



Seattle
Civil Service Department

2024 Annual Report



Introduction

Upholding Excellence in Public Service

Every day, City of Seattle civil servants play a vital role in shaping the community for people who live, work, and visit. From public safety and emergency response to maintaining utilities, powering the city, and fostering arts and recreation, these dedicated professionals keep Seattle running.

Seattle’s commitment to a strong, capable municipal workforce dates back to 1896, when voters approved a City Charter that codified a civil service system, to ensure that hiring and employment decisions are based on merit—not politics. This system remains a cornerstone of Seattle city government, ensuring fair treatment of employees and the delivery of high-quality public services.

Oversight and Integrity

Today, two independent commissions uphold the integrity of Seattle’s civil service system:

- The Civil Service Commission (CSC)
- The Public Safety Civil Service Commission (PSCSC)

These commissions serve as independent governing bodies with quasi-judicial and regulatory authority. The civil service commissions conduct hearings, issue administrative rulings, and ensure compliance with civil service laws and rules.

A key function of the PSCSC is overseeing the development and administration of rigorous civil service exams for entry-level and promotional positions in public safety, ensuring that the city’s police and fire personnel are selected through a fair, competitive process. The CSC and PSCSC are housed in the Civil Service Department (“CIV”), a hub of expertise dedicated to maintaining fair, transparent, and effective employment systems that uphold the values of public service. Through oversight, accountability, and accessibility, the independent Civil Service Department and Civil Service Commissions help sustain a diverse, professional workforce, committed to serving Seattle.

2024 Highlights

1. Strengthening Police Applications and Testing

Seattle, like other urban centers, has faced persistent challenges recruiting and retaining police officers. While CIV does not oversee police recruiting or hiring directly, the civil service application and examination process is a vital gateway for new police officers. In 2024, CIV staff took decisive action to address Seattle’s police staffing challenges:

- **Collaborated with key stakeholders**, including the Seattle Police Department (SPD), Mayor Bruce Harrell’s Office and City Council, to refine advertising and recruiting efforts, improve access by removing barriers, and decrease the time candidates spent in the application and testing process.
- **Secured critical legislative support**, as City Council passed the [Ordinance 127026](#) which bolstered police recruitment and retention efforts while funding additional staff to expand testing capacity.
- **Launched key initiatives**, including wraparound support to police candidates, a continuous police officer testing model, and robust data collection through candidate surveys and reporting metrics.



Thanks in large part to these initiatives, Seattle **saw police officer applications and test completions more than double** by year’s end. This growth highlights the power of strategic investment and collaboration of multiple stakeholders working toward a shared goal.

2. Due Diligence Process Affirms Appropriate Police Civil Service Exam

With an eye on expediting police hiring, the Mayor’s Office and City Council asked the PSCSC to evaluate police test vendors. PSCSC staff conducted a comprehensive analysis, which culminated in the [Entry Police Exam Vendor Due Diligence Report](#) (June 17, 2024).

Key findings led the PSCSC to:

- **Affirm selection of its current vendor and exam**, ensuring continuity in a well-established, legally validated, and competitive examination process.
- **Commit to regular assessment and process improvement**, working closely with stakeholders to identify opportunities for refinement and efficiency.

The report is a useful resource for understanding the history of civil service and police candidate assessment, its intersection with police reform and constitutional policing, and the potential challenges of transitioning to a new vendor.

3. Strengthening Public Safety Exams by Unifying the Civil Service Department

A major organizational shift in 2024 saw the return of the Public Safety Exams Unit from the Seattle Department of Human Resources (SDHR) to the Civil Service Department. This move strengthens Seattle’s public safety exams function and reinforces the independences of CIV’s work by:

- **Reinforcing accountability** by formalizing the existing leadership structure between the Executive Director and public safety exam staff.
- **Enhancing efficiency and providing opportunities for improvement**, by consolidating exams and related responsibilities under the appropriate agency and commission.

The transfer was formalized in the 2025-2026 Budget, marking a key milestone for the Civil Service Department.

4. Welcoming New Leaders: Three New Commissioners

CIV welcomed three new commissioners in 2024!

- **Ray Ceaser (Seattle City Light)** and **Tom Applegate (Seattle Fire Department)** were elected in fall of 2023 by employee members of the CSC and PSCSC systems, respectively, beginning their terms on January 1, 2024.
- **Denise Wells** joined mid-year to fill an unexpected vacancy on the CSC. Her City Council appointment was confirmed in September of 2024 to complete the term ending in 2024, and to serve through December of 2027.

5. Improving Exam Rules for Clarity and Fairness

In keeping with its commitment to transparent and effective civil service examinations, the PSCSC undertook key rule revisions in 2024:

- **PSCSC Rule 9.12** - Restored a **minimum passing grade** for promotional fire “oral boards” (interviews), reinforcing high standards in leadership assessment and selection.
- **PSCSC Rule 9.23** - Clarified procedural steps and memorialized a “**clearly erroneous**” **standard of review** for promotional exam protests, ensuring fairness and consistency.

These updates reflect the PSCSC’s ongoing dedication to a merit-based, legally sound, and accessible civil service system for the benefit of employees, management, and the public who rely upon Seattle’s police and fire departments for critical, competent, and timely assistance.

CIV Department: Who We Are and What We Do

Civil service ensures that qualified employees are hired to perform critical municipal services, and that employment decisions remain free from the political pressure. Together, Seattle’s two civil service commissions provide employment protections for almost 10,000 City employees across 37 City departments.

The [Civil Service Commission \(CSC\)](#) covers most City employees¹ while the [Public Safety Civil Service Commission \(PSCSC\)](#) includes employees in non-command staff sworn police and fire personnel². The Civil Service Department (CIV) staffs both commissions and is an independent City department, not reporting to the Mayor, City Council, or other elected City official.

Each commission is comprised of three members, with one appointment each by the Mayor and the City Council, and one commissioner elected by employees within the respective civil service system. CIV’s Executive Director is appointed jointly by CSC and PSCSC commissioners and confirmed by the City Council. Both commissions have quasi-judicial authority to hear appeals and issue remedies in accordance with their rulings.

The commissions derive their authority from State Law, City Charter, Seattle Municipal Code. Each commission’s rules authorize them to ensure that City departments comply with civil service processes and Personnel Rules, and that the broader personnel systems function with fairness and integrity.

As of 2024 year-end, CIV was staffed by nine full time employees (FTEs), and City Council added a tenth budgeted FTE beginning in 2025. Three of CIV’s FTEs support the commissions’ general operations such as required open and public meetings, rulemaking, personnel system oversight, conducting disciplinary appeals, and other ongoing department and commission business. The remaining six FTEs complete the work of developing and administering entry level and promotional exams for thousands of employees and potential employees each year.

¹ City Charter and Seattle Municipal Code authorize exemptions from the Civil Service for certain job titles across the City; other titles may be exempted if they meet criteria of Personnel Rule 2.2, subject to approval by City Council. Employees of the Seattle Public Library and temporary employees are not covered by civil service.

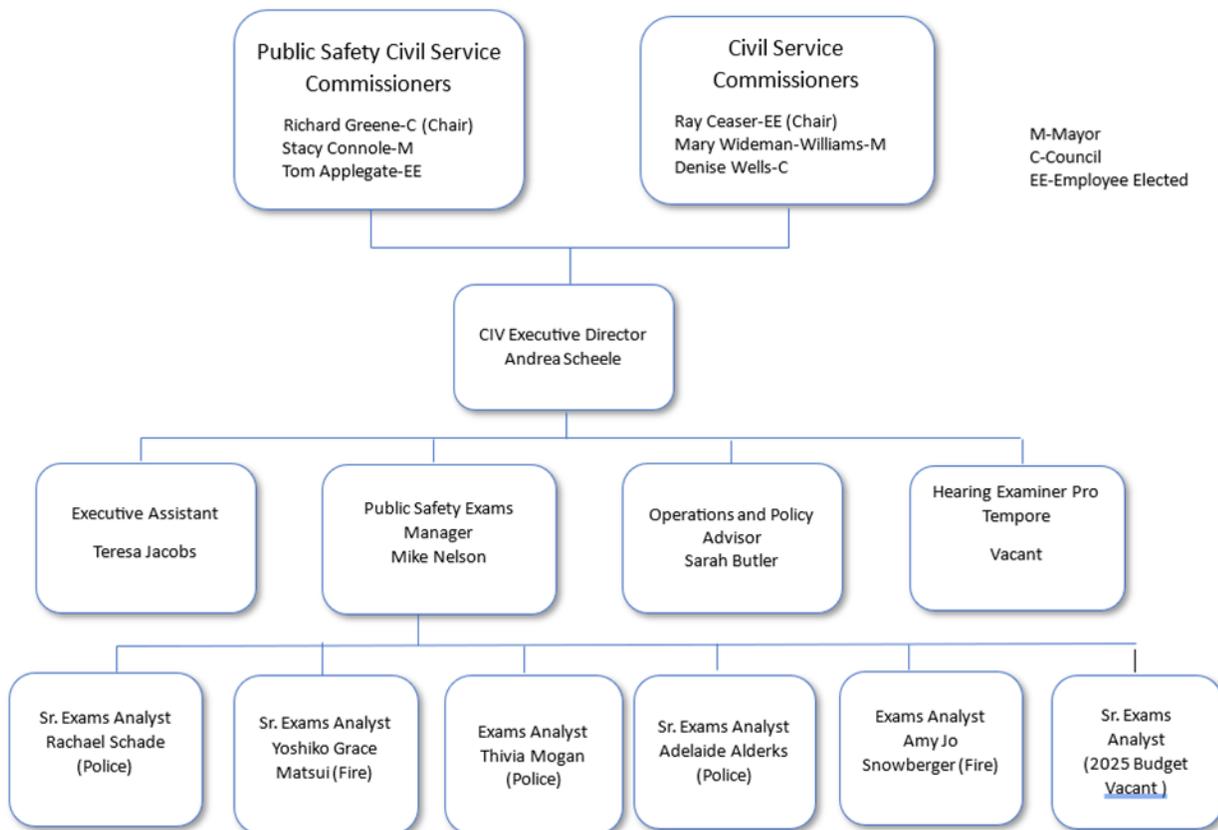
² Seattle Municipal Code affirms public safety civil service coverage for the following classifications: police special recruits, police recruits, police officers, police sergeants, police captains, police lieutenants, fire fighter pre-recruits, fire fighters, fire lieutenants, fire captains, fire battalion chiefs, fireboat pilots, fireboat engineers and assistant fireboat engineers.

2024 Highlights

In 2024, CIV staffed over 20 open and public meetings and facilitated two commission retreats for the CSC and PSCSC. Public meetings are held in a hybrid format via video conference and in-person attendance at the Seattle Municipal Tower.

CIV continued to expand outreach throughout the year, with a focus on improving digital engagement. Staff completed a comprehensive refresh of both commissions’ websites to streamline navigation and enhance content accessibility. CIV also maintained and expanded its LinkedIn presence to better share updates and connect with stakeholders, including the public.

CIV Organizational Chart (December 2024)



Civil Service Commission and System Overview

The Civil Service Commission (CSC) system is the larger of the two civil service systems in Seattle and currently serves approximately 7,900 City employees. Established by the Seattle City Charter, the CSC’s oversight responsibilities are further defined by the [Seattle Municipal Code 4.04](#), the City’s [Personnel Rules](#), and the [Civil Service Commission Rules of Practice and Procedure](#). The CSC operates under core principles of **integrity, equity, and accessibility**, and is committed to upholding these values in its oversight and governance of the civil service system.

CSC 2024 Commission Roster

Commissioner	Appointment Type	Term
Ray Ceaser, Chair	Employee Elected	January 1, 2024 – December 31, 2026
Mary Wideman-Williams	Mayor	January 1, 2023 – December 31, 2025
Denise Wells	City Council	January 1, 2025 – December 31, 2027

Former Commissioner Charlene MacMillan, appointed by the City Council, resigned in mid-2024, and we thank her for her service to the CSC.

CSC Core Functions

- **Rulemaking and Compliance, Political Patronage Investigations**
The CSC is authorized to address allegations of political patronage in hiring and promotion, through investigations and public hearings. Departments are required to report disciplinary actions and probationary separations for employees in civil service positions to CSC.
- **Recommendations to the Mayor and City Council**
CSC makes recommendations regarding administration of the personnel system to policymakers.
- **Disciplinary and Other Appeals**
The CSC conducts quasi-judicial hearings for employee appeals of suspensions, terminations, and demotions, and other alleged violations of the Personnel Rules and/or the Personnel Ordinance (SMC 4.08).
- **Outreach and Education**
The CSC is dedicated to educating employees, HR staff, unions and departments about civil service rights and procedures. We live our values of service and accessibility by reaching our diverse employees where they are, when they need us.

Rulemaking, Compliance, and Political Patronage Investigations

In 2024, the CSC did not amend its Rules nor did it receive any complaints of political patronage.

The CSC received and monitored notices of higher-level disciplinary action, and probationary dismissals involving civil service-covered employees.

2024 Summary of Probationary Dismissals and Discipline Reported to the CSC				
Department	Probationary Dismissal	Suspension	Demotion	Termination
City Light	3	7	1	3
Finance and Administrative Services	1	2	0	1
Information Technology	4	1	0	1
Office of Immigrant & Refugee Affairs	1	0	0	0
Parks & Recreation	12	4	0	4
Seattle Center	0	0	0	3
Seattle Department of Construction & Inspections	2	1	0	0
Seattle Department of Human Resources	1	0	0	0
Seattle Department of Transportation	3	5	2	1
Seattle Police Department	4	4	0	2
Seattle Public Utilities	2	1	0	4
Total	33	26	3	19
Notes: Data is based on information submitted by departments and may not reflect all actions. Departments not listed here reported no higher-level of disciplinary actions or probationary dismissals.				

Disciplinary and Other Appeals

The CSC did not receive any appeals from civil service-covered City employees in 2024. However, CIV staff provided on-demand consultation and support to employees navigating disciplinary civil service processes.

Public Safety Civil Service Commission

The Public Safety Civil Service Commission (PSCSC) has jurisdiction over 2,000 sworn police officers and uniformed fire fighters in Seattle’s Police and Fire Departments. The PSCSC is authorized and required by Seattle City Charter and the [Revised Code of Washington 41.08](#) and [41.12](#); its oversight is directed by the [Seattle Municipal Code 4.08](#), and the [PSCSC Rules of Practice and Procedure](#).

PSCSC 2024 Commission Roster

Commissioner	Appointment Type	Term
Richard Greene, Chair	City Council	January 1, 2023 – December 31, 2025
Stacy Connole	Mayor	January 1, 2022 – December 31, 2024
Tom Applegate	Employee Elected	January 1, 2024 – December 31, 2026

Queniya Mays was appointed by Mayor Bruce Harrell to serve as a commissioner for the term January 1, 2025 through December 31, 2027. CIV thanks Commissioner Connole for her six years (two terms) of service at PSCSC.

PSCSC’s core functions:

- Merit-based Hiring and Promotional Exams for Fire and Police - Utilizing subject matter experts from SPD and SFD, we develop and administer entry-level and promotional civil service exams that are used to hire and promote qualified police officers, firefighters, and higher ranks. The PSCSC rules set forth how appointing authorities hire and promote public safety employees.
- Rulemaking, Oversight, Compliance - The [PSCSC Rules of Practice and Procedure](#) govern the public safety personnel system of The City of Seattle, including discipline and discharge, position classification, discipline appeal hearings, entry and promotional examinations, certification and appointment, probation, service credit, layoff, application of veteran’s preference, etc. Political patronage is prohibited in the public safety civil service system. Police and Fire Departments are required to report certain employment actions to the PSCSC.

- Disciplinary and Other Appeal Hearings - The PSCSC presides of employee appeals of serious disciplinary actions, and alleged violations of the [PSCSC Rules](#) and Public Safety Civil Service Ordinance ([SMC 4.08](#)).

Merit-Based Public Safety Hiring Processes

PSCSC’s Public Safety Examiners in 2024 administered over 5,300 entry level tests, and 235 promotional tests (this includes “oral boards,” which are interview panels, and practical exams).

Public Safety Applications, Exams, and Registers in 2024				
Rank	Applications Processed	Written Tests Administered	Oral Boards/ Practical Exams Administered	Eligible Candidates Placed on Register
Firefighter	3,897	2,404	1,220	705
Police Officer (Entry)	4,115	1,655	N/A	1,163
Police Officer (Lateral)	216	39	36	34
Police Sergeant	67	46	38	31
Fire Captain	41	27	25	25
Fire Battalion Chief	12	9	9	9
Fireboat Pilot	4	4	2	2
Total	8,352	4,184	1,330	1,969
Notes: <u>The Firefighter exam</u> included a multidimensional test battery (situational judgement, math, reading, mechanical ability, suitability inventory). Firefighter oral boards were administered and the register published in 2025. <u>The Police Officer exam</u> included a multidimensional test battery (situational judgement, reading, writing, suitability inventory). Lateral Police Officer exams also included oral boards (interview and situational judgement). <u>The Police Sergeant, Fire captain, and Fire Battalion Chief exams</u> included a knowledge based written exam, and oral board exam (interview and job simulations). <u>The Fireboat Pilot exam</u> included a knowledge based written exam and a practical exam (simulations, skill assessments).				

PSCSC approved 40 requests from former SPD and SFD employees for placement on the Reinstatement to Eligible Register, which allows eligible individuals to be considered for return to their rank by their department chief. PSCSC in 2024 received a higher volume of requests than is typical after Director Andrea Scheele granted an extension of the lookback period used to determine eligibility for placement on the eligibility for reinstatement register. The extension expired in June of 2024.

PSCSC approved 44 requests to extend employee probationary periods from SPD and SFD departments.

Rulemaking, Oversight, and Compliance

In 2024, the PSCSC revised two [PSCSC Rules of Practice and Procedure](#) to improve and clarify its promotional exam processes and procedures to PSCSC members, departments, and other stakeholders:

- PSCSC Rule 9.12 - Reinstated a minimum passing grade for promotional fire oral boards. Previously, there was a no-fail standard applied to this test.
- PSCSC Rule 9.23 - Clarified existing processes and memorialized a “clearly erroneous” standard of review for promotional exam protests. The Rules revision considers and memorializes processes sharing exam materials that best ensure exam security.

The PSCSC received and monitored notices of higher-level disciplinary action, and probationary dismissals for covered employees.

2024 Notice of Probationary Dismissals and Discipline Received by the PSCSC				
Department	Probationary Dismissal	Suspension	Demotion	Termination
Seattle Fire Department	2	3	0	0
Seattle Police Department	10	8	0	4
Total	12	11	0	4
Notes: Data is based on information submitted by departments.				

Disciplinary and Appeal Hearings

The PSCSC received the following appeals in 2024. No appeals went to hearing.

2024 Appeals/Exam Protests/Requests for Decision/Complaints Received by the PSCSC						
Type	Case No.	Appellant	Dept	Date Filed	Issue	Status
Appeal	24-01-004A	Hill	SPD	5-21-2004	Discharge	Hearing scheduled
Appeal	24-01-006A	Englund	SPD	9-23-2024	Suspension	Pre-hearing
Appeal	24-01-007A	Willis	SPD	10-1-2024	Suspension	Withdrawn
Appeal	24-01-005A	Dron	SFD	9-10-2024	Discharge	Dismissed
Appeal	24-01-003A	Marchione	SPD	4-11-2024	Suspension	Dismissed
Appeal	24-07-002A	Dickson	SFD	3-14-2024	Discharge	Dismissed
Complaint	24-07-001C	Collins	SFD	1-25-2024	Complaint	Dismissed
Appeal	24-01-001A	Swartz	SPD	2-14-2024	Discharge	Withdrawn