

Office of Hearing Examiner

Ryan Vancil, 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

	2023 Actuals	2024 Adopted	2025 Proposed	2026 Proposed
Department Support				
General Fund Support	1,148,837	1,218,519	1,314,214	1,380,463
Total Operations	1,148,837	1,218,519	1,314,214	1,380,463
Total Appropriations	1,148,837	1,218,519	1,314,214	1,380,463
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

Budget Overview

The 2025-2026 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. 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.

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Incremental Budget Changes

Office of Hearing Examiner

	Dollars	FTE
2024 Adopted Budget	1,218,519	5.00
Baseline		
Bargained Annual Wage and Market Wage Increases to Base Budget	110,737	-
Proposed Operating		
Increase Filing Fees Revenue	-	-
Proposed Technical		
Citywide Adjustments for Standard Cost Changes	(24,353)	-
Final Adjustments for Standard Cost Changes	(10,689)	-
Ongoing Changes from Current Year Legislation	20,000	-
Total Incremental Changes	\$95,695	-
Total 2025 Proposed Budget	\$1,314,214	5.00

Description of Incremental Budget Changes

Baseline

Bargained Annual Wage and Market Wage Increases to Base Budget

Expenditures \$110,737

This centrally administered change adjusts appropriations to reflect the Annual Wage Increases and Market Adjustments, as outlined in the agreements between the City and the Coalition of Unions or other standalone Unions, for personnel costs included in this department’s baseline budget. This includes increases to salary, FICA, Medicare, retirement, overtime and temporary labor.

Proposed Operating

Increase Filing Fees Revenue

Revenues \$3,500

This item anticipates increased revenues of approximately \$3,500 by raising filing fees from \$85 to \$120 in the Office of Hearing Examiner (HXM) the General Fund Office of Hearing Examiner - Revenue Budget Control Level (00100-BR-HX-REVENUE). Historically, the Hearing Examiner has raised fees at various intervals to support cost recovery and address inflation. The last fee increase was implemented in 2013.

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Proposed Technical

Citywide Adjustments for Standard Cost Changes

Expenditures \$(24,353)

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.

Final Adjustments for Standard Cost Changes

Expenditures \$(10,689)

Citywide technical adjustments made in the proposed 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 for the department. These adjustments reflect final decisions about these costs made during the Proposed Phase of the budget process.

Ongoing Changes from Current Year Legislation

Expenditures \$20,000

This change includes ongoing budget and/or position changes resulting from current year legislation in 2024, including the Year End Supplemental Ordinance and contains 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 retroactive to March 21, 2023.

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Expenditure Overview

	2023	2024	2025	2026
Appropriations	Actuals	Adopted	Proposed	Proposed
HXM - BO-HX-V1X00 - Office of the Hearing Examiner				
00100 - General Fund	1,148,837	1,218,519	1,314,214	1,380,463
Total for BSL: BO-HX-V1X00	1,148,837	1,218,519	1,314,214	1,380,463
Department Total	1,148,837	1,218,519	1,314,214	1,380,463
Department 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 Summary by Fund Office of Hearing Examiner

	2023	2024	2025	2026
	Actuals	Adopted	Proposed	Proposed
00100 - General Fund	1,148,837	1,218,519	1,314,214	1,380,463
Budget Totals for HXM	1,148,837	1,218,519	1,314,214	1,380,463

Revenue Overview

2025 Estimated Revenues

Account Code	Account Name	2023	2024	2025	2026
		Actuals	Adopted	Proposed	Proposed
341180	Legal Service Fees	-	16,000	16,000	16,000
341900	General Government-Other Rev	-	4,000	7,500	7,500
Total Revenues for: 00100 - General Fund		-	20,000	23,500	23,500
Total HXM Resources		-	20,000	23,500	23,500

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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	2023	2024	2025	2026
	Actuals	Adopted	Proposed	Proposed
Office of the Hearing Examiner	1,148,837	1,218,519	1,314,214	1,380,463
Total	1,148,837	1,218,519	1,314,214	1,380,463
Full-time Equivalents Total*	5.00	5.00	5.00	5.00

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