

# **BYLAWS OF THE CITY OF SEATTLE**

## **HUMAN RIGHTS COMMISSION**

The City of Seattle (“City”) Human Rights Commission (“Commission”) established by the Seattle Municipal Code (“SMC”) 3.14.920, has adopted the following as its Bylaws pursuant to the authority granted in SMC 3.14.940. These Bylaws shall be interpreted to ensure the Commission operates in a manner consistent with its functions and responsibilities established by the Seattle Municipal Code.

### **Article I. General**

#### **Section I.01, Duties**

As set forth in SMC 3.14.931, the Commission shall act in an advisory capacity to the Mayor, City Council, Office for Civil Rights, and other City departments in respect to matters affecting human rights, and in furtherance thereof shall have the following specific responsibilities:

- (a) To consult with and make recommendations to the Director of the Office for Civil Rights and other City departments and officials regarding the development of programs for the promotion of equality, justice, and understanding among all citizens of the City;
- (b) To consult with and make recommendations to the Director of the Office for Civil Rights with regard to problems arising in the City which may result in discrimination because of race, religion, creed, color, national origin, citizenship or immigration status, sex, marital status, parental status, sexual orientation, gender identity, political ideology, age, ancestry, honorably discharged veteran or military status, genetic information, the presence of any disability, alternative source of income, participation in a Section 8 or other subsidy program, right of a parent to breastfeed a child, an individual’s actual, potential, perceived, or alleged pregnancy outcomes as defined in SMC 14.04.030, or the use of a service animal by a disabled person, and to make such investigations and hold such hearings as may be necessary to identify such problems;
- (c) As appropriate, study and advise as part of recommending policies to all departments and offices of the City in matters affecting civil rights and equal opportunity, and recommend legislation for the implementation of such policies;
- (d) Encourage understanding between all protected classes and the larger Seattle community, through long range projects;
- (e) Hear appeals and hearings as set forth in Chapters 14.04, 14.06, 14.08, and 14.09 of the Seattle Municipal Code;
- (f) Report on a semi-annual basis to the Mayor and the City Council. The reports shall include an annual or semi-annual work plan, a briefing of the Commission’s public involvement process for soliciting community and citizen input in framing their annual work plans, and updates on the work plans;
- (g) Meet on a quarterly basis through a designated representative with the Seattle Women’s Commission, the Seattle LGBTQ (Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender, Queer) Commission, the Immigrants and Refugee Commission, and the Seattle Disability Commission to ensure coordination and joint project development;
- (h) Engage the community and the public at large to identify issues relevant to human rights, gather public feedback, and co-develop community-led solutions.

## **Article II. Membership**

### **Section II.01, Appointments**

In accordance with SMC 3.14.920, the Commission shall be composed of 21 Commissioners. Nine members shall be appointed or nominated by the Mayor (which includes one member nominated through the Get Engaged program pursuant to Chapter 3.51 SMC), eight members shall be appointed by the City Council, and four members shall be appointed by the Commission as constituted. All appointments and nominations other than City Council appointments shall be subject to confirmation by a majority vote of the City Council.

Commissioners shall be representative residents, and shall include representatives of minority communities, other protected classes, and persons with demonstrated concern and background in human rights.

### **Section II.02, Terms**

In accordance with SMC 3.14.920, Commissioners shall be appointed to two- year terms. Commissioners shall not serve more than two consecutive two-year terms. For nominees and appointees subject to City Council confirmation, the terms of such members start on the date of Council confirmation. For members appointed by the Council, the terms of those members start on the date of appointment by the Council. If a member is appointed or nominated to serve an unexpired term of a previous Commission member, that term shall qualify as one of two consecutive terms only if the length of the unexpired term actually served is one year or more. Any vacancy shall be filled for the unexpired term in the same manner as an original appointment. A member whose term is ending may continue on an interim basis as a member with voting rights until such time as a successor for that position has been appointed by the Council or confirmed by the Council.

### **Section II.03, Duties**

Commissioners are expected to spend a minimum of ten (10) hours per month participating in the following:

- (a) Attend and actively participate in monthly and annual Commission meetings.
- (b) Serve on at least one standing committee, ad-hoc committee and/or task force for at least 50% of one's term.
- (c) Organize, attend and participate in community meetings, forums, and other events when able.
- (d) Respond to commission related communications in a timely manner.
- (e) Participate in appeal hearings.
- (f) Support other commission projects as identified.
- (g) Review City Policies related to civil rights and social justice and make recommendations for improvements to the Office of Civil Rights and City Council as needed.
- (h) Section II.04 Code of Ethics
- (i) In accordance with SMC Chapter 4.16, all Commissioners shall adhere to the City of Seattle Code of Ethics.

## **Section II.05, Attendance**

Commissioners are expected to attend every monthly Commission meeting and scheduled meetings for the task force or committees on which they serve. If a Commissioner is unable to attend a meeting, it shall be their responsibility to notify a member of the Executive Committee of their absence in advance.

If a commissioner is absent for two (2) consecutive Commission, committee, or task force meetings in a 12-month period, the Commissioner will be expected to notify a member of the Executive Committee with a general explanation for the absence. If the Commissioner fails to do so, the Chair of the Commission shall reaffirm the attendance policy in writing to the Commissioner. If a Commissioner is absent for four meetings in a 12-month period, that Commissioner shall notify the Executive Committee making a firm commitment to attend all future meetings for the remainder of the 12-month period. Personal or extenuating circumstances may be grounds for a leave of absence determined on a case-by-case basis.

## **Section II.06, Resignations**

The Office of Civil Rights requests that Commissioners wishing to resign from the Commission submit a letter of resignation to the Commission Co-Chairs and staff liaison in the Office for Civil Rights, that the resignation notice clearly indicates the effective date of the resignation, and that the effective date of resignation be no later than fourteen (14) days from the date of submission.

## **Section II.07, Removals**

Commissioners may be removed by their appointing authority only for failure to meet assigned duties and responsibilities, including as relates to attendance as above described, as well as for non-compliance with the City's Code of Ethics.

If a Commissioner believes another Commissioner has acted in a manner that may establish grounds for removal, the Commissioner may submit a request to the Co-Chairs and the staff liaison in the Office for Civil Rights for an executive session of the Commission to discuss the matter. During the executive session, the Commissioner requesting the executive session will present their concern(s). The Co-Chairs will then determine next steps for evaluating or investigating the concern(s). If the request for removal involves requested removal of a Co-Chair, the other Co-Chairs will determine next steps for evaluating or investigating the concern(s), and the Co-Chair who is the subject of the concern(s) shall be recused from consideration of the concern(s).

All Commissioners shall receive at least seven (7) days' written notice that an upcoming Commission meeting agenda will include an item for consideration regarding recommended removal of a Commissioner.

For Commissioners who were appointed by the Commission, a majority vote of the Commission's current membership (not a majority of those present) may approve removal of Commission-appointed Commissioner. If such a vote to remove a Commission-appointed Commissioner is approved by the Commission, the removal shall be effective immediately.

For Commissioners appointed or nominated by the Mayor or the City Council, a majority vote of the Commission's current membership (not a majority of those present) may approve the recommendation of a Commissioner's removal to the Commissioner's appointing authority.

The Co-Chairs and the staff liaison in the Office for Civil Rights shall notify the applicable City Council Committee Chairperson of a Commission vote to recommend removal of a Council-appointed Commissioner within seven (7) days of the Commission vote to remove. The Co-Chairs and the staff liaison in the Office for Civil Rights shall notify the Mayor's office of a Commission vote to recommend removal of a Mayor-appointed Commissioner within seven (7) days of the Commission vote to remove. If the Mayor or the City Council, as applicable, approves the removal of the Mayor-appointed or Council-appointed Commissioner at issue, the removal shall be effective.

## **Article III. Meetings and Procedures**

### **Section III.01, Open Public Meetings Act**

In accordance with RCW 42.30.030, the Commission shall comply with the Open Public Meetings Act ("OPMA") and the Public Records Act.

### **Section III.02, Agenda**

Commissioners who wish to add an item to the meeting agenda must submit the item to the Commission Executive Committee Co-Chairs at least ten (10) business days prior to the general Commission meeting. Proposed agenda items submitted less than ten (10) business days may not be added to that upcoming meeting's agenda.

### **Section III.03, Parliamentary Procedure**

Robert's Rules of Orders shall be used for formal Commission actions, including but not limited to adopting official positions; deciding content and manner of official presentations to the Mayor, City Council, other City departments and external agencies; approving the agenda and minutes of Commission meetings; endorsing events; creating Task Forces; and amending Bylaws. Commissioners must disclose any potential conflict of interest prior to voting and must abstain unless the Co-Chairs unanimously decide to allow the potentially conflicted Commissioner to vote and submit written justification documenting that decision.

### **Section III.04, Quorum**

A simple majority of confirmed Commissioners shall constitute a quorum for the transaction of Commission business at any given meeting. Commissioners who are on approved leave do not count toward quorum. In the event a Commission meeting is interrupted by the loss of a quorum of commissioners, the presiding Co-Chair shall announce that the Commission meeting has been adjourned due to the absence of a quorum. The meeting may continue with further informational presentations and discussions, but no official Commission business or voting can occur.

## **Voting**

It shall be the responsibility of each Commissioner to vote on all questions put for action. Commissioners shall recuse themselves, when necessary, because of a conflict of interest per Section III.03. Unless otherwise specified in these Bylaws, any action or motion of the Commission may be adopted by a simple majority vote of the Commissioners in attendance. A roll call vote shall be required if requested by any Commissioner.

## **Section III.05, Public Comment**

The Commission encourages public comment. The Commission shall designate time at each regular monthly Commission meeting for public comment. The Commission may establish time limits for each speaker and an overall time for the receipt of public comment. Public comment may be submitted in any language and provided in either written or verbal format, in person or online. Members of the public using interpretation services are allowed additional time for their public comment.

## **Section III.06, Regular Meetings**

The Commission shall meet on the first Thursday of every month from 6:00 p.m. - 8:00 p.m. The physical location of such meetings shall be at Seattle City Hall in Room L280, unless circumstances require a different location as described in the meeting notice.

Commissioners and members of the public may participate either in person or through an online meeting platform. Online meeting link to be included in the distributed agenda.

There shall be a minimum of ten (10) regular monthly Commission meetings per year, and one (1) annual retreat. The dates and times of regular meetings shall be posted on the Commission's website as required by the Open Public Meetings Act, including posting of the agenda on the Commission's website at least 24 hours prior to each meeting (RCW 42.30.077), unless otherwise required by law.

## **Section III.07, Special Meetings**

Special meetings of the Commission shall be held in accordance with the Open Public Meetings Act (see, e.g., RCW 42.30.080). Special meetings may be called at any time by Commission Co-Chairs or by a majority of Commissioners. The public shall be notified by a posted notice at least 24 hours prior to the special meeting. The Commission shall only take action on matters included in the special meeting notice.

## **Section III.08, Committee and Task Force Meetings**

Committees and task forces shall include less than a quorum of the Commission, and shall meet at minimum once per month at an agreed upon time and, as determined by that committee's or task force's members.

Appeals hearings will be scheduled for Commissioners to attend and participate as needed by the Office for Civil Rights.

The schedule for Committee and Task Force meetings shall be provided to Office for Civil Rights staff for publication on the Commissions' website.

### **Section III.09, Annual Retreat**

The Commission shall hold an annual retreat where a work plan will either be developed or reviewed to drive the commission's strategic direction. The Commission should consider City and State legislative activities in scheduling the Annual Retreat and development of the work plan.

### **Section III.10, Commission Meeting Cancellations**

The Executive Committee may cancel a Commission meeting due to lack of agenda items or as deemed necessary. The Commission's staff liaison from the Seattle Office for Civil Rights shall issue notice of such cancellations no later than 24 hours in advance of the scheduled meeting time pursuant to the requirements of the Open Public Meetings Act.

## **Article IV. Executive Committee**

### **Section IV.01, Election**

The following Executive Committee roles will be filled via elections: Three (3) Co-Chairs; Secretary; Administrator; Treasurer; Communications Chair; Events Chair; and Appeals Chair. Elections will be held at the last Commission meeting of the calendar year. If the Co-Chairs deem it necessary, the positions of Administrator and Treasurer may be combined into a single position.

### **Section IV.02, Terms**

The Executive Committee shall serve one-year terms or until a successor has been elected. Executive Committee members are limited to serving two consecutive terms. Newly elected Executive Committee members shall begin their term at the first Commission meeting following their election.

### **Section IV.03, Vacancies**

Except in the case of death, resignation, incapacity, or removal, Executive Committee members shall serve until the end of their term. To fill a vacant officer position, the Executive Committee shall appoint a successor to serve the remainder of the vacated term.

### **Section IV.04, Resignations and Removals**

Any Executive Committee member may resign from their position while remaining a commissioner, by providing written notice to any Co-Chair and the Commission's staff liaison with the Office of Civil Rights. The effective date may be no later than two calendar weeks from the date of submission. Should a commissioner wish to resume an Executive Committee member position after the effective date of resignation, election procedures outlined in these Bylaws shall apply.

Officers may be removed from their position by a simple majority vote of Commissioners present at any regular or special meeting. A vote of the Commission shall be taken no sooner than 14 days and no later than 28 days after written notice of intent to remove the Officer is submitted to the Executive Committee and to the Commission's staff liaison in the Office for Civil Rights, including the cause of removal. After receiving such written notice,

the Executive Committee shall inform the Commissioner of the recommendation for removal. A Commissioner may be removed from an Executive Committee position and continue to serve as a Commissioner.

## **Article V. Committees and Task Forces**

### **Section V.01, Standing Committees**

There shall be standing committees: Executive, Communications, Events, and Appeals. Committee chairs shall facilitate development of agendas for meetings. Committee chairs shall also ensure that meeting minutes are taken, are stored in the Commission's document storage location, and are available to the Office for Civil Rights.

#### **(a) Executive**

The Executive Committee is empowered to conduct the overall affairs of the Commission as outlined in these Bylaws and any other relevant municipal code, policy, and procedure.

The Commission delegates its authority to the Executive Committee to carry out the Commission's past decisions and actions between regular Commission meetings. This delegation may be general in nature and need not be expressly reiterated for every step or action to be taken. Should the situation demand urgent action requiring a vote of the Commission, a special meeting may be called. Otherwise, the matter may be added to the next monthly agenda as prescribed in these Bylaws.

#### **(b) Communications**

The Communications Committee, led by the elected Communications Chair, shall publish statements and other media as needed on behalf of the Commission's Committees and Task Forces including but not limited to website updates, social media posts, messages of support and advocacy, status updates on monthly meetings, human rights scorecards, annual reports, and work plans. Communications will not be in support of or in opposition to any campaign for elected office or ballot measure.

#### **(c) Events**

The Events Committee, led by the elected Events Chair, shall organize and coordinate events hosted by the Seattle Human Rights Commission, including an annual Human Rights Day event; provide logistical support to Task Forces to host events; and create and maintain documentation of event logistics.

The Events Committee Chair shall:

- i. Serve as manager for internal and external events hosted by the Commission. Internal event management may include social events and the annual retreat. External events include those hosted by other organizations (e.g. tabling at other city events) as well as public forums on Commission issues. The most substantial external event is the annual Human Rights Day event.
- ii. Oversee volunteers, vendors, scheduling, space management, and other related obligations to ensure successful events.
- iii. Create and routinely update a calendar of events related to the Commission.

- iv. Provide monthly updates to the commission about upcoming events and planning progress.
- v. Liaise with Task Force chairs to ensure the events calendar is reflective of Task Force activities.

**(d) Appeals**

The Seattle Human Rights Commission is to hear appeals and hearings as set forth in Chapters 14.04, 14.06, 14.08, and 14.09 of the Seattle Municipal Code and Seattle Human Rights Rules Chapter 46– Seattle Human Rights Commission Appeals Rules.

Appeals Committee Chair shall:

- i. Represent the Commission and the Office for Civil Rights with respect to hearing appeals of determinations in accordance with SMC Chapter 14.
- ii. Ensure each appeal hearing has three commissioners present along with 1 available alternate.
- iii. Coordinate with the Office for Civil Right to provide regularly scheduled training for Commissioners to ensure adequate staffing at future appeals and hearings.
- iv. Per Section 1.01 of this document, recommend modifications to Seattle Human Rights Rules Chapter 46 as needed.

**Section V.02, Task Forces**

Task Forces are standing work groups and are established based on Commissions work plan.

Task Forces shall consist of Commissioners, led by a Task Force Chair. If a task force does not field at least two members then the task force will be removed from the work plan. It can be reinstated through a vote.

Consistent with the Commission’s duties described in Section 1.01, Task Forces shall:

- (a) Conduct research on the topic of the Task Force.
- (b) Ensure that minutes are taken at meetings and are stored in the Commission’s document storage location and available to the Office for Civil Rights.
- (c) Host a minimum of two (2) events per year to present and/or gather information surrounding the topic.
- (d) Work actively in conjunction with other Task Forces on issues of intersectionality.
- (e) Submit for review and publication any recommended changes to legislation, policy, or practice that affects the topic of the Task Force.
- (f) New Task Forces may be established upon the recommendation of any Commissioner to the Executive Committee. Should the Executive Committee by majority vote approve the proposed Task Force, appropriate steps shall be taken to bring the proposal to the Commission for approval by two-thirds vote of commissioners present.
- (g) The Seattle Human Rights Commission’s Executive Committee shall form a permanent Task Force responsible for recruitment, onboarding, and retention of new Commissioners.

The Task Force Chair shall:

- (a) Report regularly on the progress of their Task Forces at the monthly Commission meeting.
- (b) Establish an annual work plan which includes metrics for success and a communications strategy.
- (c) Such other duties as the Commission may require, as determined by the Commission on a case-by-case basis.
- (d) Call Task Force meetings to order, reserve space in person or virtually, and prepare meeting agendas based upon contributions from fellow Task Force members.
- (e) Facilitate development of agenda Task Force meetings.
- (f) Ensure minutes are taken at the meetings and uploaded to the commission's document storage location.

### **Section V.03, Ad-Hoc Committees**

When issues arise which do not readily fall under the existing Task Forces, an Ad Hoc Task Force may be established and Commissioners appointed to serve upon it. If one year after its establishment, an Ad Hoc Task Force continues to exist, the Commission shall review and determine whether the Ad Hoc Task Force shall continue and in what capacity.

### **Section V.04, Executive Officer Duties**

#### **(a) Co-Chairs**

The Co-Chairs shall have responsibility for general supervision and guidance of the affairs of the Commission and shall run all monthly meetings of the Commission, and act as the spokespeople for, or representatives of, the Commission. Co-Chairs shall jointly complete the following tasks, but are not limited to these functions:

- i. Report on a semi-annual basis to the Mayor and the City Council. The Report shall include an annual or two-year semi-annual work plan, a briefing of the Commission's public involvement process for soliciting community input, and updates on progress made toward meeting the work plan goals (SMC 3.14.931).
- ii. Perform the duties as the Commission may require or determined by the Commission on a case-by-case basis.
- iii. Lead collaboration with the Seattle Office of Civil Rights in matters of Commission administration including attending the quarterly Seattle Office for Civil Rights Five-Commissions meeting, in accordance with SMC 3.14.931 (G).
- iv. Facilitate updates that reflect the activities of the Commission's Committees and Task Forces into the Commission's Work Plan and discuss these with the Five Commissions.

#### **(b) Communications**

The Communications Chair shall:

- i. Serve as member of the Executive Committee.
- ii. Collaborate with the Seattle Office for Civil Rights in matters of external communication needs.
- iii. Ensure the Commission's social media accounts are used in a manner that complies with the City of Seattle Code of Ethics (SMC 4.16) and any additional City or Commission policies.
- iv. Ensure that social media login information is held as part of the Commission's

- official records and (with the Office for Civil Rights staff liaison.
- v. Ensure the day-to-day operation of the Commission's communications, including but not limited to transmitting press releases, promotion of events, and engagement with community.
  - vi. Provide communication-related support to the Commission's Committees and Task Forces.
  - vii. Develop a communications plan for the Commission, in collaboration with other Commissioners.
  - viii. Report at monthly meetings on progress of the communications plan.

**(c) Secretary**

The Secretary shall:

- i. Take meeting notes and attendance at commission meetings, and store documents in the Commission's document storage location for publication. In the event of the Secretary's absence, the Administrator shall take meeting notes or identify another Commissioner to do so.
- ii. Keep and make available for publication the minutes of all Executive Committee meetings.
- iii. Facilitate development of agenda for monthly Commission meeting.
- iv. Such other duties as the Commission may require, as determined by the Commission on a case-by-case basis.

**(d) Treasurer**

The Treasurer shall:

- i. Track expenses.
- ii. Provide a regular status update of the Commission's annual budget.
- iii. Support the annual Human Rights Day Event planning process.
- iv. Help draft budget requests.

**(e) Administrator**

The Administrator shall:

- i. Serve as back-up for the Secretary as needed.
- ii. Facilitate Commission review of materials, proposals, and official Office of Civil Rights training information in advance of Commission meetings where voting and training is planned.
- iii. Provide administrative support to the Commission's Committees and Task Forces.

**Article VI. Amendments**

These bylaws may be amended at any meeting of the Commission by a two-thirds vote of the Commissioners provided the proposed amendment was submitted in writing to the Commission at least two (2) weeks prior to the meeting at which the amendment is voted upon.