

SEATTLE RENTERS' COMMISSION (SRC)

MINUTES

October 2, 2024

6:30-8:00 PM

Webex link: <https://seattle.webex.com/seattle/j.php?MTID=ma4148d39d8a58d51ca11fb8551fd6a07>

Seattle City Hall, Room 370

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 Kate Rubin, Lydia Felty, and Montana Houston

Commissioners not in attendance: Atif Osami, Dan Godfrey, and Julissa Sanchez

Staff: Laura Jenkins

Quorum: No

Public Comment: Yes

(Transcriber's note: These minutes provide a summary of key points discussed. A full recording is available upon request.)

Welcome & Acknowledgments

Commissioner Rubin led the land and labor acknowledgment.

Approval of the Agenda (10/2); Approval of the Minutes (9/4)

No quorum. Vote on minutes postponed to a future meeting.

Commission Appointments

- Get Engaged Commissioner Welcome & Introductions
 - Welcoming Montana Houston.
- Pending Commission Appointments
 - Staff liaison Jenkins will provide an updated roster, including commissioner terms and pending appointments, for clarity on available and upcoming positions.

Proposed Bylaws Amendments and Vote

No quorum. Vote on proposed bylaws amendments postponed to a future meeting.

Vote to Endorse Keep Seattle Moving - Seattle Prop 1

No quorum. Vote to endorse Keep Seattle Moving postponed to a future meeting.

Social Housing PDA Update

- The commissioners emphasized the importance of renter representation on the Social Housing Public Development Authority (PDA) board. Their involvement will help shape early decisions for Seattle's social housing strategy.

City Budget

- **Overview of Budget Process:** Staff liaison Jenkins provided an overview of the budget process, including a timeline that is accessible through the public Budget link: [Seattle Council Budget Process](#).

- **Status of \$50,000 Allocation:** There were specific inquiries regarding the status of the \$50,000 allocated to form a tenant workgroup.
 - Staff liaison Jenkins committed to gathering additional information about the funds for the tenant workgroup.
- **Proposed Cuts:** The city budget includes \$1.2 million in cuts to tenant services, which includes:
 - **SDCI Impact:** An \$811,000 reduction in tenant services, affecting funding for tenant support organizations and legal services.
 - **Renter Protections:** Concerns were raised about the reduction in eviction prevention services and legal aid, which are critical for low-income renters.
- **Advocacy Strategy:** Commissioners proposed drafting a letter to Seattle City Council to advocate for the reconsideration of these budget cuts. There was also a discussion about potentially endorsing the Seattle Solidarity Budget to align with broader advocacy efforts aimed at opposing austerity measures that affect renters.

Budget Impact & Commission Funding

- Discussion on the Seattle Renters Commission's \$2,500 budget, which must be used by year-end. Commissioners considered potential uses, including consulting support or outreach activities.

Action Items & Strategic Scheduling

- **Draft Letter:** Commissioners Felty, Houston, and Payne to collaborate on a letter advocating against the tenant service budget cuts, targeting submission by October 21-22.
- **Special Meeting:** Tentatively scheduled for October 22 to vote on pending items, including the advocacy letter and Solidarity Budget endorsement.
- **City Budget Hearing:** Commissioners encouraged to attend the October 16 budget hearing to voice renter-related concerns.

Public Comment

- **Affordability Concerns:**
 - Patricia Scott noted the increasing struggle for senior homeowners, especially those on Social Security or with recent life changes (e.g., moving to lower-rent housing) to manage costs amid rent increases and budget cuts. She emphasized how budget cuts to tenant services would indirectly affect employers if their employees could no longer afford to live sustainably in Seattle.
 - Moxie-S. shared concerns about pricing trends, observing that housing affordability challenges aren't unique to Seattle and highlighting the potential return to pre-pandemic pricing with additional increases. This concern echoes broader public sentiment about the impact of rent hikes amid economic pressures.
- **Rental Management Fees:**
 - A commenter identified as "renters against unrestrained land leeches" expressed frustration with new administrative fees, like a \$5 monthly billing fee from large rental management firms. They proposed that such fees, perceived as "greed grabs" circumventing rent control, be banned to protect renters from indirect cost increases.
- **Public Advocacy and Engagement:**
 - Patricia Scott and other commenters expressed gratitude for the Seattle Renters' Commission's work and encouraged continued advocacy, highlighting the meeting's

value in clarifying the severe impact of budget cuts on renter protections and tenant support organizations. Concerns were raised about the low public turnout, along with suggestions to improve outreach and engagement efforts.

Unfinished/New Business

- The Office of Civil Rights announced an upcoming training session titled "*How to Talk with Your Landlord*," on October 9th from 12:00 PM to 1:00 PM, led by SOCR Mediator Andrea Braeutigam. Participants will learn strategies for minimizing conflicts and effectively communicating their needs. The session will also discuss how the Office for Civil Rights can better support renters in Seattle.

Workshop Details:

- **Time:** 12:00 PM - 1:00 PM
- **Format:** Virtual
- **RSVP:** [Registration Link](#)

Adjourn | 7:47PM