



City of Seattle
Seattle Renters' Commission

Kim McGillivray & Daniel Godfrey, Co-Chairs

SEATTLE RENTERS' COMMISSION (SRC)

MINUTES

February 3, 2024

9:30am – 4:00pm

Webex, online

City Hall, L280 Boards and Commissions room

Purpose: The Seattle Renters' Commission (SRC) was established to represent the interest of renters located in Seattle, to advise and make recommendations to the Mayor and City Council on public policy matters of importance to renters citywide.

Commissioners in attendance: Kim McGillivray, Kate Rubin, Lydia Felty, Atif Osmani, Dan Godfrey, Julissa Sanchez

Commissioners not in attendance: Char Smith, Sendia Registin

Public attendance: Julia Payne, Simone Barron

Facilitator: Mariela Barriga Chavez

Staff: Zach Frimmel, Lydia Faitalia

Quorum: Yes

Minutes approved: None

Decisions voted on: None

(Transcriber's Note: Seattle Renters' Commission meeting minutes are not an exact transcript and represent key points and the basis of discussion. The recording of the minutes is available upon request.)

Welcome

Co-chairs opened with Land & Labor Acknowledgements and approved meeting minutes for October and November meetings, including the Special Meetings.

Land & Labor Acknowledgment

The facilitator asked the SRC to reflect on their land and labor acknowledgement and how the acknowledgements are reflected in the actions of the commission.

Collective Vision Setting

The facilitator guided them through a breakout group exercise to have them share their housing story. This sharing about each other's lived experience around housing helped ground the commissioners, learn more about their humanity, inter-generational healing, where they came from, and some of the unknown struggles they faced.



Knowledge Building

In the context of your workplan, what do you know to be true?

What are some skills, talents, that you'd like to contribute?

- Some connections on other commissions
- Research

Where do you feel challenged with this plan?

- Mostly ideas, no steps to accomplish anything specific
- Unclear as to who cares about renter's rights now
- Strong desire to create a power map of City Council and other institutional resources

What areas could you move up or move back (as individuals)?

- Moving back from co-chairs, would love to hear what the rest of the team wants to do for 2024
- Partnering with other commissions (like transportation), transportation is key and very joined at the hip with renting...so many join forces and make some changes
- Our community connections to elevate community work that is being done and aligning as best we can to move efforts at the Council level

Design Thinking

Creative:

- redefining what we think we know and what we want to solve
- Practicing divergent ways of thinking
- Exercising empathy in real-time

Non-linear:

- Process is cyclic
- Commitment to improvement process
- Trust the process and continue the challenge

Innovative

- Commitment to trying
- Culture around mistakes
- Utilizing the group's big skills/ideas

Human-centered

- The user experience is the motivator
- Belief that people matter over products/finances

Data Analysis Exercise

Commissioners took one piece of data (article, report, etc.) on renting or housing and filled out a chart of their observations, implications, and root causes related to that data point.



Reflection Sharing

When we think of public housing in the United States, there's a model that presents public housing program as failed programs but really they were just not continued to be funded and so the system failed the programs. Systemic barriers create housing insecurity. The root causes of public housing failing in America is that society/systemic reasons gave up on public housing. The people who were getting by off of public housing were directly impacted by the lack of reliability of systemic infrastructure.

Fighting back from getting security deposits is difficult. Advocating for grievances is challenging, especially in any way that champions the renter. Access to lawyers is minimal and/or expensive. There is no accountability process for landlords in the favor of renters when the renter should have more power and benefits. There is an active defunding of accountability bodies.

One commissioner had a lot of experience as a grassroots advocate for the renter community and how to help them get their deposits back. You don't necessarily need a lawyer, but you do need to know your rights and be assertive.

Design thinking activity:

Empathy map: what does that people think, feel, do, and say?

Share-out: The challenge of information access. Renters might think they don't know where to get information, they may feel disadvantaged, may compromise their rights.

The challenge with small landlords. They might feel persecuted, though think they are providing a benefit to the renter, and think that they are justified in providing access to only those they want to. Sometimes there is discrimination, sometimes they provide public comment against renter protections. On the flip side, they often do have lower than market rates and often don't raise the rent as often as larger landlords.

SMARTIE Goals

Two groups of commissioners came out with different SMARTIE goals to add to their 2024 workplan. They ran out of time before getting to share, but they generated dozens of strategic questions to help them then generate SMARTIE Goals. They grouped the questions into organic categories and synthesized each group into a main question.

Renter experience and security/leaving housing

What advocacy actions can we focus on to help renters' experiences?

Policy/legislation

What policies should the SRC engage with and how do we want to advocate at the legislative level?

Sociocultural

How can we strengthen citywide support for working class renters?

Progress and Accountability



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How can we improve the collaboration of the SRC and make ourselves more accountable to move work forward?

City Council

How can we building relationships with City Council to have our advocacy work taken seriously and respected?

Partnerships

What strategic partnerships can we focus on to strengthen the SRC's support base?

Special populations

How can we create more equitable and inclusive support of renters?

Enforcement

How can we create more enforcement accountability for landlords?

DON

How can DON support the SRC with these new goals regarding, City Council, policy engagement, and administration?