

CITY OF SEATTLE

ORDINANCE _____

COUNCIL BILL _____

..title

AN ORDINANCE relating to renters; establishing the Seattle Renters' Commission, representing the interests 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; amending Section 3.35.030 of the Seattle Municipal Code, and adding a new Chapter 3.65, consisting of Sections 3.65.010, 3.65.015, 3.65.020, 3.65.030, 3.65.040, 3.65.050, and 3.65.060, to the Seattle Municipal Code.

..body

WHEREAS, more than 54 percent of households in Seattle are renter households, 48 percent of

Seattle's household population reside in renter households, ~~52 percent of households in~~

~~Seattle live in rental housing,~~ and in some neighborhoods renters make up more than 80

percent of households ~~residents,~~ according to the 2011-15 ~~2010-14~~ American Community

Survey; and

WHEREAS, the median household income of renters is less than 50 percent of the median

income of homeowners in Seattle, according to the 2010-14 American Community

Survey; and

WHEREAS, the median net worth of renter households in the United States is less than three

percent of the median net worth of homeowner households, according to the 2013 Federal

Reserve Board's Survey of Consumer Finances; and

WHEREAS, the renter population is representative of many protected classes, including people

of color, people living with disabilities, and LGBTQ people, as well as young adults,

seniors, low-income people, those paying rent with assistance, ~~and~~ those with felony

records, and renters who have experienced homelessness; and

1 WHEREAS, 53 percent of white Seattle residents own their homes, compared to 29 percent of
2 African-American and 27 percent of Latino residents, according to the 2010 Census; and

3 WHEREAS, the City has sought to include diverse perspectives of Seattle residents, such as with
4 the 2016 Housing Affordability and Livability Agenda (HALA) Focus Groups, and a
5 Renters' Commission will formalize participation of a group that comprises over half of
6 the city's population; and

7 WHEREAS, Resolution 31718, adopted by the City Council on November 21, 2016 and signed
8 by the Mayor on November 28, 2016, established citywide community involvement
9 principles for equitable outreach and engagement into historically disenfranchised
10 communities; and

11 WHEREAS, renters in Seattle are directly impacted by a wide variety of issues facing the city,
12 such as housing affordability, transportation access, green and other public spaces, land
13 use, renter protections, public health and safety, education, and economic growth; and

14 WHEREAS, a recent study published in the journal *Urban Affairs Review* found that low-income
15 renters are nearly twice as likely as homeowners to be displaced by gentrification; and

16 WHEREAS, the Equitable Development Initiative, created in 2016 as part of the Seattle 2035
17 Comprehensive Plan update, established strategies for City departments to leverage their
18 collective resources to create communities of opportunity for everyone, regardless of race
19 or means; and

20 WHEREAS, a Renters' Commission will offer useful insight and perspective inclusive of diverse
21 renter voices from across the city that otherwise might not be heard at City Hall without
22 such an intentional and proactive effort; NOW, THEREFORE,

23 **BE IT ORDAINED BY THE CITY OF SEATTLE AS FOLLOWS:**

1 Section 1. Section 3.35.030 of the Seattle Municipal Code, which was last amended by
2 Ordinance 125192, is amended as follows:

3 **3.35.030 Director—functions**

4 The Director of the Department of Neighborhoods shall manage the department and shall:

5 A. Serve as liaison with residents, neighborhood groups, and other community
6 organizations;

7 B. Provide staff for the Community Involvement Commission, the Seattle Youth
8 Commission, and the Seattle Renters' Commission;

9 C. Administer the Neighborhood Matching Fund Program and the Neighborhood
10 Matching Fund;

11 D. Conduct outreach programs to elicit public participation; present community concerns
12 to City departments; and strengthen and support the provision of coordinated departmental
13 responses to community concerns, including the delivery of high-quality customer service;

14 E. Assist communities in understanding and responding to proposed projects and
15 activities and convene public meetings on City issues and actions having an impact on
16 communities;

17 F. Assist communities in identifying local challenges and needs and help them implement
18 neighborhood and community plans and other actions to address such issues;

19 G. Support neighborhood-based community building through technical assistance,
20 translation services, capacity building, and other resources, as appropriate. Promote
21 intergenerational and multilingual neighborhood-based organizing, emphasizing engagement of
22 racially and economically diverse communities;

1 H. Provide technical assistance, training, and access to digital engagement tools to
2 communities undertaking general organizing efforts; and

3 I. Perform such other duties as assigned by the City in its annual budgets or by ordinance
4 from time to time.

5 Section 2. A new Chapter 3.65 is added to the Seattle Municipal Code as follows:

6 **CHAPTER 3.65 SEATTLE RENTERS' COMMISSION**

7 **3.65.010 Establishment**

8 There is established a Seattle Renters' Commission (referred to in this Chapter 3.65 as the
9 "Commission") that shall advise the Mayor and City Council on issues and policies of
10 importance to tenants in residential rental properties citywide.

11 **3.65.015 Definitions**

12 As used in this Chapter 3.65, "renter" means a tenant in a residential rental property.

13 **3.65.020 Membership**

14 A. The Commission shall be composed of 15 members. Appointments should be made to
15 ensure that varied renter perspectives are represented, including those of renters who identify
16 with or are affiliated with organizations that work with historically underrepresented groups,
17 such as low income renters, LGBTQ renters, immigrant renters, renters with felony records, ~~and~~
18 those paying rent with assistance, and renters who have experienced homelessness.

19 Appointments shall be made, to the extent possible, so that the Commission membership is
20 representative of the city geographically. Each member of the Commission must be a renter
21 within the City of Seattle at the time of their appointment and throughout their term.

22 B. Members serve without compensation.

23 **3.65.030 Appointment and term**

1 A. Member positions shall be numbered one through 15. Individuals shall be appointed
2 into these numbered positions. Members in positions one through six shall be appointed by the
3 City Council. Members in positions seven through 12 shall be appointed by the Mayor. Positions
4 13 through 14 shall be appointed by the Commission. Position 15 shall be a young adult position
5 pursuant to the Get Engaged Program, Chapter 3.51. All appointments are subject to
6 confirmation by a majority vote of the full City Council.

7 B. For the initial round of appointments, odd numbered positions will serve one-year
8 terms and even numbered positions will serve two-year terms. After the conclusion of initial
9 terms, all subsequent terms of each position shall be for two years, except for position 15, whose
10 term length is one year under Section 3.51.040. No members shall serve more than two
11 consecutive terms. Any vacancy in an unexpired term shall be filled in the same manner as the
12 original appointment. If a person is appointed to fill the duration of an unexpired term, then that
13 term shall count as one of the two consecutive terms only if the portion of the unexpired term
14 actually served is at least one year. Except for position 15, a member whose term is ending shall
15 continue on an interim basis as a member with voting rights until such time as a successor for
16 that position has been appointed and confirmed by the City Council.

17 C. Terms shall begin on March 1.

18 **3.65.040 Duties and ancillary powers**

19 A. The duties of the Commission include the following:

20 1. Provide information, advice, and counsel to the Mayor, City Council,
21 Department of Neighborhoods, Office of Housing, Office of Civil Rights, Seattle Department of
22 Construction and Inspections, Seattle Human Services Department, and other City departments
23 concerning issues and policies affecting renters, including, but not limited to, housing

1 affordability, transportation access, green and other public spaces, land use, renter protections,
2 public health and safety, education, and economic growth;

3 2. Monitor the enforcement and effectiveness of legislation related to renters and
4 renter protections;

5 3. Provide periodic advice on priorities, policies, and strategies for strengthening
6 and enhancing the enforcement and effectiveness of renter protections;

7 4. Report on an annual basis to the Mayor and the City Council. The reports shall
8 include an annual work plan, a briefing on the Commission's public involvement process for
9 soliciting community and citizen input in developing their annual work plan, and updates on the
10 work plan; and

11 5. Meet periodically with other City Commissions, City departments, the Seattle
12 Housing Authority Board of Commissioners, and other community groups and associations,
13 including those representing rental property landlords, to gather information, feedback, and
14 recommendations related to the Commission's work.

15 B. The Commission shall have the power to:

16 1. By a majority vote, elect one or more Commission members to serve as
17 Chairperson for a one-year term, and elect one or more members to serve as vice chairperson for
18 a one-year term, who shall serve as chair in the absence of the chairperson; and

19 2. Adopt rules of procedure to accomplish its functions.

20 **3.65.050 Meetings**

21 A. The Department of Neighborhoods shall provide staff support and meeting facilities
22 for the Commission and maintain its records. The Commission may also receive staff assistance

1 from other City departments. Staff support will include ongoing training and capacity building of
2 Commission members.

3 B. Meetings of the Commission shall be open to the public and the Commission shall
4 operate subject to the Washington Open Public Meetings Act (chapter 42.30 RCW). Meeting
5 notifications, agendas, minutes of proceedings, findings and recommendations, annual reports,
6 and other related materials shall be available to the public and posted on the Commission's
7 website.

8 **3.65.060 Unexcused absences and removal**

9 Any member may request an excused absence from a Commission meeting from the
10 Commission or from the Commission chair. The Commission may recommend, by a majority
11 vote of all members of the Commission, that the Mayor or Council remove any member who is
12 absent without excuse from three consecutive Commission meetings. The appointing authority
13 may remove any member for cause.

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