

# Seattle Renters' Commission By-Laws

Adopted September 6, 2018

## Article I – Purpose

1. The Seattle Renters' Commission, herein after "SRC" was established pursuant to Section 3.65 of the Seattle Municipal Code. 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.
2. The SRC shall act in accordance with the rules and policies outlined in:
  - Seattle Municipal Code, Code of Ethics, Chapter 4.16
  - Enabling Legislation – Ordinance 125280, Council Bill 118921
  - Federal, state, and local laws and regulations that apply to appointed advisory bodies of public agencies.

## Article II – Definitions

1. **Protected Classes:** age, ancestry, breastfeeding in a public place, color, creed, disability, gender identity, marital status, national origin, parental status, political ideology, race, religion, sex, sexual orientation, use of a section 8 certificate, use of a service animal, military status or veteran (as defined by the City of Seattle Office of Civil Rights)
2. **City:** all incorporated districts of Seattle.

## Article III – Goals

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 that 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 LGBTQ 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 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 their 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 a holistic citywide point of view when evaluating proposed plans, projects, policies and ideas.
5. The SRC shall make recommendations which recognize and are mindful of the City's needs and government constraints.

## **Article III – Role**

1. The SRC shall perform under the management and oversight of the Department of Neighborhoods. The department will provide staff support to the SRC.
2. Chapter 3.65.040 of the Seattle Municipal Code states that the duties of the SRC include the following:
  - a. Provide information, advice, and counsel to the Mayor, City Council, Department of Neighborhoods, Office of Housing, Office of 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 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.
  - f. The SRC shall have the power to, by a majority vote, elect two Commission members to serve as Co-Chairs, who shall share Co-Chair responsibilities, for a one-year term; and
3. Adopt rules of procedure to accomplish its functions.

## **Article IV – Membership**

1. The Commission shall be composed of 15 members. 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. Appointments shall be made, to the extent possible, so that the Commission membership is representative of the city geographically. Each member of the Commission must be a renter within the City of Seattle at the time of their appointment and throughout their term.
2. Members serve without compensation.
3. Member positions shall be numbered one through 15. Individuals shall be appointed into these numbered positions. Members in positions one through six shall be appointed by the City Council. Members in positions seven through 12 shall be appointed by the Mayor. Positions 13 through 14 shall be appointed by the Commission. Position 15 shall be a young adult position pursuant to the Get Engaged Program, SMC 3.51. All appointments are subject to confirmation by a majority vote of the full City Council.

4. For the initial round of appointments, odd numbered positions will serve one-year terms and even numbered positions will serve two-year terms. After the conclusion of initial terms, all subsequent terms of each position shall be for two years, except for position 15, whose term length is one year under Section 3.51.040. No members shall serve more than two consecutive terms. 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. 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. Terms shall begin on March 1.
  6. Any member may request an excused absence from a Commission meeting. To request an excused absence, Commissioners shall notify the Seattle Renters' Commission staff member and the Co-Chairs at least 24 hours prior to the Commission meeting stating the specific reason for the request, with the exception of unexpected emergencies. Commissioners may have up to 4 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. The appointing authority may remove any member for cause.
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## **Article V – Meetings**

1. The SRC shall meet on a regular basis, with at least one meeting per month. The meeting shall occur on the first Monday of each month from 6 p.m. to 8 p.m. The Chair, or appointing authority may adjust the regular convening time of meetings on a temporary or permanent basis.
2. All regular scheduled meetings of the SRC shall be open to the public. On occasion, a meeting, or portion of a meeting, may be closed to the public to consider personnel matters, or any other matter exempt from the Open Meetings Act.
3. Commission meetings shall be conducted in the spirit of Robert's Rules of Order, Seattle Municipal Code, with specific methods described in the Commission's adopted rules and procedures.
4. The public may speak on issues which come before the SRC. The Co-Chair(s) shall designate the appropriate time for public testimony and establish time limits for each speaker.
5. Special meetings of the SRC may be held whenever and wherever the Co-Chair(s) and/or Executive Committee may determine, or upon petition by a majority of the members. Commissioners and the public shall be entitled to at least 24 hours' notice of a special meeting.
6. 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.
7. The SRC shall act as one entity in making and announcing its decisions. No SRC member shall speak or act for the Commission without prior authorization by the SRC or appointing authority, or the delegate of the appointing authority. Co-Chairs may speak on the status of SRC work, process, and procedure without prior authorization.
8. SRC members may call into a commission meeting but are not allowed to vote by proxy or alternate at meetings.

## **Article VI – Conflicts of Interest**

1. All SRC members shall comply with the rules for disclosure of interests and recusal as outlined for advisory boards in the Seattle Municipal Code, section 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 VII – Commission and Commission Actions**

1. A quorum is required to take action on a matter before the SRC Commission actions include formal SRC positions, reports, statements, and letters to City and other governmental officials (Mayor, Council, department directors, agency directors) and staff.
2. Final decisions shall only be made at SRC meetings.
3. Commission actions include commenting as 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 focus.
4. Individual SRC members may represent the SRC (e.g. providing testimony, meetings with Council, Mayor etc.) if authorized by a majority vote by the Commission.
5. SRC may speak in public testimony as individuals, clearly specifying that they are speaking as an individual, or as an individual SRC member articulating their own point of view and concerns (e.g. I am speaking as an individual, not representing the Seattle Renters' Commission).

## **Article VIII – Duties of Co-Chairs**

1. The Co-Chairs shall preside at all meetings and act as a spokesperson for the SRC at meetings with other organizations unless another spokesperson(s) is chosen by the SRC, the Chair, or appointing authority.
2. When a Co-Chair is absent, unavailable, or resigns, the Co-Chair will perform the duties.
3. The Co-Chair(s) shall meet on a regular basis with the Department of Neighborhoods designee to discuss ongoing business and priorities of the SRC.

## **Article IX – Work Program, Priorities, Agendas**

1. The SRC shall develop an annual work program.
2. The work program shall be consistent with the goals of the SRC and other City department work programs, the City Council's work program, other agency work programs, SRC initiatives, and emerging issues.

## **Article X – Committees**

1. SRC members shall serve on committees as assigned or elected.
2. The SRC shall establish various committees and committee leadership by majority vote.
3. Committees shall be established to effectively carry out the goals of the SRC.
4. The Co-Chairs determine work programs, agendas, rules, assignments and recruitment of new SRC members. The Co-Chairs shall also be responsible for monitoring each committee's activities.
5. The Standing Committees shall be formed based on subject areas as determined by the work program. Commissioners shall be assigned to a committee either by self-selection or by the Co-Chairs. Each SRC member should serve on at least one committee but may serve on more if desired. Committees are expected to meet regularly, with a schedule determined by the committees. Committees shall analyze issues and prepare subject matter briefings in advance of SRC consideration.

## **Article XI – Co-Chair Elections**

1. The SRC shall elect two Co-Chairs by majority vote each of who shall be elected annually.
2. If a Co-Chair vacates a position prior to completing their term, a special election shall be held to fill that position. Filling a special term of less than six months shall not count towards the eligibility to serve as Co-Chair for two consecutive one-year terms.

## **Article XII – 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 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 XIII – Adoption and Amendment of By-Laws**

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 for the public.
2. These by-laws, as adopted by the SRC, may be revised or amended by a majority of all current SRC members, provided that copies of the proposed revision or amendment shall be made available to each SRC member no less than 7 days prior to the meeting at which the proposed revision or amendment is to be acted upon. Announcement and discussion of the proposed change(s) shall occur at one meeting and voting shall occur at the next meeting.