

Tacoma Permit Advisory Group

Virtual meeting

Meeting #38 - August 17th, 2022, 2:00pm

Task Force Members in attendance: Layne Alfonso, Clinton Brink, Jim Dugan, Michael R. Fast, Justin Goroch, Mandy McGill, Claude Remy, John Wolters

Excused: Ben Ferguson

Absent:

2:06 Welcome

2:10 Approval of July Minutes

- Quorum for attendance was not reached and July minutes were not voted on. Technical difficulties occurred with the new zoom link and not all members were in attendance at the same time. July minutes will be voted on at September's meeting.

2:12 Quick updates:

- John Wolters put together a list of common parking problems and solutions that was distributed to [Tacoma Permit Advisory Group](#) (TPAG) members on 8/3/2022. Members would like to continue to encourage these discussions so advancements can be made.
 1. Solid Waste containers require 4-foot **clearance** on all sides when set out for service.
 2. Solid waste containers must be placed on private property when **set out for service**.
 3. Sites located within Mixed Use Centers and within 500-feet of a **transit stop** can reduce parking requirements by 25%.
 4. There is partial **parking credit** for restored parking spaces on the street with the installation of bulb-outs with angled or perpendicular parking.
 5. In Mixed Use Centers (20) 450 square foot apartments, or half the total number in the development, are **exempt from parking requirements**.
- Chris Johnson (City of Tacoma Staff) will now be the point of contact for TPAG.
- Planning and Development Services is having modifications with workload and change in staff. At the next leadership meeting it may be proposed to change TPAG to a bi-monthly meeting.
- Outreach and recruitment- no updates. When there is an update Corey Newton will distribute to TPAG.
- Lyle Hauenstein and Lewis Griffith from the Solid Waste department joined today's meeting to provide additional insight on requirements related to parking/solid waste.
- Chris Johnson shared PDS is launching a Capital Assets tab in Accela. This will help PDS provide better reporting on private development contributions to new public infrastructure through the

permitting process. For example, linear footage of sidewalk constructed annually. This work was driven in part by earlier conversations with the TPAG.

- Launching soon is a texting option to schedule inspections. This is in addition to scheduling via IVR or calling in. In due course, inspectors will also be getting a new application to provide texting and updates to clients while in the field.

2:25 Parking Related Discussion

One: Clearance

In Chapter 12.09 of the [Tacoma Municipal Code](#) it requires that [solid waste](#) containers have a 4-foot clearance on all sides when set out for service. With this requirement in place, it takes up ample amount of room when in the development stages of a property. Many members are noticing service trucks can safely service waste containers without the 4-foot clearance provided. It is proposed that maybe the distance could be lessened and a change to the code could be considered.

Lyle Hauenstein and Lewis Griffith from Solid Waste explained that those containers being serviced with a boom that extends need to be provided the 4-foot clearance so they can safely service the containers. If the trucks are hitting items when servicing the containers, it is the drivers that take on this responsibility and with each incident this requires a review process. It is not encouraged by the Solid Waste department for drivers to pick up items if the clearance is not obvious.

Some potential changes in coding could be to provide shared containers in residential areas— one large can versus the multiple cans. Shared containers are currently approved for some developments such as triplex's but not for residential collection. However, there are also cons to shared containers as there is no accountability when problems arise. The worry is with a change like that it has potential to cause an even bigger problem than the one being discussed.

It is code to have containers set out for service on private property 4-feet apart and not in the right of way (ROW). A series of photos were shared. The photos demonstrated containers being serviced in the ROW and only 6-8 inches apart. The photos shown were ROW curbside in an alley and then moved back to private property. With this example of containers being set out and not impeding traffic it is questioned why the code cannot be adjusted.

Staff emphasized not all situations are the same. When the drivers are in smaller areas and not an open street or on a curve or a lot of obstruction within close proximity, cans this close significantly slow down the operational efficiency. For example, in a tight alleyway or if there is a car in the way they cannot do the cans. It causes more room for error and will cause the drivers to slow down to be more careful, decreasing efficiencies and increasing rate payer costs as more route drivers would need to be added.

Lewis Griffith oversees reviewing service truck incidents and states there are several a week where a driver has bumped into a fence or a car because they are servicing cans that are too close. The requirement in code is in place to try and not create those situations for the drivers.

TPAG members feel that the [solid waste requirements](#) have now made it almost impossible to develop property. The goal is not to make it more dangerous but to propose compromise and meet in the middle

on clearance guidelines. It is communicated that the ongoing conflict between designs and requirements is what is happening. Members have brought up an issue and they want to know how to go forward with proposing changes.

Lyle Hauenstein went into specifics on how the grippers on service trucks are sending containers into the objects surrounding it. The problem is not just container to container, it is when the grippers try to go in-between and without the appropriate clearance, they push containers into objects. Unfortunately, the service trucks are getting larger whereas the space as not changed from 4-feet even with larger equipment. Commercial grippers are even larger and have larger swing on them as well.

TPAG questions if there someone enforcing the 4-foot rule because it is not shown to be in good practice by the public.

Staff informed the group that drivers do have authority to tag containers that do not meet the requirements – there is also the potential a bin will not be serviced that week if it is not safe.

When developments do not meet the requirements are there options for developers to opt-in to a “carry fee”? (Carry Fee: a contract to pick up Solid Waste materials without the designated space within the development to set out containers).

Solid waste explained that there is an option sometimes, but it must be approved. The apprehension comes when the development is sold, and the new owner doesn't want to pay the carry fee. If the new owner elects standard pick-up services but the area is not developed with the space for this, then the city cannot force new owners to pay the carry fee if they do not wish to have that service.

Members suggested that the carry fee could be addressed by recording it against the title, so it transfers to new owners. Members also proposed a fee for not paying the carry fee could be required on developments with this choice so that the cost is not put on the City of Tacoma once a property is sold.

These would need to be discussions for the legal team on what policies could be put into place. Difficult to enforce as legally the City cannot refuse garbage service due to hazardous material regulations.

TPAG concludes that when one department makes decisions, it affects a lot of City departments, builders, housing supply and creates a cascade of unintended consequences. TPAG uses the example of upgrading the service trucks to bigger trucks now increases requirements on developments for space for service which impedes what can be developed.

Two: Set Out for Service

Per code solid waste containers need to be stored on private property but are staged for pick-up adjacent to the right-of-way. When servicing properties with an alley, Solid Waste is competing with parking spaces oriented perpendicular to the alley. It is proposed to allow solid waste containers to be placed along the edge of the public right of way when set out for pick up. With multiple unit properties it should be standard not a special request or not allowed to set containers in the alley to not take up as much lot area.

Solid Waste explains containers that are in a standard 20ft alley for service becomes a traffic problem as there is not enough room in the alley for containers, service truck, and a car to pass in the space

provided. Another example given is if a container is set behind another person's car and they need to stop in the alley to move the container to leave, this causes another traffic issue.

Regarding solid waste containers there are two routine sizes offered, 90- and 300-gallon bins. TPAG asks if there are any in-between sizes that could be offered? When a development is just over the 90-gallon limit they now must make accommodations for a much larger bin. Lyle Hauenstein from Solid Waste will investigate and get back to the group.

A suggestion for more dense areas to offer a commercial compacter versus all the bins. Due to more developments and denser areas additional options should be available because one size does not fit all situations.

Staff states that some downtown areas are working on getting commercial compactors because the infrastructure does not give enough space to keep containers out of the ROW. There are currently two now in downtown.

Solid Waste described the goal is to keep cost down on the garbage services and to reduce the carbon footprint for weekly or biweekly service. With this in mind, Solid Waste needs to make sure developments are providing the space for the correct number of bins so that the public has an appropriately sized place for all of their waste and that it makes sense for service pickup.

Three: Transit Stop

Code says you can [reduce requirements](#) by 25% for standard parking stalls, not including ADA parking, if a site is in a mixed-use center and it is within 500 feet of a transit stop. Proposed change is to allow that any development within 500ft of a transit stop should be able to reduce parking by 25%-50%. An accessible route (sidewalk) to the transit would still be required.

One concern deliberated would be with Tacoma Public School areas. There are a lot of kids and not having parking spots can cause problems for all the teachers who work there, parents dropping off, parking for sports events, etc. Should have available parking for all the uses that the area is used for.

Should be evaluated by use within the area not just the area itself. So, if someone wants to reduce parking because it has the transit within the 500 feet, but it is not practical to reduce due to the use of the area then it should not be an option.

If we design our cities around parking and cars- we will get people driving everywhere. If we build our city around public parking and biking, then the public will go forward with an increase of this transportation type.

Until Pierce Transit catches up there is going to be a point where there's a parking shortage. The quantity of bus routes and frequency of stops have reduced. If there is more development in areas, then the bus routes will be in more demand and then the bus routes can come back.

TPAG agrees that Pierce Transit should come into a conversation for more insight on the matter.

Four: Parking Credit

If you redevelop an area with curb cuts and you restore the parking places (by removing the driveway) – you do not get any credit for adding on-street parking. If you are in an area that you can provide

perpendicular or 45-degree parking, then you get credit. Members feel this should be the same when parking is restored.

Five: Exempt from Parking Requirements

In mixed-use centers- the first 20 apartments that are 450 square foot or smaller are exempt for parking requirements, except for accessible parking. There are newer transits or transportation opportunities this exemption should be expanded city wide not just mixed-use centers.

It is in mixed-use centers because they are more walkable areas of the city- if it is spread city wide these areas would not have as many options for transport centers.

Why won't the city allow developers to build a product that they can take a chance on in the market – no parking- see if it sells?

Members question why it is a 450 square foot cut off as this allows building more units in a denser space, but regulations say less parking can be provided. They feel this is counterintuitive and parking should not be based off the square foot of units. Members feel if you are close to a transit center regardless of size it should be exempt or have reduced parking requirements. Size should not matter.

How do we decouple parking from the size of housing? We have families to develop for but smaller units are being built because they do not have parking requirements but that will not house families that are in need.

The challenge is that one size doesn't fit all but the city needs something repeatable and efficient to go forward with developments being processed. If each area and situation have changes to the code this will slow down the processing of permits.

3:25 Parking Recommendation Wrap Up

- Goal is to draft an official letter for Council or City Manager on these concerns.
- Lyle Hauenstein will provide Chris Johnson details on waste container size options.

3:27 Future Agenda Topics

- Home in Tacoma for the next meeting.

3:28 Final Comments

- Lyle and Lewis thank you for joining this robust conversation.

3:29 Adjourn