



**BUSINESS OF THE CITY COUNCIL
YAKIMA, WASHINGTON
AGENDA STATEMENT**

Item No. 9.B.
For Meeting of: May 12, 2026

ITEM TITLE: Process to put fluoridation of water on the ballot

SUBMITTED BY: Sara Watkins, City Attorney

SUMMARY EXPLANATION:

City Council directed staff to put a session on a future agenda to determine whether the Council would like to put a vote to the people to end fluoridation of water in the City of Yakima water system.

The City of Yakima decided to fluoridate its drinking water after a vote of the people in 1999. The petition required fluoridation in "all large water systems which supply potable water within the city limits of the City of Yakima...." Fluoridation started in the year 2000. Because the initiative and law was passed by initiative under the Yakima Charter, it goes back to the voters to repeal the prior initiative language and law.

The City will also have to follow Washington State law regarding discontinuing fluoridation of water supply. RCW 70A.125.210 states in full:

A public water system that considers commencing or discontinuing fluoridation of its water supply on a continuing basis shall notify its customers and the department of its intentions at least 90 days prior to a vote or decision on the matter. The water system shall notify its customers via radio, television, newspaper, regular mail, electronic means, or any notification methods which effectively notify customers at least 90 days prior to any meeting at which the vote or decision will occur. Any public water system that violates the notification requirements of this subsection [section] shall return the fluoridation of its water supply to its previous level until proper notification is provided under the provisions of this section.

Department of Health requirements for discontinuation of fluoride treatments requires notification to the Office of Drinking Water at least 90 days prior to a vote or decision on the matter as well.
<https://doh.wa.gov/community-and-environment/drinking-water/fluoride-drinking-water>.

Therefore, before the vote can be taken on putting this issue on the ballot, the City must provide notification to its customers more than 90 days before the Council meeting where that vote is going to be taken.

Staff recommends the following:

1. Determining if the City Council wants to move forward with an evaluation of whether to create an initiative for the voters to decide whether to discontinue fluoridation of drinking water.

2. If the answer to that is “yes”, determining if the City Council wishes to move forward immediately, or wait until the next time a City Council position, or City matter is on the ballot. The next City Council primary, if needed, is in August of 2027, and the next City general election is in November of 2027.
3. Based on the time frame desired by Council, staff can send out the required notification approximately 120 days before a meeting where the matter will be on the agenda for decision.
4. On the agenda on the date of decision, there would be a section for public comment, as normal, and then a separate section for public comment specifically on this issue, scheduled similarly to a public hearing, on the issue of fluoridation.

Included documents:

Resolution No. 99-79
RCW 70A.125.210

ITEM BUDGETED: No

STRATEGIC PRIORITY 24-25: N/A

RECOMMENDATION:

ATTACHMENTS:

[Resolution No. 1999-079.pdf](#)
[RCW 70A.125.210.pdf](#)