

# Office of Hearing Examiner

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<http://www.seattle.gov/examiner/>

## Department Overview

The Office of Hearing Examiner is Seattle's quasi-judicial forum for reviewing factual and legal issues raised by the application of City Code requirements to specific people or property. As authorized by the Seattle Municipal Code, the office conducts hearings and decides appeals in cases where members of the public disagree with a decision made by a City agency. Many of the matters appealed to the Hearing Examiner relate to land use and environmental permit decisions and interpretations made by the Seattle Department of Construction and Inspections. The Hearing Examiner also hears appeals in many other subject areas; and it makes recommendations to the City Council on rezoning petitions, major institution master plans, and other land-use actions.

The Hearing Examiner is appointed by the City Council, and Deputy Hearing Examiners are appointed by the Hearing Examiner. Examiners handle all pre-hearing matters, regulate the conduct of hearings, and prepare decisions and recommendations based upon the hearing record and applicable law. The Seattle Municipal Code requires all examiners to be attorneys with training and experience in administrative hearings. The Hearing Examiner also manages an executive assistant to oversee the administrative areas of the office, a legal assistant to assist with hearings and decision preparation, and an administrative specialist to support all other office positions and provide information to the public.

## Budget Snapshot

|                              | 2024<br>Actuals  | 2025<br>Adopted  | 2026<br>Endorsed | 2026<br>Proposed |
|------------------------------|------------------|------------------|------------------|------------------|
| <b>Department Support</b>    |                  |                  |                  |                  |
| General Fund Support         | 1,305,836        | 1,314,214        | 1,380,463        | 1,372,629        |
| <b>Total Operations</b>      | <b>1,305,836</b> | <b>1,314,214</b> | <b>1,380,463</b> | <b>1,372,629</b> |
| <b>Total Appropriations</b>  | <b>1,305,836</b> | <b>1,314,214</b> | <b>1,380,463</b> | <b>1,372,629</b> |
| Full-Time Equivalents Total* | 5.00             | 5.00             | 5.00             | 5.00             |

*\* FTE totals are provided for informational purposes only. Changes in FTEs resulting from City Council or Human Resources Director actions outside of the budget process may not be detailed here*

## Budget Overview

The 2026 Proposed Budget maintains support to the Office of Hearing Examiner (HXM) and preserves the services provided by the Hearing Examiner to members of the public and the City Council. The budget includes an increase in revenue from providing hearing examiner services to other government entities. Additionally, technical adjustments have been made to bring the proposed budget into alignment with Citywide adjustments to internal service costs.

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### Incremental Budget Changes

#### Office of Hearing Examiner

|  | 2026<br>Budget     | FTE         |
|--|--------------------|-------------|
| <b>Total 2026 Endorsed Budget</b>                              | <b>1,380,463</b>   | <b>5.00</b> |
| <br>Increase in Revenue by Providing Hearing Examiner Services | <br>-              | <br>-       |
| <b>Baseline</b>  |                    |             |
| Citywide Adjustments for Standard Cost Changes                 | 4,689              | -           |
| <b>Proposed Technical</b>                                      |                    |             |
| Bargained Annual Wage Adjustment to Base Budget                | (11,762)           | -           |
| SCERS Retirement Contribution Rate Reduction                   | (761)              | -           |
| <b>Total Incremental Changes</b>                               | <b>\$(7,834)</b>   | <b>-</b>    |
| <b>Total 2026 Proposed Budget</b>                              | <b>\$1,372,629</b> | <b>5.00</b> |

### Description of Incremental Budget Changes

#### Increase in Revenue by Providing Hearing Examiner Services

Revenues \$15,000

This item proposes to increase revenues by \$15,000 for providing expanded hearing examiner services to other government entities.

#### Baseline

#### Citywide Adjustments for Standard Cost Changes

Expenditures \$4,689

Citywide technical adjustments made in the baseline phase reflect changes to internal services costs, including rates from the Department of Finance & Administrative Services, Seattle Information Technology Department, Seattle Department of Human Resources, and for healthcare and other central cost factors. These adjustments reflect initial assumptions about these costs and inflators early in the budget process.

#### Proposed Technical

#### Bargained Annual Wage Adjustment to Base Budget

Expenditures \$(11,762)

This centrally administered change adjusts base budget appropriations to reflect the proper Annual Wage Increase (AWI) increment for 2026, as outlined in the agreements between the City and the Coalition of City Unions for personnel costs. AWI increments are determined based on the average change in the local Consumer Price Index

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(CPI). This change represents a true-up between the forecasted CPI assumption included in the Endorsed Budget and the actual CPI data.

**SCERS Retirement Contribution Rate Reduction**

Expenditures \$(761)

The City’s employee retirement system, the Seattle City Employees Retirement System (SCERS) is a defined benefit pension program funded by a combination of salary-based employer (i.e., the City) and employee contributions, and investment earnings. Based on the updated actuarial valuation for 2025, this item reduces the employer contribution rate from the endorsed rate of 15.17% to the SCERS minimum actuarial required rate of 15.06%.

## Office of Hearing Examiner

### Expenditure Overview

|   | 2024<br>Actuals  | 2025<br>Adopted  | 2026<br>Endorsed | 2026<br>Proposed |
|---|------------------|------------------|------------------|------------------|
| <b>Appropriations</b>                                     |                  |                  |                  |                  |
| <b>HXM - BO-HX-V1X00 - Office of the Hearing Examiner</b> |                  |                  |                  |                  |
| 00100 - General Fund                                      | 1,305,836        | 1,314,214        | 1,380,463        | 1,372,629        |
| <b>Total for BSL: BO-HX-V1X00</b>                         | <b>1,305,836</b> | <b>1,314,214</b> | <b>1,380,463</b> | <b>1,372,629</b> |
| <b>Department Total</b>                                   | <b>1,305,836</b> | <b>1,314,214</b> | <b>1,380,463</b> | <b>1,372,629</b> |
| <b>Department Full-Time Equivalents Total*</b>            | <b>5.00</b>      | <b>5.00</b>      | <b>5.00</b>      | <b>5.00</b>      |

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### Budget Summary by Fund Office of Hearing Examiner

|                              | 2024<br>Actuals  | 2025<br>Adopted  | 2026<br>Endorsed | 2026<br>Proposed |
|------------------------------|------------------|------------------|------------------|------------------|
| 00100 - General Fund         | 1,305,836        | 1,314,214        | 1,380,463        | 1,372,629        |
| <b>Budget Totals for HXM</b> | <b>1,305,836</b> | <b>1,314,214</b> | <b>1,380,463</b> | <b>1,372,629</b> |

### Revenue Overview

#### 2026 Estimated Revenues

| Account<br>Code                                 | Account Name                 | 2024<br>Actuals | 2025<br>Adopted | 2026<br>Endorsed | 2026<br>Proposed |
|---|------------------------------|-----------------|-----------------|------------------|------------------|
| 341180  | Legal Service Fees           | 5,603           | 16,000          | 16,000           | 31,000           |
| 341900  | General Government-Other Rev | 4,675           | 7,500           | 7,500            | 7,500            |
| <b>Total Revenues for: 00100 - General Fund</b> |                              | <b>10,278</b>   | <b>23,500</b>   | <b>23,500</b>    | <b>38,500</b>    |
| <b>Total HXM Resources</b>                      |                              | <b>10,278</b>   | <b>23,500</b>   | <b>23,500</b>    | <b>38,500</b>    |

## Office of Hearing Examiner

### Appropriations by Budget Summary Level and Program

#### **HXM - BO-HX-V1X00 - Office of the Hearing Examiner**

The purpose of the Office of Hearing Examiner Budget Summary Level is to conduct fair and impartial hearings in all subject areas where the Seattle Municipal Code grants authority to do so (there are currently more than 75 subject areas) and to issue decisions and recommendations consistent with applicable law.

| <b>Program Expenditures</b>    | <b>2024<br/>Actuals</b> | <b>2025<br/>Adopted</b> | <b>2026<br/>Endorsed</b> | <b>2026<br/>Proposed</b> |
|--------------------------------|-------------------------|-------------------------|--------------------------|--------------------------|
| Office of the Hearing Examiner | 1,305,836               | 1,314,214               | 1,380,463                | 1,372,629                |
| <b>Total</b>                   | <b>1,305,836</b>        | <b>1,314,214</b>        | <b>1,380,463</b>         | <b>1,372,629</b>         |
| Full-time Equivalents Total*   | 5.00                    | 5.00                    | 5.00                     | 5.00                     |

*\*FTE totals are provided for informational purposes only. Changes in FTEs resulting from City Council or Human Resources Director actions outside of the budget process may not be detailed here*