

Metropolitan King County Council

Position Description



Position: Hearing Examiner	FLSA: salaried, overtime exempt
Department: Hearing Examiner's Office	Salary Grade: 134
Council Approved: 7/8/2025	

Summary

The King County Hearing Examiner leads an independent agency responsible for conducting fair, efficient, and inclusive quasi-judicial administrative hearings on a variety of matters. Under the King County Code, the Hearing Examiner's Office has jurisdiction over 80 distinct subject areas—examples include animal control, public health, for-hire transportation, and land use, including permitting, preliminary plats, and code enforcement. In addition to drafting and issuing written decisions, orders, and recommendations for the office, the Examiner also supports the King County Personnel Board in producing its written opinions.

The Hearing Examiner supervises a staff of three full-time employees and several pro tem examiners, in addition to managing the agency's budget. This is a salaried, at-will position that reports to the Chair of the King County Council, with a dotted-line relationship to the Council's Chief of Staff.

Distinguishing Career Features

The Hearing Examiner is appointed by the King County Council for a renewable term under the guidelines set forth in [King County Code Section 20.22](#). This is a high-profile position with significant autonomy and independence, requiring a fair-minded, principled professional with experience as an attorney, administrative law judge, or other role that requires adjudication in compliance with the law. The incumbent must also be a strong people manager and administrator who can apply an equity and social justice lens to their work.

Essential Duties and Responsibilities

Hearings and Proceedings

- Manage the scheduling, preparation, and conduct of public hearings on a variety of land use applications, appeals from agency decisions, and other administrative matters. Ensure that hearings are timely scheduled and that notices and other communications are sent within appropriate deadlines.
- Conduct proceedings including hearings and conferences. Prepare reports of hearings conducted that include written findings of fact and conclusions, final decisions, or recommendations for Council action.
- Assign cases to pro tem examiners and monitor status throughout all stages of the hearing process; ensure that pro tem decisions are legally sound and comply with applicable laws and standards.
- Coordinate with Hearing Examiner staff to manage case files, ensuring that hearing exhibits and official documents are properly included, identified, and maintained as a

permanent record.

- Maintain poise and empathy during stressful and emotional situations involving adversarial hearings, including viewing exhibits and listening to testimony that may be graphic or distressing.

Information and Policy

- Submit complete case file packets and conduct briefings for the Council on decisions that are being appealed to the Council or higher legal authority. Prepare and deliver summaries, respond to questions, and advise on issues to consider.
- Review and periodically revise procedural rules and guides for the conduct of public hearings. Advise the Council on areas where County policy can be revised, clarified, and strengthened; work with Council to propose or revise legislation as appropriate. Prepare periodic reports of office activity and outcomes, and provide briefings to Council as needed.
- Work with Council staff, County agencies, the Prosecuting Attorney's Office, and other interested parties to as needed to research, clarify, and convey information; periodically provide public briefings at Council meetings.
- Initiate and respond to requests for information on official policies and procedures dealing with the conduct of examiner hearings. Ensure that the Hearing Examiner's Office complies with all Public Records Act requirements.
- Establish physical and electronic information storage and retrieval systems to support hearing activity and decisions.

Personnel and Office Management

- Manage and support Hearing Examiner staff by setting clear expectations and short- and long-term goals; provide regular coaching and feedback; conduct periodic performance evaluations; and foster professional development.
- Work with the Council Chief of Staff and Chief Operating Officer to research and prepare budget proposals, including projecting staffing and material needs and costs. Present budget requests to the Council as needed and administer approved budgets.
- Periodically evaluate hearing procedures, including scheduling and decision-making processes. Consult with and seeks advice from other County agencies. Design and implements processes that make for efficient scheduling and handling of documents, and enhanced resources to enable faster hearings.
- Perform other duties as required to coordinate office functions with Council policies and procedures.

Qualifications

Knowledge and Skills

- Advanced knowledge of King County Code provisions; federal, state, and local laws; court decisions; and other legal requirements relevant to quasi-judicial administrative

hearings, including rules of evidence and procedure.

- Project management skills to organize and oversee complex assignments, implement policies and processes, and develop ideas from concept to completion.
- Understanding of the theory, principles, and practices involved with land use planning and implementation, land development processes, and related code.
- Advanced communication skills, including a strong command of the English language to write decisions, reports, and other documents that convey complex, sensitive issues in a thoughtful and accessible manner.
- Knowledge of the principles and practices associated with supervision, leadership style, team building, and performance management.
- Interpersonal communication skills and a high level of emotional intelligence to be able to work with others in difficult situations and manage conflict, employ lines of questioning for fact-finding, and deliver information in a variety of settings.
- Proficiency with a range of technology and applications related to a hybrid work environment: word processing and spreadsheet applications, databases, videoconferencing, cloud storage systems, etc.
- Appropriate math skills to prepare budgets, account for expenditures, and develop and interpret statistical and operating information.

Abilities

- Organize, facilitate, and execute a high volume of critical thinking and decision-making processes, including conducting research and analysis.
- Learn, interpret, and apply relevant sections of the King County Code, and local, state and federal legislation dealing with subject matter that comes before the Hearing Examiner's Office.
- Maintain order in hearings, remaining fair and impartial to all parties, and properly handle private and confidential communications; ability to de-escalate emotionally charged interactions and maintain decorum.
- Remain fair and impartial at all times, maintaining the ability to render decisions free from political or personal influence.
- Communicate and present information in a clear, concise, and accessible manner, both verbally and in writing.
- Develop and maintain positive, professional work relationships with diverse people, including staff, hearing participants, community members, councilmembers, county agencies, and others.
- Prioritize workload and manage competing needs and interests across the agency; manage a variable schedule.

Education and Experience

A minimum combination of education and experience equivalent to the following:

- A Juris Doctor from an accredited law school—or the successful completion of a Law Clerk program—and be an active attorney with membership in good standing with the Washington State Bar;
- Five years of progressively responsible experience conducting or assisting with conducting administrative or other contested hearings, or experience adjudicating matters in areas applicable to the County’s hearing process.
- Three years of supervisory or program management experience.

Licenses and Certificates

License to practice law in the State of Washington