

Office of Hearing Examiner

Ryan Vancil, Hearing Examiner

(206) 684-0521

<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

	2019 Actuals	2020 Adopted	2021 Proposed
Department Support			
General Fund Support	947,036	1,061,713	1,061,517
Total Operations	947,036	1,061,713	1,061,517
Total Appropriations	947,036	1,061,713	1,061,517
Full-Time Equivalent Total*	4.63	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 2021 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. Technical adjustments have been made to bring the proposed budget into alignment with an Annual Wage Increase, and other citywide adjustments to internal service costs.

The City is projecting significant revenue losses due to COVID-19 and the resulting public health crisis. As a result, the budget includes reductions for most departments across the City. Because HXM is a small department with limited flexibility in its budget, the reductions to HXM's budget are minimal and do not impact staffing or services. The details of the changes to HXM's budget are included in the Incremental Budget Changes section below.

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Incremental Budget Changes

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	2021 Budget	FTE
Total 2020 Adopted Budget	1,061,713	5.00
Baseline		
Adjustment for One-Time Budget Changes	(8,000)	-
Citywide Adjustments for Standard Cost Changes	1,406	-
Baseline Adjustments for Personnel Costs	19,398	-
Align Health Care Budget	-	-
Proposed Operating		
Equipment Budget Reduction	(3,500)	-
Office Furniture and Equipment Budget Reduction	(5,500)	-
Supplies Budget Reduction	(4,000)	-
Total Incremental Changes	\$(196)	-
Total 2021 Proposed Budget	\$1,061,517	5.00

Description of Incremental Budget Changes

Baseline

Adjustment for One-Time Budget Changes

Expenditures \$(8,000)

This item includes a reduction for a one-time addition for the purchase of portable recording equipment in the 2020 Adopted Budget.

Citywide Adjustments for Standard Cost Changes

Expenditures \$1,406

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.

Baseline Adjustments for Personnel Costs

Expenditures \$19,398

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This centrally administered change adjusts appropriations to reflect an annual wage increase, as outlined in the agreements between the City and the Coalition of Unions, for personnel costs included in this department's baseline budget. This includes increases to salary, FICA, Medicare, family medical leave, retirement, overtime and temporary labor. There is no increase assumed from 2021 to 2022.

Align Health Care Budget

Expenditures -

This item is a net zero baseline change to ensure the baseline budget for employee health care costs matches the bill in the 2020 Adopted Central Cost Manual.

Proposed Operating

Equipment Budget Reduction

Expenditures \$(3,500)

This change reduces the Hearing Examiner's budget for equipment by \$3,500, a 23% reduction of the 2020 equipment budget.

Office Furniture and Equipment Budget Reduction

Expenditures \$(5,500)

This change reduces the Hearing Examiner's budget for office furniture & equipment by \$5,500.

Supplies Budget Reduction

Expenditures \$(4,000)

This change reduces the Hearing Examiner's budget for supplies by \$4,000, about 20% of the 2020 supplies budget.

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Expenditure Overview

	2019 Actuals	2020 Adopted	2021 Proposed
Appropriations			
HXM - BO-HX-V1X00 - Office of the Hearing Examiner			
00100 - General Fund	947,036	1,061,713	1,061,517
Total for BSL: BO-HX-V1X00	947,036	1,061,713	1,061,517
Department Total	947,036	1,061,713	1,061,517
Department Full-Time Equivalents Total*	4.63	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 Summary by Fund Office of Hearing Examiner

	2019 Actuals	2020 Adopted	2021 Proposed
00100 - General Fund	947,036	1,061,713	1,061,517
Budget Totals for HXM	947,036	1,061,713	1,061,517

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.

Program Expenditures	2019 Actuals	2020 Adopted	2021 Proposed
Office of the Hearing Examiner	947,036	1,061,713	1,061,517
Total	947,036	1,061,713	1,061,517
Full-time Equivalents Total*	4.63	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*