

SEATTLE RENTERS' COMMISSION (SRC) MEETING MINUTES

August 13, 2025

5:00-7:00 PM

Webex Meeting and 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, Julissa Sanchez, E. Mandisa Subira, Daniel Lugo, Allan Francis, Adora Blue, Sally Kinney, Liz Fite, Sam Wolfson, Angela O'Brien, Kasey Burton, Karen Taylor, Andrew Ashiofu

Commissioners not in attendance: None

Staff: Laura Jenkins from Seattle Department of Neighborhoods

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 & Land and Labor Acknowledgement

Meeting opened at 5:05 PM with a land and labor acknowledgment.

Approval of Agenda and Approval of Minutes

The August 13 meeting agenda was reviewed, and these items were added to unfinished/new business: Multi-Family Tax Exemption (MFTE) Program, Mass Surveillance Expansion, and meetings with Councilmembers. The agenda was approved with additions. The July 2 meeting and July 16 special meeting minutes were approved.

Public Comment and Brief Introductions

Two public commenters provided comment against the Ratio Utility Billing Systems (RUBS) and the unfairness of this kind of billing practice. Two public commenters voiced opposition to the expansion of mass surveillance cameras in the Central District and Capitol Hill.

Commissioners introduced themselves with their names, pronouns, and neighborhoods.

Overview of Commission, Duties, and More

Staff Liaison Laura Jenkins provided background on the commission. She outlined information about the commission's duties, member term dates, structure, meetings, her role as a staff member, required boards and commissions trainings.

Laura will follow up to get more information on the item prohibiting commissioners to: "Take a public stance as a commissioner or encourage people how to vote on a ballot initiative or campaign." She will also follow up to get additional information on quorum and public disclosure guidelines for electronic communications related to commission business because commissioners had a few questions about this topic.

Commission Present and Past

Interim co-chairs Kate Rubin and Lydia Felty provided background about the Renters' Commission. They brought up specific past work items like the moratorium on winter evictions which the commission championed.

They mentioned the current bylaws and code related to co-chairs guidelines – they want to propose alternating chairs to expand the role more broadly than two people. The commission discussed the possibilities of changes to the current co-chair set-up.

- Some members voiced support for a shared facilitation model.
- Commissioners would also like to see onboarding/transition time with the current and next co-chairs.
- Laura will follow up on a question came up in relation to whether it's stated in the code if members/co-chairs can speak on behalf of the commission or not, or if that is only stated in the bylaws.
- A commissioner voiced support for keeping one chair and vice chair role (that could still allow other commissioners to volunteer to facilitate meetings). They said this would help to have a point of contact/consistency.
- A commissioner mentioned another commission's "Rapid Response" process for making quick comments. Laura will check in on their process and follow up with the commission.

Ideas for Future Work and Structure

Commissioners discussed possible future work items:

- One commissioner mentioned the topics from the meeting's public comment period:
 - Ratio Utility Billing Systems (RUBS) and expansion of mass surveillance cameras
- A commissioner asked what the usual channel is for the commission to meet with and share thoughts with the City of Seattle. They are also curious what the commission's relationships with different departments has been.
 - Examples of interaction with the City include writing letters to Council, informational presentations from Seattle Department of Construction and Inspections, etc.
 - The commission hopes to work on continued relationship building.
 - Laura will share a departmental organization chart for Seattle City departments and City budget timeline materials.
- Improving onboarding/offboarding process
- Process for filling Seattle Social Housing Developer Board seats
- Engaging more renter community members

Retreat Planning

The commission briefly reviewed the 2024-2025 work plan and the agenda from the 2024 retreat.

Items commissioners would like to see at this years' Renters' Commission retreat (open to the public, likely will be 5-6 hours):

- Come out of the retreat with an updated work plan or notes that can be turned into a work plan
 - List of goals broken down into action items
 - Trying to make work plan - broader items
 - Workgroups could narrow down topics – come up with more specific priorities to propose to commission within their work (with a caveat that there would be no gatekeeping)
- Decide on workgroups
 - Reporting out at monthly meetings
- Hire a facilitator
- Would like to know what we are doing next for particular issues, how do we move forward with next steps
- Figuring out the structure
- Adjust bylaws to be more functional for this group
- Appoint liaisons to gather information from different groups and bring back to the commission
- Clear understanding of individual roles, commission role, and next steps/action items

The commission also discussed when the retreat will take place. Request to schedule at least a couple months in advance.

The commission put together a retreat planning workgroup. The workgroup includes Kasey Burton, Lydia Felty, Kate Rubin, Liz Fite, and Julissa Sanchez.

Multiple questions came up about quorum and public disclosure from the commission. Laura will research and follow up on these questions.

Unfinished/New Business

- Monthly Meeting Schedule
 - The commissioners do not have any major conflicts and will move forward with having their regular monthly meetings the first Wednesday of the month from 6:30-8pm.
- Proposed Bylaws Updates
 - This item was discussed earlier in the meeting. The interim co-chairs proposed taking a look at the commission's bylaws at the retreat to see what changes may need to be made to work for this group.
- Commission Budget Spending Decision
 - Laura reiterated that the commission has \$5,000 to spend before the end of 2025. She needs to let her supervisor know what the money will be used for by the end of September.
 - The commission voted and approved authorizing the retreat workgroup to decide how to spend up to \$5,000 for the Renters' Commission retreat (including facilitation, venue, and food) with the caveat that they will report back to the commission before spending happens.
- Multifamily Tax Exemption (MFTE) Program Proposal

- There wasn't a proposed decision around this topic, but one of the members wanted to make sure commissioners were aware of the City's Multifamily Tax Exemption (MFTE) Program proposal.
 - The City is proposing to increase qualifying Area Median Income (AMI) in some cases. Example: for one-bedroom units, they're proposing to increase AMI from 70% to up to 75%. So, the amount of rent that could be charged would be higher.
 - One new member asked if commissioners can be more aware of spelling out acronyms and plain language for those who are newer to space.
 - The timeline is tight on this proposal. Seattle City Council plans to vote on it by September 10th but it could be earlier.
 - The commission requested that the City provide a presentation to them about the topic and will record the presentation for members who cannot attend. Laura will follow up on that request.
- Mass Surveillance Expansion
 - The commission voted and approved reviewing, editing, and sending a letter that strongly opposes Council Bills 121052 and 121053 which would greatly expand the Seattle Police Department's CCTV camera network and real time Crime Center RTCC.
 - The workgroup reviewing and editing the letter would be less than a quorum of commissioners. The workgroup includes Adora Blue, Sam Wolfson, Karen Taylor, and Kate Rubin.
- Meetings with Councilmembers
 - There are several upcoming meetings with Seattle City Councilmembers and members of the commission including meetings with:
 - Councilmember Juarez – District 5 (North Seattle), Chair of Housing and Human Services Committee
 - Requested by SRC
 - The Councilmember invited a few SRC members to meet in her office. Due to overwhelming interest from the commission, they've requested that Councilmember Juarez attend a monthly commission meeting.
 - Councilmember Rinck – Citywide
 - Requested by Councilmember
 - Plans to join a future monthly SRC meeting, likely this fall.
 - Councilmember Saka – District 1 (West Seattle and South Park)
 - Requested by Councilmember
 - Requested meeting with SRC co-chairs

Adjournment

The meeting was adjourned.

Decisions and Votes made during this meeting:

1. The commission voted and approved authorizing the retreat workgroup to decide how to spend up to \$5,000 for the Renters' Commission retreat (including facilitation, venue, and food) with the caveat that they will report back to the commission before spending happens.
2. The commission voted and approved reviewing, editing, and sending a letter that strongly opposes Council Bills 121052 and 121053 which would greatly expand the Seattle Police Department's CCTV camera network and real time Crime Center.