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Seattle Renters' Commission Bylaws
Adopted March 4, 2026

WHEREAS, Ordinance 125280, also identified as Council Bill 118921, was passed by the Seattle City Council (the "Council") on March 20, 2017 and signed by the Mayor on March 31, 2017;

WHEREAS, this measure established the Seattle Renters' Commission (hereinafter "SRC");

NOW, THEREFORE, the SRC shall be governed as follows:

Article I – Establishment and Purpose

1. The Seattle Renters' Commission (hereinafter the "SRC" or the "Commission") was established pursuant to Ordinance 125280, Council Bill 118921, which is codified as Seattle Municipal Code ("SMC") 3.65.
2. The SRC was created to advise the Mayor and Council on issues and policies of importance to tenants in residential properties citywide.
3. The creation of the SRC is a direct expression of the intent of the City to include the diverse perspectives of Seattle's rental population who are directly impacted by a wide variety of issues facing the city. The SRC shall advise the Mayor and City Council on issues and policies of importance to tenants in residential rental properties citywide. The SRC shall offer useful insight and perspectives inclusive of diverse renter voices from across the city that otherwise might not be heard at City Hall without such an intentional and proactive effort.

Article II – Governing Law

1. The SRC shall act in accordance with the intent, rules, and policies outlined in:
 - a. Enabling Legislation – Ordinance 125280, Council Bill 118921, SMC 3.65
 - b. SMC 4.16, Code of Ethics
 - c. Applicable federal, state, and local laws and regulations

Article III – Definitions

The below terms, when referenced herein, are defined as follows:

1. **City:** All incorporated districts within the municipal boundaries of Seattle.
2. **City Council:** The Seattle City Council and their staff.
3. **DON Liaison(s):** The staff member(s) assigned to work with the SRC by the Department of Neighborhoods (DON).
4. **Protected Class(es):** A person or group of people who have a common characteristic protected by law. Per SMC 14.08.020, these characteristics include race, color, creed, religion, ancestry, caste, national origin, citizenship or immigration status, age, sex, marital status, parental status, sexual orientation, gender identity, political ideology, honorably discharged veteran or military status, alternative source of income, participation in a Section 8 or other subsidy program, an individual's actual, potential, perceived, or alleged pregnancy outcomes as defined in SMC

14.04.030, the presence of any disability, or the use of a service animal by a disabled person.

5. **Quorum:** A simple majority of the total number of Board commissioners.
6. **Renter:** As used in SMC 3.65, "renter" means a tenant in a residential rental property.

Article IV – Duties

1. The SRC shall perform under the management and oversight of the Seattle Department of Neighborhoods (hereinafter “DON”), which will provide staff support to the SRC in the form of at least one DON Liaison.
2. The SRC shall work to fulfill its obligations as outlined by SMC 3.65.040:
 - a. Provide information, advice, and counsel to the Mayor, City Council, DON, Seattle Office of Housing, Seattle Office for Civil Rights, Seattle Department of Construction and Inspections, Seattle Human Services Department, and other City departments concerning issues and policies affecting renters, including, but not limited to, housing affordability, transportation access, green and other public spaces, land use, renter protections, public health and safety, education, and economic growth;
 - b. Monitor the enforcement and effectiveness of legislation related to renters and renter protections;
 - c. Provide periodic advice to the Seattle government on priorities, policies, and strategies for strengthening and enhancing the enforcement and effectiveness of renter protections;
 - d. Report on an annual basis to the Mayor and the City Council. The reports shall include an annual work plan, a briefing on the Commission’s public involvement process for soliciting community and citizen input in developing their annual work plan, and updates on the work plan; and
 - e. Meet periodically with other City Commissions, City departments, the Seattle Housing Authority Board of Commissioners, and other community groups and associations, including those representing rental property landlords, to gather information, feedback, and recommendations related to the Commission’s work.
3. The SRC is permitted to adopt rules of procedure, as appropriate, to accomplish its functions.

Article V – Membership

1. Membership and appointments are governed by SMC 3.65, as described below.
2. **Members:** The Commission shall be composed of 15 members (also referred to as “commissioners”).
 - a. Appointments should be made to ensure that varied renter perspectives are represented, including those of renters who identify with or are affiliated with organizations that work with historically underrepresented groups, such as Protected Classes, low-income renters, LGBTQ renters, immigrant renters, renters with felony records, those paying rent

- with assistance, and renters who have experienced homelessness.
 - b. Appointments shall be made, to the extent possible, so that the Commission membership is representative of the city geographically.
 - c. Each member of the Commission must be a renter within the City of Seattle at the time of their appointment and throughout their term.
3. **Appointments:** Members shall be appointed into positions numbered one through 15. Individuals shall be appointed into these numbered positions:
- a. Members in positions one through six shall be appointed by the City Council.
 - b. Members in positions seven through 12 shall be appointed by the Mayor.
 - c. Positions 13 through 14 shall be appointed by the Commission.
 - d. Position 15 shall be a young adult position pursuant to the Get Engaged Program, SMC 3.51.
 - e. All appointments are subject to confirmation by a majority vote of the full City Council.
4. **Term Lengths and Limits:** Each position shall be for two years, except for position 15, whose term length is one year (under SMC 3.51.040).
- a. No members shall serve more than two consecutive terms.
 - b. Any vacancy in an unexpired term shall be filled in the same manner as the original appointment. If a person is appointed to fill the duration of an unexpired term, then that term shall count as one of the two consecutive terms only if the portion of the unexpired term actually served is at least one year.
 - c. Except for position 15, a member whose term is ending shall continue on an interim basis as a member with voting rights until such time as a successor for that position has been appointed and confirmed by the City Council.
5. **Meeting Absences:** Members are expected to attend all Commission meetings.
- a. Excused Absences: Any SRC member may request an excused absence from a Commission meeting by notifying both the designated DON liaison to the SRC and at least one Chairperson or, in the event no Chairperson is available, at least one Vice Chairperson.
 - i. The SRC shall indicate how the member seeking an excused absence should provide notice in its rules and procedures documents.
 - ii. An unexpected emergency may constitute an excused absence. The SRC shall establish procedures to evaluate whether an unexpected emergency is an excused absence in its rules and procedures documents.
 - b. Unexcused absences:
 - i. Unexcused absences are absences that occur when a commissioner has not notified a Chair or Vice-Chair and the DON Liaison at least 24 hours in advance and does not meet the criteria for an excusable emergency absence as outlined in the SRC's rules and procedures documents.

- ii. Commissioners may have up to four consecutive or non-consecutive excused or unexcused absences in a 12-month period before the Commission may recommend their removal. The Commission may recommend, by a majority vote of all members of the Commission, that the Mayor or Council remove any member who is absent without excuse from three consecutive Commission meetings.
 - 1. This rule does not apply to Special Meetings, given the short notice associated with them.

6. Removal:

- a. **For Cause:** The appointing authorities may remove any member they appointed for cause.
 - i. The Commission may recommend, by a majority vote at any meeting, that an appointing authority remove any member it appointed for cause.
- b. **Absences:** The Commission may recommend, by a majority vote, that the appointing authority remove any member who is absent from three Regular Meetings in a 12-month period. The Chair of the Commission shall attempt to meet with the commissioner who missed three meetings prior to recommending removal.
- c. **Eligibility:** Each member of the Commission must be a renter within the city of Seattle throughout their term. Members who move out of the City or stop renting should inform the DON liaison with as much notice as possible to provide time to find a replacement. Members who are no longer eligible will be removed from the Commission.

7. Compensation: Members serve without compensation.

Article VI – Commission Leadership

1. Chairperson(s).

- a. **Election:** Once a year, or as needed, SRC members shall, by majority vote, determine the number of Chairpersons to elect, as well as elect this number of Chairpersons. This may take place at any type of meeting, so long as there is quorum.
 - i. SRC members may be elected for up to two consecutive single-year terms at a time to a Chairperson position. Reaching the term limit for a Chairperson position does not prevent an SRC member from seeking election to a Vice-Chair position.
 - ii. Filling a special term of less than six months shall not count towards the total term limit for one of these positions.
 - iii. Any SRC member elected as a Chairperson shall ensure they provide all practicable information and support to their replacement before they leave the SRC and/or their position and, if practicable, after their term(s) end(s).
 - iv. As space (defined by quorum limits) allows, the commission may elect, by majority vote, additional Vice Chairs.

Article VII – Conflicts of Interest

1. All SRC members shall comply with the rules for disclosure of interests and recusal as outlined for advisory boards in SMC 4.16.070.G.
2. All SRC members shall disclose any personal interest or affiliation that does create, or may create the appearance of conflict, bias, or undue influence. Such disclosures shall be made as part of the record at a regular or special meeting. The intent of making the disclosure a part of the meeting minutes is that the disclosure shall be known by the other members of the SRC and during a time that the public may comment or become aware of the disclosure.
3. A personal interest is broadly defined to include but is not limited to any actual or potential benefits or advantages that an SRC member, a spouse, family member or person living in their household might directly or indirectly obtain from an action taken by the SRC.

Article VIII – Meetings

1. **Regular Meetings:** The SRC shall meet on a regular basis, holding at least one meeting per month.
2. **Special Meetings:** Special Meetings are meetings outside of Regular Meetings and/or meetings of an SRC committee or work group. Special Meetings may be scheduled by one or more Chairperson(s) or upon a majority vote via email of commissioners. Commissioners and the public shall be entitled to at least 24 hours' notice of a Special Meeting.
3. **Open Public Meetings Act:** All regularly scheduled and special meetings of the SRC shall be open to the public. On occasion, a portion of a meeting, may be closed to the public to consider personnel matters, or any other matter exempt from the Open Public Meetings Act.
4. **Procedure:** Commission meetings shall be conducted in a manner that aligns with the Seattle Municipal Code, with specific methods described in the Commission's adopted rules and procedures.
5. **Public Comment:** The public may speak on issues that come before the SRC. The Co-Chair(s) shall designate the appropriate time for public testimony and establish time limits for each speaker.
6. **Quorum:** A quorum is required to take action on a matter before the SRC. A quorum shall consist of a majority (more than half) of all current SRC members. Meetings may proceed without quorum, but no actions may be taken (see Article IX).
7. **Remote Attendance:** SRC members may attend commission meetings by phone or video call and may vote in the same manner as in-person attendees. Members are not allowed to vote by proxy at meetings.

Article IX – Commission Actions

1. A quorum is required to authorize a Commission Action.
2. **SRC Public Opinions and Positions:** The SRC shall act as one entity in making and announcing its decisions, opinions, and positions on issues. No SRC member shall speak or act for the Commission without prior authorization by the SRC.

- a. The Chairperson(s) may speak on the status of SRC's work, processes, and procedures without prior authorization.
 - b. Individual SRC members may represent the SRC (e.g., providing testimony, meetings with City Council, Mayor, etc.) if authorized by a majority vote of the SRC.
- 3. **Commission Actions:** Commission Actions are activities and/or communication intended to convey the SRC's official comments, thoughts, opinions, and concerns on any issues or topics. This includes, but is not limited to:
 - a. Communicating and/or publishing reports, statements, and letters regarding the SRC's position on a matter to City and other relevant governmental officials, including the Mayor, City Council, City department directors, City agency directors) and their staff.
 - b. Providing written or oral testimony, comment, letters, or other communication that is presented as the official position of the SRC or attempts to represent a document or proposal as by or supported by the SRC.
 - c. Commenting on a commission on department or agency generated draft policies and plans, presenting proposals or preparing comments for SRC action, and sponsoring SRC activities related to the SRC's scope of interest.
- 4. **Approving Commission Actions:** The SRC may authorize Commission Actions at Regular or Special Meetings via majority vote. The SRC, its members, and its committees may not take any Commission Action without prior approval.
- 5. **Testimony in public spaces:** SRC members may provide public testimony regarding their personal views and thoughts on an issue inside the SRC's scope without prior authorization or approval by the SRC.
 - a. During the course of their testimony, SRC members may identify themselves as members of the Commission. They cannot, however, state, imply, or otherwise indicate that their opinion or position represents the opinion or position of the Commission without first obtaining the above-described approval.
 - b. The SRC member may identify themselves as a member of the Commission, but must clarify that what they express does not represent the thoughts, opinions, or position of the Commission. (e.g., "I serve on the Seattle Renters' Commission, but I am speaking as an individual, not representing the Seattle Renters' Commission").

Article X – Work Plan, Reporting Requirements, Agendas, and Programming

- 1. **Work Plan:** The SRC shall hold at least one meeting per calendar year to evaluate the Commission's progress towards its previous year's goals and to determine the Commission's goals in the upcoming calendar year.
 - a. The work plan program shall be consistent with the goals and initiatives of the SRC, and other City department work programs, the City Council's work program, other agency work programs, SRC initiatives, and emerging issues.

- b. The work plan shall incorporate community and citizen input where possible.
2. **Reporting Requirements:** The SRC shall report on an annual basis to the Mayor and the City Council. Consistent with SMC 3.65, the reports shall include an annual work plan, a briefing on the Commission's public involvement process for soliciting community and citizen input in developing their annual work plan, and updates on the work plan.
3. **Recruitment:** The Commission shall determine work programs, agendas, rules, assignments, and processes for recruitment of new SRC members, to be passed by majority vote.

Article XI – Goals and Priorities

1. The SRC shall work in a collaborative manner to provide timely advice and recommendations to City elected and appointed officials, and the community at large. These recommendations may address the needs of the Seattle rental population that is comprised of many Protected Classes, defined above, including but not limited to people of color, people living with disabilities, and LGBTQIA2S+ people; as well as young adults, immigrant renters, seniors, low-income renters, those paying rent with assistance, those with felony records, and renters who have experienced homelessness.
2. The SRC shall work collectively to represent the voice of renters facing more broad issues citywide including but not limited to such as housing accessibility, transportation, green and other public spaces, land use, renter protections, public health and safety, education, and economic growth.
3. The SRC shall leverage its collective resources to assist in creating communities of opportunity for everyone regardless of background or means. The SRC shall accomplish this goal by ensuring that there is meaningful citizen participation and timely public involvement. The SRC shall utilize established community involvement principles for equitable outreach and engagement into historically disenfranchised communities.
4. The SRC shall do its best to represent people throughout Seattle from a holistic citywide point of view when evaluating proposed plans, projects, policies, and ideas.
5. The SRC shall make recommendations that recognize and are mindful of the City's needs and government constraints.

Article XII – Committees and Work Groups

1. Committees shall be established to effectively carry out the goals of the SRC.
2. **Committees:** The SRC shall establish and dissolve committees by majority vote, as needed.
 - a. **Standing Committees:** Standing Committees are permanent committees. The SRC shall maintain at least the following Standing Committee(s):
 - i. **Executive Committee:** This shall be composed of the SRC's Chairperson(s) and Vice-Chairperson(s). The Executive Committee must meet at least once per quarter. There shall be no Vice-Chair elected or selected for this Committee. Instead, each Committee

- shall select a representative to join the Executive Committee as a Vice-Chairperson.
- ii. Commission Development Committee: This shall be composed of at least three Commission members who either volunteer or, if necessary, are appointed by the Chairperson(s). This committee shall be responsible for supporting the Chairperson(s) in creating and maintaining SRC policies and procedures, as well as overseeing recruitment of and support for commissioners. This committee shall meet regularly at intervals of Commission Development Committee members' choice.
 - b. **Ad Hoc Committees:** Each Ad Hoc Committee shall last until dissolved by majority vote of SRC members.
 - c. Committee membership shall not meet or exceed quorum.
3. **Work Groups:** The SRC may establish Work Groups to identify and/or take a specific action related to a discrete topic or issue, such as drafting a letter or researching a specific topic to help the SRC make a decision.
 - a. If a Work Group's efforts continue for more than six months, the SRC shall discuss at the next Regular Meeting whether to convert the Work Group into a Committee.
 - b. Work Group membership shall not meet or exceed quorum for the SRC as a whole.
 - c. Work group members shall report to the Chairperson(s) or Vice-Chairperson(s) selected by the Chairperson(s) at the time of the Work Group's creation.
4. **Meetings:** Committees and Work Groups are expected to meet regularly.
 - a. Each Chairperson and Vice-Chairperson to whom a committee or Work Group reports shall provide an update on the progress and work of that committee or Work Group at each Regular Meeting, with a schedule determined by the committees. Committees shall analyze issues and prepare subject matter briefings in advance of SRC consideration.
5. **Commission Actions:** When a committee or Work Group is created, SRC members may authorize one or more members of said committee or Work Group to engage in one or more Commission Actions specific to the scope of that committee or Work Group. Authorization shall be granted by majority vote at a Special or Regular Meeting.
6. Committee and Work Group communications and efforts may be public record pursuant to the Open Public Meetings Act.

Article XIII – Records, Publications, and Reports

1. All decisions of the SRC shall be evidenced in writing and recorded during the meeting for which the decision was made.
2. Minutes of SRC meetings shall be prepared in writing by the DON Liaison (or a DON-designated replacement) and submitted to the SRC for approval. After approval by the SRC, these minutes shall be posted on the SRC website as a public record.

3. Copies of specific SRC documents shall be made available to the public upon written request, and upon payment of fees for copies if applicable. A reasonable amount of time shall be allowed for the SRC to comply with the request for information.

Article XIV – Adoption and Amendment of Bylaws

1. The SRC shall adopt these by-laws to ensure the efficient and ethical conduct of SRC business. Copies of such by-laws shall be posted on the SRC's website for the public.
2. These bylaws, as adopted by the SRC, may be revised or amended by a majority of all current SRC members, provided that revisions are approved by the City Attorney's Office and copies of the proposed revision(s) or amendment(s) are made available to each SRC member no less than seven days prior to the meeting at which the proposed revision or amendment is to be voted on.