Office of Hearing Examiner

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https://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 it makes recommendations to the City Council on rezone petitions, major institution master plans, and other 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

	2025 Actuals	2026 Adopted	2027 Proposed	2028 Proposed
Department Support				
General Fund Support	1,305,510	1,915,629	1,905,496	1,927,922
Total Operations	**1,305,510**	**1,915,629**	**1,905,496**	**1,927,922**
Total Appropriations	**1,305,510**	**1,915,629**	**1,905,496**	**1,927,922**
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 Overview

The 2027-28 Proposed Budget maintains support to the Office of Hearing Examiner 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 the centrally projected revenue forecast, internal service costs, and retirement contribution rates.

Incremental Budget Changes

Office of Hearing Examiner

	Dollars	FTE
2026 Adopted Budget	**1,915,629**	**5.00**
Baseline		
Citywide Adjustments for Standard Cost Changes	658	-
Reduce SCERS Retirement Contribution Rate	(10,791)	-
Proposed Technical		
Align Department Revenues with April Forecast	-	-
Total Incremental Changes	**$(10,133)**	**-**
Total 2027 Proposed Budget	**$1,905,496**	**5.00**

Description of Incremental Budget Changes

Baseline

Citywide Adjustments for Standard Cost Changes

Expenditures $658

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 and other central cost factors. These adjustments reflect initial assumptions about these costs and inflators early in the budget process.

Reduce SCERS Retirement Contribution Rate

Expenditures $(10,791)

The City's employee retirement system, the Seattle City Employees Retirement System (SCERS) is a defined benefit pension program funded by a combination of salary-based employer (i.e., the City) and employee contributions, and investment earnings. Based on the updated actuarial valuation for 2026, this item reduces the employer contribution rate from the endorsed rate of 15.06% to the SCERS minimum actuarial required rate of 13.48% for 2027 and 13.52% for 2028.

Proposed Technical

Align Department Revenues with April Forecast

Revenues $(11,000)

This is a technical adjustment to capture centrally projected and forecast General Fund revenue increments for this department.

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Expenditure Overview

Appropriations	2025 Actuals	2026 Adopted	2027 Proposed	2028 Proposed
HXM - BO-HX-V1X00 - Office of the Hearing Examiner				
00100 - General Fund	1,305,510	1,915,629	1,905,496	1,927,922
Total for BSL: BO-HX-V1X00	**1,305,510**	**1,915,629**	**1,905,496**	**1,927,922**
Department Total	**1,305,510**	**1,915,629**	**1,905,496**	**1,927,922**
Department Full-Time Equivalents Total*	**5.00**	**5.00**	**5.00**	**5.00**

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Budget Summary by Fund Office of Hearing Examiner

	2025 Actuals	2026 Adopted	2027 Proposed	2028 Proposed
00100 - General Fund	1,305,510	1,915,629	1,905,496	1,927,922
Budget Totals for HXM	**1,305,510**	**1,915,629**	**1,905,496**	**1,927,922**

Revenue Overview

2027 Estimated Revenues

Account Code	Account Name	2025 Actuals	2026 Adopted	2027 Proposed	2028 Proposed
341180	Legal Service Fees	4,150	31,000	24,000	4,000
341900	General Government-Other Rev	3,875	7,500	3,500	3,500
Total Revenues for: 00100 - General Fund		**8,025**	**38,500**	**27,500**	**7,500**
Total HXM Resources		**8,025**	**38,500**	**27,500**	**7,500**

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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 80 subject areas) and to issue decisions and recommendations consistent with applicable law.

Program Expenditures	2025 Actuals	2026 Adopted	2027 Proposed	2028 Proposed
Office of the Hearing Examiner	1,305,510	1,915,629	1,905,496	1,927,922
Total	**1,305,510**	**1,915,629**	**1,905,496**	**1,927,922**
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*