changes.
- City Manager Masko reported on the Legal Services budget and highlighted a decrease in prosecution contract costs without the Ruston Court contract.
- Public Works Director Bemis reported on the City Hall columns' restoration, upcoming facility painting needs, anti-graffiti options for the public restrooms, and the Time and Temperature sign.
- Finance Director Deskins reported on the proposed increase to the Information Systems budget and highlighted the replacement of network firewalls, professional services, and software licensing costs.

- Police Chief Celis reviewed the Police Department budget to include the photo enforcement program, increased dispatch fees, overtime, police liability insurance, and ERR contributions. Council discussions included police liability insurance costs, updated ERR replacement schedules, and funding projections. There was a brief discussion on the proposed increase in jail expenditures.
- City Manager Masko reported on the Planning and Building budget and highlighted no significant changes.
- City Manager Masko reported on the Animal Control budget. There was a brief discussion on inviting the Humane Society representatives to a Council meeting to discuss the City's concerns and the contract.
- Parks and Recreation Director Grover reported on the Recreation Department budget, including programming, community events, the pool, and parks. Council discussions included the community center maintenance plan, the Community Events Specialist position, replacement pool cover, and the Parks, Recreation, and Open Space Plan.
- Councilmember George requested information regarding year-to-year library reimbursement requests.

Finance Director Deskins reported on a projected General Fund operating surplus of $308,000 and said Council would receive a budgetary requests list at the October 19, 2026 workshop.

Finance Director Deskins reviewed the Park Bond Debt Service, Park Bond Capital, REET, and Cumulative Reserve Funds. She highlighted debt service obligations and stated that there were no proposed capital or cumulative reserve expenditures for 2027.

There was a brief discussion on the Police guild contract and its impact on the budget.

Council briefly discussed the City's holiday tree options. There was Council consensus to plant a new living tree and explore temporary alternatives.

ADJOURNMENT

Councilmember Barrentine MOVED to adjourn the meeting at 7:26 P.M., seconded by Councilmember Wittner.

The Motion Carried (6-0).

Nikki Bufford, Mayor

Arlette Burkhart, City Clerk