



Legislation Text

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CITY OF SEATTLE

ORDINANCE _____

COUNCIL BILL _____

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.

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

household population reside in renter households, and in some neighborhoods renters make up more than 80 percent of households, according to the 2011-15 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, those with felony records, and renters who have experienced homelessness; and

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

WHEREAS, the City has sought to include diverse perspectives of Seattle residents, such as with the 2016

Housing Affordability and Livability Agenda (HALA) Focus Groups, and a Renters' Commission will formalize participation of a group that comprises over half of the city's population; and

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

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

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

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

WHEREAS, a Renters' Commission will offer useful insight and perspective 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; NOW, THEREFORE,

BE IT ORDAINED BY THE CITY OF SEATTLE AS FOLLOWS:

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

3.35.030 Director-functions

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

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

B. Provide staff for the Community Involvement Commission, the Seattle Youth Commission, and the

Seattle Renters' Commission;

- C. Administer the Neighborhood Matching Fund Program and the Neighborhood Matching Fund;
- D. Conduct outreach programs to elicit public participation; present community concerns to City departments; and strengthen and support the provision of coordinated departmental responses to community concerns, including the delivery of high-quality customer service;
- E. Assist communities in understanding and responding to proposed projects and activities and convene public meetings on City issues and actions having an impact on communities;
- F. Assist communities in identifying local challenges and needs and help them implement neighborhood and community plans and other actions to address such issues;
- G. Support neighborhood-based community building through technical assistance, translation services, capacity building, and other resources, as appropriate. Promote intergenerational and multilingual neighborhood-based organizing, emphasizing engagement of racially and economically diverse communities;
- H. Provide technical assistance, training, and access to digital engagement tools to communities undertaking general organizing efforts; and
- I. Perform such other duties as assigned by the City in its annual budgets or by ordinance from time to time.

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

CHAPTER 3.65 SEATTLE RENTERS' COMMISSION

3.65.010 Establishment

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

3.65.015 Definitions

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

3.65.020 Membership

A. 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 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.

B. Members serve without compensation.

3.65.030 Appointment and term

A. 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, Chapter 3.51. All appointments are subject to confirmation by a majority vote of the full City Council.

B. 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.

C. Terms shall begin on March 1.

3.65.040 Duties and ancillary powers

A. The duties of the Commission include the following:

1. 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;
2. Monitor the enforcement and effectiveness of legislation related to renters and renter protections;
3. Provide periodic advice on priorities, policies, and strategies for strengthening and enhancing the enforcement and effectiveness of renter protections;
4. 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
5. 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.

B. The Commission shall have the power to:

1. By a majority vote, elect one or more Commission members to serve as Chairperson for a one-year term, and elect one or more members to serve as vice chairperson for a one-year term, who shall serve as chair in the absence of the chairperson; and
2. Adopt rules of procedure to accomplish its functions.

3.65.050 Meetings

A. The Department of Neighborhoods shall provide staff support and meeting facilities for the Commission and maintain its records. The Commission may also receive staff assistance from other City departments. Staff support will include ongoing training and capacity building of Commission members.

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

3.65.060 Unexcused absences and removal

Any member may request an excused absence from a Commission meeting from the Commission or from the Commission chair. 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.

Section 2. This ordinance shall take effect and be in force 30 days after its approval by the Mayor, but if not approved and returned by the Mayor within ten days after presentation, it shall take effect as provided by Seattle Municipal Code Section 1.04.020.

Passed by the City Council the _____ day of _____, 2017, and signed by me in open session in authentication of its passage this _____ day of _____, 2017.

President _____ of the City Council

Approved by me this _____ day of _____, 2017.

Edward B. Murray, Mayor

Filed by me this _____ day of _____, 2017.

Monica Martinez Simmons, City Clerk

(Seal)