

Civil Service Commission Candidate and Election Information Session

City Clerk and Civil Service Commission (CSC)

September 2026



City of Seattle

Introductions:

Agenda:

- Overview
- Civil Service Commission
- Commissioner Election
- Questions?



Overview



Purpose: Civil Service System

- Covered positions are recruited through open competition, hired and promoted because of their aptitude, skills, and knowledge, and are demoted, suspended, removed from office, or discharged only for cause.
- Civil service in local government exists to curb favoritism and remove the coercive pressures that once caused public employees to contribute money, time and loyalty to partisan political candidates, to the detriment of the important work they do.



Civil Service Rights:

See City Charter Art. XVI, Sec. 3-4

- Open and competitive hiring/promotion processes based on knowledge, skills, abilities to do the work
- Freedom from political coercion in hiring
- Limited probationary periods
- Just cause/due process for discipline and termination
- Appeal higher levels of discipline and other alleged policy violations
- Continued employment (with limited exceptions)

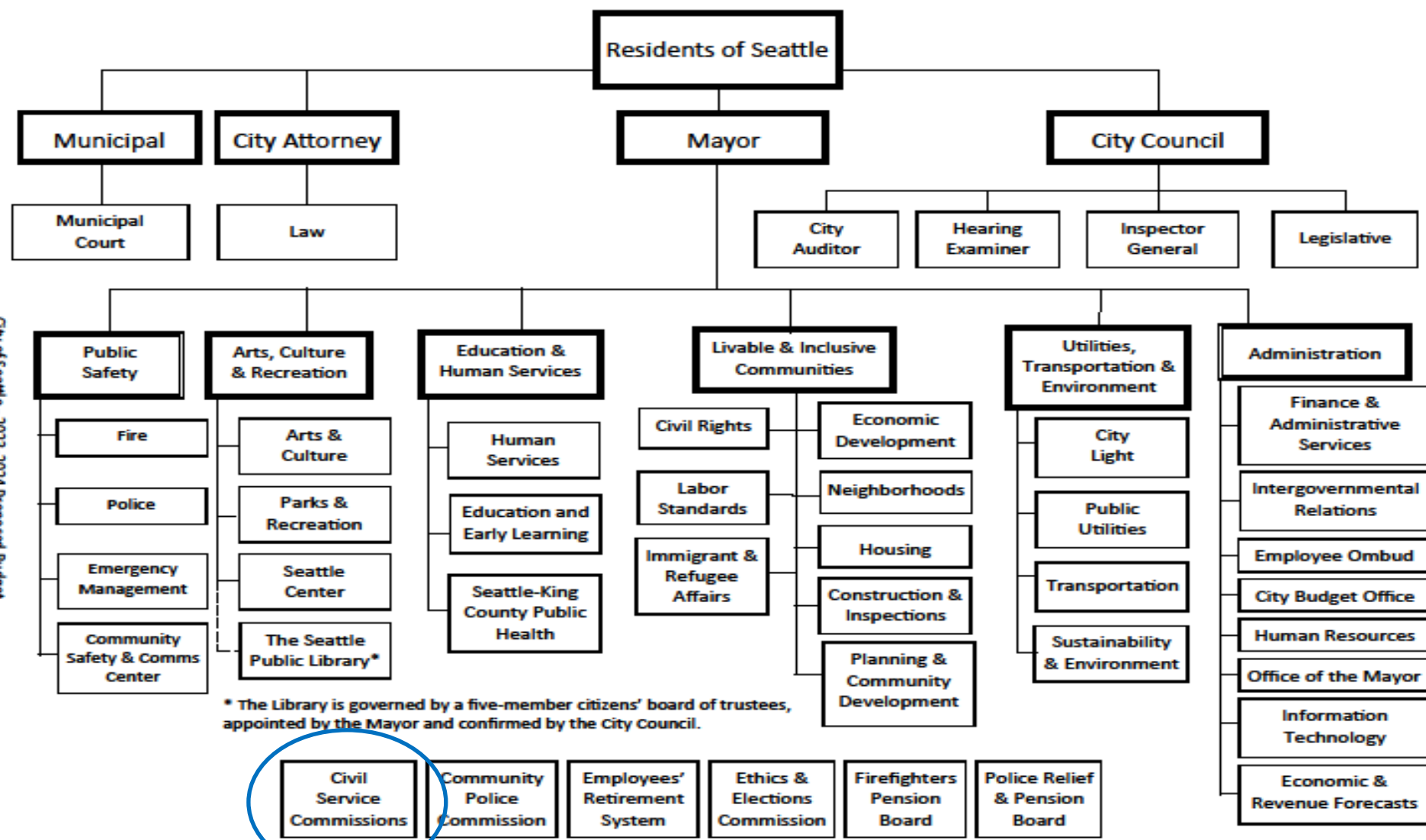
Rights embedded into Rules/municipal law, enforced by appeal process (ultimately decided by independent commission)



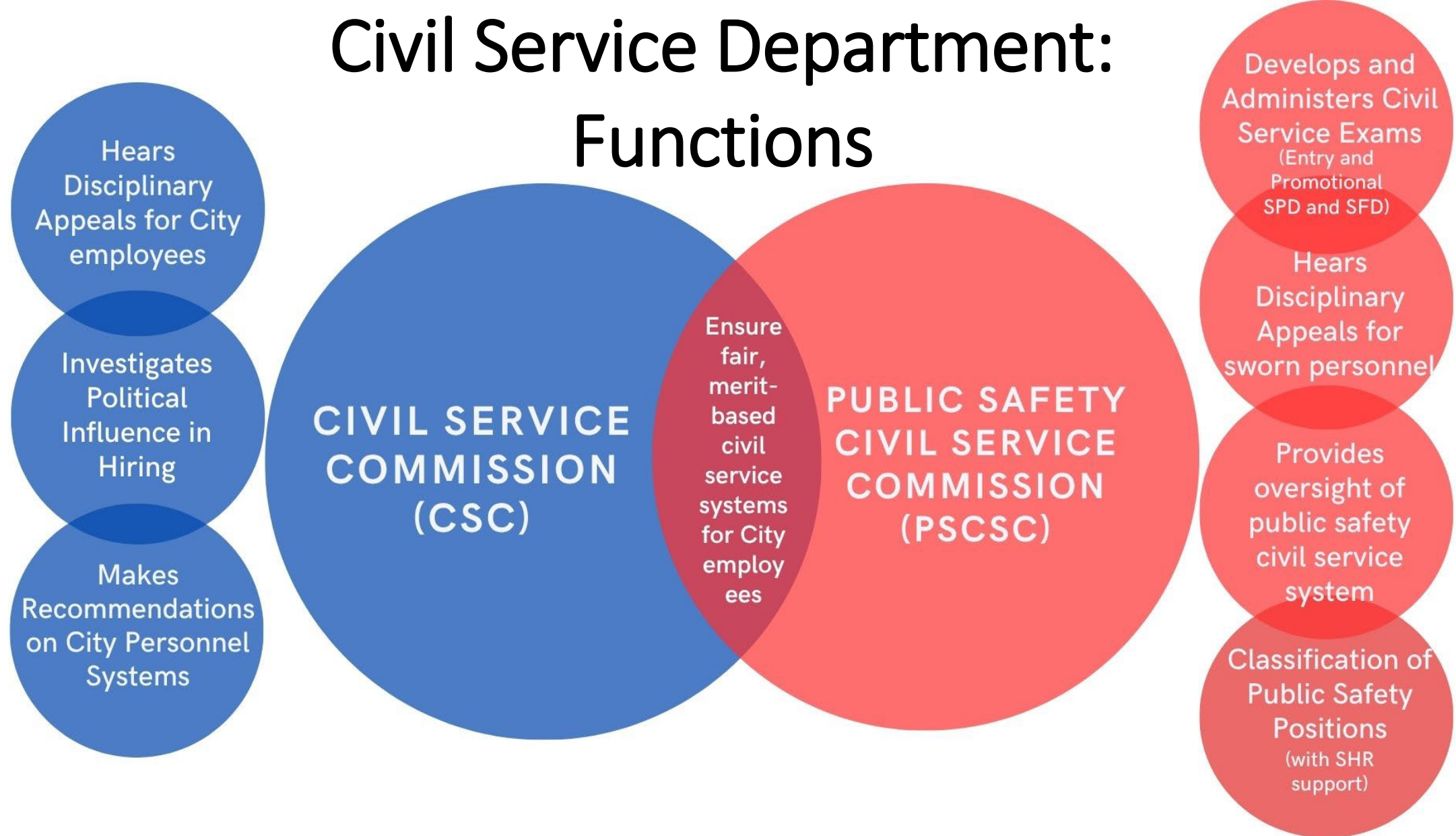
History and Organization

- Established in 1896, re-organized in 1977
- Creates a merit-based system of City employment to hire/retain qualified employees, insulate them from political pressures
- Two systems
 - Civil Service – most City employees (City Charter)
 - Public Safety Civil Service - "uniformed" police and fire (City Charter and State law)
- Housed in Civil Service Department or "CIV"
 - Staffed by ten FTE (most are Exam staff)

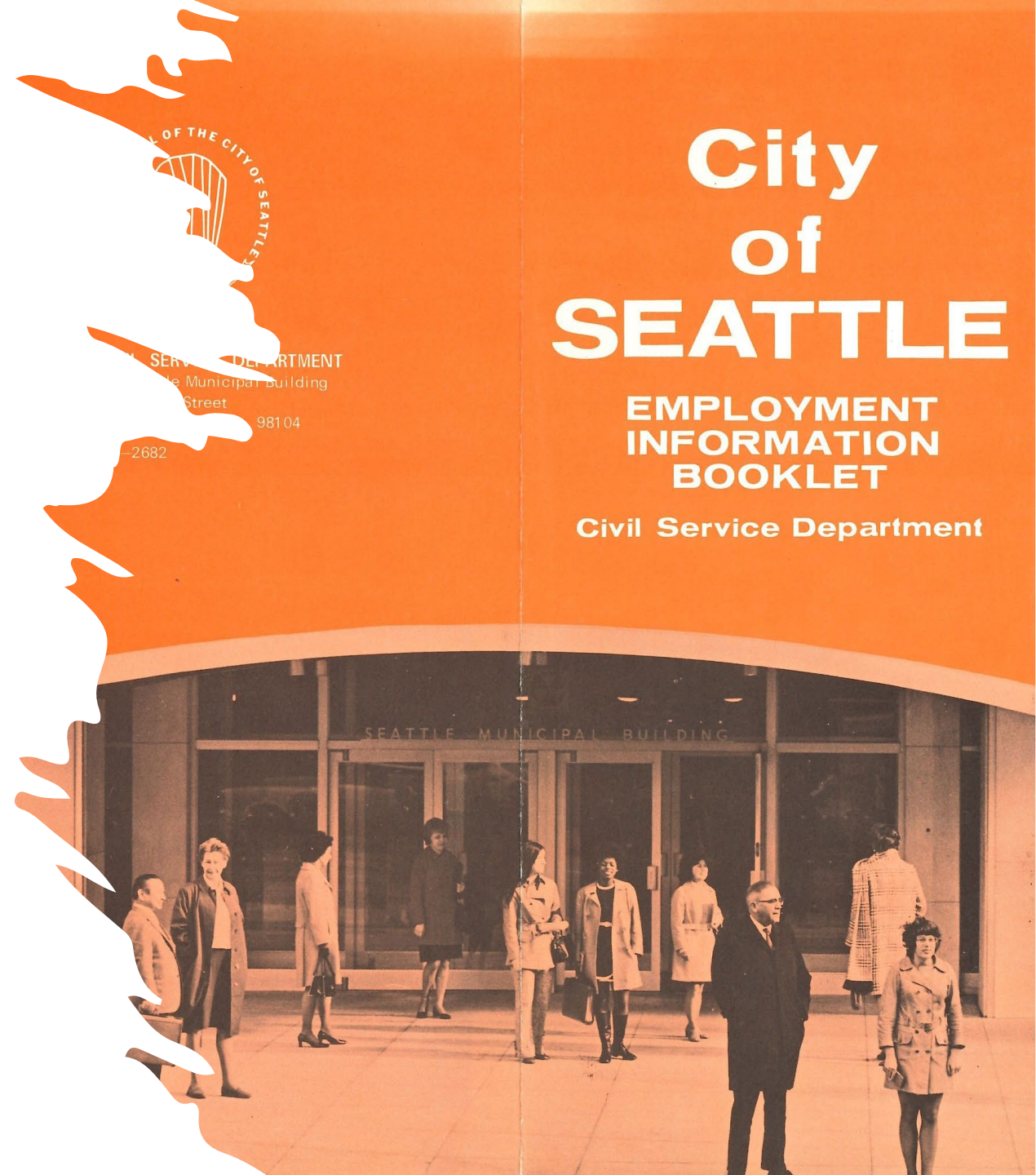




Civil Service Department: Functions



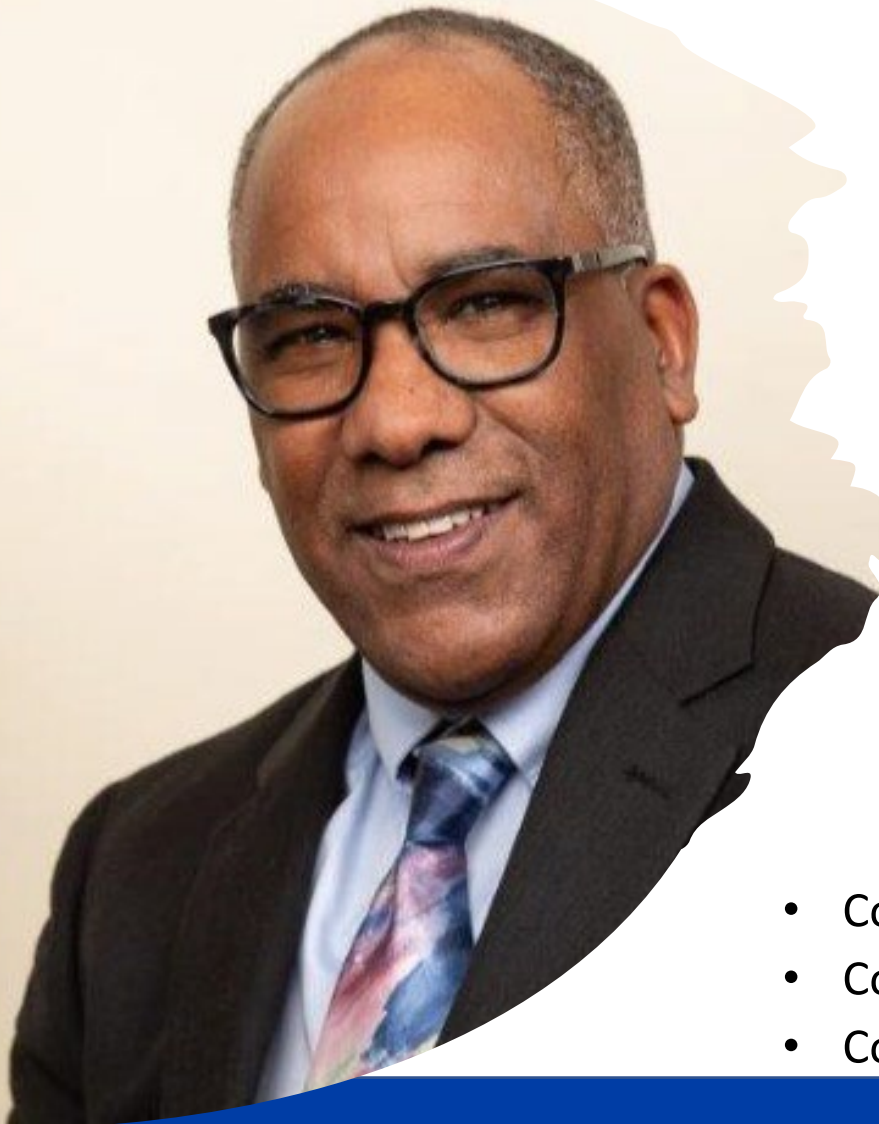
The Role of the Civil Service Commission (CSC)



City of SEATTLE

EMPLOYMENT INFORMATION BOOKLET

Civil Service Department



CSC Commissioners

- Commission Chair Denise Wells, 2025-2027 (City Council appointee)
- Commissioner Steve Zwerin, 2026-2028 (Mayor appointee)
- Commissioners Ray Ceaser, 2024-2026 (employee elected)



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What does the Commission do?

Make Decisions on Employee Appeals:

- Alleged violations of the City Charter, Personnel Ordinance (SMC 4.04), and applicable Personnel Rules
- Most commonly, disciplinary suspensions, terminations, and demotions
- Conduct hearings - administer oaths, issue subpoenas, receive evidence, compel the production of documents, question witnesses at hearings
- Issue remedies, such as reinstatement, backpay, reversal of discipline
- Rulings may be appealed to Superior Court

What does the Commission do? (cont.)

Advocate for a Fair Employment System

- Consider opinions and interests of City employees and stakeholders on matters of the personnel system
- Submit recommendations to the Mayor and City Council related to the City's personnel system
- Review and comment on proposed Personnel Rule changes

Respond to Political Patronage Complaints

- Investigate allegations of inappropriate pressure in hiring applied by elected officials in hiring

What does the Commission do? (cont.)

Oversee Department Business and Collaborate with CIV Staff

- Attend monthly meetings and receive updates about department operations
- Appoint and supervise the Executive Director (jointly with the Public Safety Civil Service Commission)

Time commitment and compensation

- 2-4 hours/month paid time (hearings are not frequent but may last one or more days)
- \$400/month stipend



Attributes of a successful commissioner:

- Ability to put aside personal opinions and apply Civil Service Rules, Personnel Rules, etc.
- Ability to work collaboratively with people from diverse backgrounds and perspectives
- Commitment to objectively review decisions made by higher-level authority
- Willingness to learn about and implement City RSJ and anti-racist practices
- Willingness to collaborate with CIV staff
- Availability to participate in several trainings and workshops



Attributes of a successful commissioner (cont.):

- Ability to remain neutral and exercise independence when making decisions that impact City employees
 - Recognize conflicts of interest and recuse self from such matters as appropriate
 - Observe Appearance of Fairness doctrine
 - Uphold Civil Service Commission as an independent decision-making body
- Understanding or willingness to learn the principles of due process



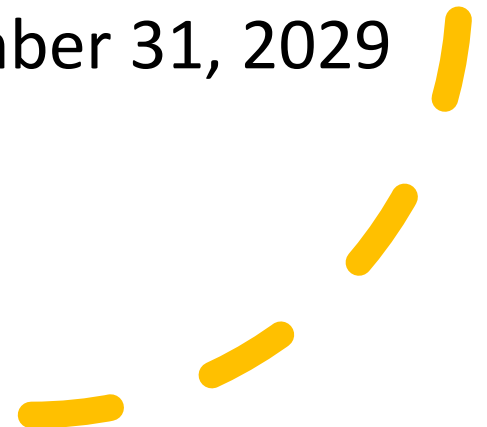
Commissioner Election



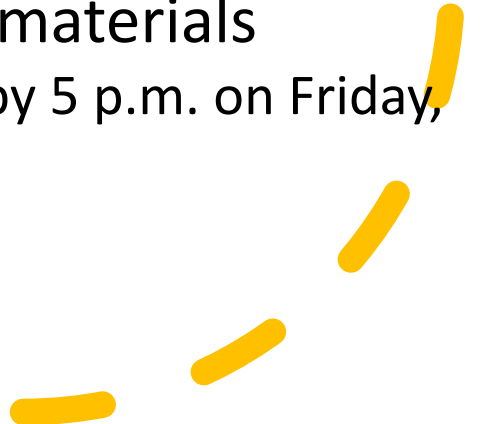
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Commissioner Election & Timeline:

- Any member of the civil service system may declare candidacy and/or vote
- Election is administered by the City Clerk's Office
- Candidacy filing week is October 5 - 9
- Voting occurs November 2 - 6
- Results will be certified mid-November
- Term is January 1, 2027 – December 31, 2029



Declaring Candidacy:

- Complete and submit the Notice of Candidacy form
 - The form must be signed in the presence of a notary public, or the City Clerk or her designee
 - The form must be submitted to the Office of the City Clerk in person, or by mail. The form will not be accepted via email or fax.
 - Forms must be received by the Office if the City Clerk no later than 5 p.m. on Friday, October 9.
 - Candidates may, if they choose, submit a statement of up to 200 words and a 2x3 in. black and white photo to be included with election materials
 - These must be received by the Clerk by 5 p.m. on Friday, October 9.
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Voting



- Voting takes place November 2 – 6
 - Online
 - Paper ballots
- Election vendor administers vote
- Ranked choice voting



Questions



- What questions do you have about the process?
- What questions do you have for Commissioners or CIV staff?



Questions (cont.)



- For questions about the civil service system, or role of commissioners:
sarah.butler@seattle.gov, (206)586-1991
- For questions about the election process, including declaring candidacy and voting:
ann.vuong@seattle.gov, (206)233-3896
- Additional information
 - Commission <https://www.seattle.gov/civil-service-commission/who-we-are/get-involved>
 - Election: <https://www.seattle.gov/city-clerk/city-clerk-services/employee-elections>

