

# 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 makes recommendations to the City Council on rezone petitions, major institution master plans, and other Council 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

	2022 Actuals	2023 Adopted	2024 Endorsed	2024 Adopted
<b>Department Support</b>				
General Fund Support	1,063,079	1,163,296	1,189,054	1,218,519
<b>Total Operations</b>	<b>1,063,079</b>	<b>1,163,296</b>	<b>1,189,054</b>	<b>1,218,519</b>
<b>Total Appropriations</b>	<b>1,063,079</b>	<b>1,163,296</b>	<b>1,189,054</b>	<b>1,218,519</b>
Full-Time Equivalent 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

## Office of Hearing Examiner

### Incremental Budget Changes

#### Office of Hearing Examiner

	2024 Budget	FTE
<b>Total 2024 Endorsed Budget</b>	<b>1,189,054</b>	<b>5.00</b>
<b>Baseline</b>		
Citywide Adjustments for Standard Cost Changes	15,473	-
<b>Proposed Technical</b>		
Hearing Examiner Salary Increase	20,000	-
<b>Council</b>		
SCERS Contribution Rate Change	(6,008)	-
<b>Total Incremental Changes</b>	<b>\$29,465</b>	<b>-</b>
<b>Total 2024 Adopted Budget</b>	<b>\$1,218,519</b>	<b>5.00</b>

### Description of Incremental Budget Changes

#### Baseline

##### Citywide Adjustments for Standard Cost Changes

Expenditures \$15,473

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, retirement, and industrial insurance charges for the department. These adjustments reflect initial assumptions about these costs and inflators early in the budget process.

#### Proposed Technical

##### Hearing Examiner Salary Increase

Expenditures \$20,000

This item is a technical adjustment to add budget for an ongoing salary increase approved by the City Council with the Hearing Examiner's reappointment to a 4-year term. The salary increase was effective March 21, 2023.

#### Council

##### SCERS Contribution Rate Change

Expenditures \$(6,008)

## Office of Hearing Examiner

The City's employee retirement system, the Seattle City Employees Retirement System (SCERS), of which most non-uniformed City employees are members, is a defined benefit pension program funded by a combination of salary-based employer (i.e., the City) and employee contributions, and investment earnings.

The employer portion of the SCERS contribution is funded through the annual budget process as a percentage of salaries based on several factors including reports from the contracted actuary and the City's long-range financial forecasts. The Mayor's 2024 Proposed Mid-Biennial Budget included an employer contribution rate of 16.22%, which was determined prior to the actuary's recommendation but provided for long-term "smoothing" given the City's long-term financial challenges.

This item reduces the employer contribution rate from the proposed rate of 16.22% to the SCERS minimum actuarial required rate of 15.17%, which was determined to provide sufficient funding to the retirement system to achieve 100% funded status by 2042.

# Office of Hearing Examiner

## 2023-24 Mid-Biennium Adopted Budget Updates - Expenses

Budget Summary Level	Fund	Budget Process Phase Endorsed	Adopted Changes	Grand Total
Office of the Hearing Examiner	00100 - General Fund	1,189,054	29,465	1,218,519
<b>Office of the Hearing Examiner Total</b>		<b>1,189,054</b>	<b>29,465</b>	<b>1,218,519</b>
<b>Grand Total</b>		<b>1,189,054</b>	<b>29,465</b>	<b>1,218,519</b>