

SEATTLE RENTERS' COMMISSION (SRC)
MINUTES

September 4, 2024

6:30-8:00 PM

Webex link:

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 Dan Godfrey, Julissa Sanchez, Kate Rubin, and Lydia Felty

Commissioners not in attendance: Atif Osami and Montana Houston

Staff: Francesca Murnan and Lydia Faitalia

Quorum: Yes

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 Sanchez led the land and labor acknowledgment.

Approval of Agenda & Minutes - The September 4 agenda and the August 27 meeting minutes were approved.

Bylaws Amendments Discussion - Commissioner Rubin proposed several changes to simplify and clarify the Commission's bylaws:

- Removing the specific meeting start time.
- Merging sections related to co-chairs for better readability.
- Commissioner Felty suggested removing language allowing an appointing authority to authorize commissioners to speak on behalf of the Commission.

The consensus was to simplify the bylaws and eliminate unnecessary or ambiguous provisions. The requirement to discuss amendments at one meeting before voting was seen as redundant if ample review time is provided beforehand.

- **Next Steps:**
 - Commissioner Felty will draft the proposed bylaw amendments for review and possible action at the next meeting.

Pending Commission Appointments - Commissioner Rubin provided an update on pending appointments, notably Commissioner Montana Houston's expected appointment through the "Get Engaged" program. Other appointments have been delayed.

- Commissioner Felty urged members to advocate during public meetings and engage with community organizers to expedite the process, noting that some appointments have faced nearly a year-long delay.

- **Next Steps:**
 - Commissioners are encouraged to attend public meetings and raise the issue of delayed appointments.
 - Commissioner Rubin will share talking points for public comment advocacy. Commissioners to attend upcoming meetings to push for timely appointments.

LGBTQ Commission - Commissioner Rubin reported on discussions with the LGBTQ Commission, which is actively working on renter protection issues. The LGBTQ Commission has been meeting with City Council members to advocate against potential rollbacks of renter protections. The LGBTQ Commission has invited SRC commissioners to join these advocacy efforts and meetings, providing an opportunity for stronger collaboration on shared goals.

- **Next Steps:**
 - Commissioner Rubin will keep interested commissioners informed about LGBTQ Commission activities and potential collaborations on renter protection issues.

City Budget - Commissioner Rubin led a discussion on advocating for tenant services funding in the upcoming city budget.

- Commissioner Rubin noted concerns about possible cuts to funding for tenant services, particularly the \$50,000 allocation that had not yet been released. Emphasized the importance of advocating for the reinstatement of these funds and preparing a clear stance on budget priorities for the public hearing in October.
- Concern has been expressed over the use of JumpStart Payroll Expense Tax funds to fill the city's budget gap, advocating for more progressive revenue sources to avoid cuts to essential services.
- **Next Steps:**
 - Commissioners Rubin and Felty will prepare budget advocacy proposals for review at the next meeting. The Commission will discuss and potentially endorse related budget initiatives in the October meeting.

Social Media Protocols & Letterhead - Staff provided updates on the Commission's use of standardized letterhead and the management of social media accounts. The goal is to comply with public records requirements while improving engagement and communication with the public.

- Commissioner Rubin suggested adopting best practices from the LGBTQ Commission to improve SRC's social media presence.
- It was also noted that access to social media accounts had previously been problematic, and measures were needed to ensure a smooth handover of responsibilities to future commissioners.
- **Next Steps:**
 - Implement better social media management practices to ensure public transparency and compliance with records retention rules.

Public Comment Discussion - A public commenter expressed frustration with the additional fees charged by some rental management companies, specifically the RUB (Ratio Utility Billing) system, which adds monthly administrative fees to tenants' utility bills among tenants but adds a recurring fee of \$2.50 to \$5.00 per month per tenant.

- **Next Steps:**
 - The Commission discussed the legality of these fees and suggested the Commission should investigate further. Commissioners volunteered to research the issue and explore potential advocacy against such "junk fees." Commissioner Rubin will research the legality of rental management fees.

9. Unfinished/New Business

- **Unfinished Business:** Initiative 137 was briefly discussed, with a focus on keeping sub-minimum wage issues on the agenda.
- **New Business:** Commissioner Rubin shared updates from recent Land Use Committee meetings, highlighting proposed legislation that could affect renters, including bills related to housing development and green building projects.
- **Next Steps:**
 - Commissioner Rubin will connect with Councilmember Morales's office and provide updates for potential Commission support actions before the next meeting.

Adjourn | 8:03PM