

TO: City Council

FROM: Bob Engler, Councilmember

DATE: September 12, 2023

SUBJECT: National League of Cities Summer Board and Leadership Meeting, Tacoma, WA, July 19-21, 2023

RECOMMENDATION:

1. Receive report.
2. Find that this action is not a project as defined under the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA).

FINANCIAL IMPACT:

No Additional Funding Requested. Direct and indirect costs are included in the Adopted FY 2023-24 General Fund Budget.

BACKGROUND:

The National League of Cities (NLC) hosts a Summer Board and Leadership Meeting each year. The purpose of the summer session is to bring together the organization's leadership with members of five Federal Advocacy Committees to hear federal policy updates and develop policy positions for consideration. Councilmember Engler, who serves on the Public Safety Crime Prevention Federal Advocacy Committee, and Legislative Affairs Manager Mina Layba, who serves on the Energy Environment and Natural Resources Federal Advocacy Committee, attended. The Summer Board and Leadership Meeting was held at the Tacoma Convention Center in Tacoma, Washington on July 19-21, 2023.

DISCUSSION/ANALYSIS:

The Summer Board and Leadership Meeting was as follows:

A. Mobile Workshops

The host city of Tacoma coordinated mobile workshops to showcase local initiatives and programs:

1. How Tacoma is Moving Safety, Mobility, and Sustainability Forward: The walking/light rail tour, led by Tacoma staff, focused on Prairie Line Trail, Pacific Avenue, Pierce Transit's electric buses, and Sound Transit's Link light rail. The tour highlighted viewing public art installations and transportation safety upgrades that are improving mobility options and increasing connections. City representatives emphasized the history of the Puyallup Native American tribe, the shipping industry spurred by the Northern Pacific Railroad Company, and contributions by Chinese and Japanese workers who built the railroad lines through Washington.

2. Hilltop Neighborhood and Transit: Tacoma Councilmember Kristina Walker and nonprofit housing leaders conducted a tour of the historic Hilltop neighborhood. The tour showcased the area's new affordable housing projects supported by a mix of federal and city investments. The tour discussed the preservation of historic businesses and public art installations amid a new light rail extension opening in August 2023. The tour concluded with a visit to the Tacoma Community Arts Center funded by a local short-term art tax.

B. Special Presentations

1. The Importance of Digital Skills: Victoria Woodards, NLC Chair and Mayor of Tacoma, and Broderick Johnson, Comcast Executive Vice President of Public Policy, discussed the importance of digital equity. Speakers expressed that digital equity supports the well-being of the community. Jobs and schools require a digital skill set. To ensure digital literacy begins at a young age, it is important that households are connected to broadband. Comcast/Xfinity offers an Affordable Connectivity Program (ACP), which provides qualified households with a credit of up to \$30-\$70/month towards internet and mobile services. Cities are encouraged to inform residents of the ACP program. Although Comcast/Xfinity is providing an investment, NLC will continue to lobby the federal government for funding to support digital equity.

2. Drone Presentation: Manufacturer BRINC Drone conducted a live demonstration of public safety-grade drones. Drones or unmanned aircraft systems are deployed in emergency situations to provide rapid and efficient assistance. BRINC drones are equipped with various sensors, cameras, and other technology to gather real-time data, perform search and rescue missions, assess disaster areas, monitor hazardous situations, and deliver critical supplies to areas that are difficult for traditional first responders to access.

3. Press Conference and Presentation on NLC's 2023 State of Cities: NLC leaders presented data compiled and analyzed from mayoral "state of the city" addresses from around the country. NLC's Center for Research and Data found the top issues affecting cities are (1) infrastructure – 32 percent; (2) budget and management –

17 percent; (3) public safety – 12 percent; (4) economic development – 11 percent; and (5) housing – 8 percent. NLC will use this data to help shape its lobbying efforts with the White House and Congress.

C. Public Safety and Crime Prevention Policy Committee (PSCP) Meeting

1. Tacoma Police Department: Deputy Chief Paul Junger from the Tacoma Police Department shared how the City of Tacoma's Police Department is working to reduce crime through its Burglary Reduction Initiative and Violent Crime Reduction Plan.

2. Federal Update: NLC PSCP lobbyist Yucel Ors provided a federal update.

- FY 2024 Appropriations: The House majority leadership aims to make deeper cuts to domestic programs except for defense spending. If appropriations bills are not passed by January 1, 2024, the House is considering a short-term stop-gap measure to fund the government into the next fiscal year. Local governments may see a 20 percent decrease in earmarks.

- Reauthorization Bills: (1) Rail Safety – The Senate Commerce Committee passed the Railway Safety Act of 2023 (S. 576). (2) Aviation Reauthorization – Passage of the Securing Growth and Robust Leadership in American Aviation Act (H.R.3935) passed the House with a bipartisan vote. The Senate Commerce Committee is facing delays over flight training requirements for pilots. (3) National Flood Insurance Reauthorization (NFIP) – Despite bipartisan support, The NFIP-RE Act of 2023 (H.R.4349/S.2142) is facing uncertainty with concerns of long-term stability, rate hikes, and increasing costs.

- Pending Legislation: (1) The 2018 SUPPORT Act – This bill aims to tackle the opioid crisis by integrating 28 existing bills from all federal departments. (2) S. 1514/H.R. 3170 or the "Homes for Every Local Protector, Educator, and Responder Act of 2023" or the "HELPER Act" – these bills seek to amend the National Housing Act to establish a mortgage insurance program specifically for first responders, medical technicians, and teachers. (3) Community Broadband Act (HR 2552/S 1197) aims to allow all local governments to own and operate broadband networks but lacks bipartisan support.

3. Review of Public Safety Resolutions: The Committee discussed the public safety issues they will work on to present to NLC's General Assembly during the Congressional Cities Conference. The Committee focused on the following policies:

- Transforming 9-1-1: Committee discussed what is needed to transform the 9-1-1 system to better handle mental health and nonviolent, noncriminal calls for help.

- Mass Shootings: Committee reviewed key measures for dealing with mass shootings, including strengthened background checks, improved coordination and information sharing, enhanced mental health initiatives, increased funding for community policing, and comprehensive emergency response planning.

- Drones as First Responders: Committee acknowledged the value of drone deployment as actual first responders to enhance situational awareness and help save lives, especially in hard-to-reach or hazardous locations.

- Counter Drone Technology: The committee discussed the use of counter-drone technology. The technology provides the ability to detect and disable unauthorized or unsafe drones, using detection methods such as infrared devices, radio frequency systems, and acoustic methods. Mitigation techniques involve interference signals to force drones to land or return to their operators.

- Preventions of Fentanyl and Substance Use Overdoses and Deaths: The committee acknowledged the importance of passing a resolution urging the federal government to provide direct funding and resources to cities, towns, and villages to combat fentanyl and other substance use overdoses and deaths. This funding is essential for cities to develop comprehensive prevention programs, improve access to evidence-based treatment, and strengthen the capabilities of first responders.

4. Next PSCP Meeting: The next PSCP meeting will be at the annual City Summit in Atlanta, GA. The meeting will take place as a pre-conference session on November 15, 2023.

COUNCIL GOAL COMPLIANCE:

Meets the following City Council goal:

B. Provide municipal government leadership which is open and responsive to residents, and is characterized by ethical behavior, stability, promoting public trust, transparency, confidence in the future, and cooperative interaction among civic leaders, residents, business representatives, and staff, while recognizing and respecting legitimate differences of opinion on critical issues facing the City.

PREPARED BY: Mina Layba, Legislative Affairs Manager