



**King County
Office of the
Executive**

**HUMAN AND CIVIL RIGHTS COMMISSION
DRAFT AGENDA FOR THE January 21, 2026 MEETING**

Time: 6-8 PM

Location: King County Chinook Building – 401 5th Avenue, Seattle, WA 98104 or Zoom (virtual)

Attendance:

Commissioners:

Position 1: Betelhem Michael	Position 2: Emily Huynh	Position 3: Allison Hastings	Position 4: Jacob Joens-Poulton	Position 5: Aneeka Ferrell, Vacant
Position 6: Jennifer Karls	Position 7: Mona Jaber	Position 8: Steven Sawyer	Position 9: Daisy Wong	Position 10: Vanessa Sanchez-Mexicano

King County staff:

Evelyn Chow, King County Executive’s Office	Senayet Negusse, King County Executive’s Office
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Agenda:

- 1) Review and Approval of Meeting Minutes
- 2) Welcome and introductions (20 mins)
 - a. Update on Position 5, Aneeka Ferrell
 - b. Introductions: Senayet Negusse, Civil Rights Program Manager
- 3) Update on Leadership Positions (10 mins)
- 4) Review and Finalize Bylaws (20 mins)
- 5) Break (10 mins)
- 6) Overview of Deliverables (10 mins)
 - a. Work Plan (45 mins)
 - i. Developing Subcommittees
 - ii. Meeting cadence
- 7) Next steps (5 minutes)
 - a. Next meeting: Thursday, January 22nd, 6-8 PM



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HUMAN AND CIVIL RIGHTS COMMISSION

January 21, 2026 Meeting Minutes

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Location: King County Chinook Building – 401 5th Avenue, Seattle, WA 98104 or Zoom (virtual)

Commissioners:

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Meeting Attendance: Bethlehem Michael, Allison Hastings, Jacob-Joens-Poulton, Aneeka Ferrell, Jennifer Karls, Mona Jaber, Daisy Wong, Vanessa Sanchez-Mexicano,

Absent: Emily Huynh, Steven Sawyer

Observers: None.

Agenda:

- 1) Review and Approval of Meeting Minutes.
 - Evelyn or Senayet will send out the minutes from the December and January (tonight’s) meetings, and we will approve those tomorrow.

- 2) Welcome and introductions (20 mins)
 - a. Update on Position 5, Aneeka Ferrell
 - She applied for a position with King County and got it (Equity, Inclusion, and Belonging Manager for King County Metro), and she can’t serve on a commission or board as an employee of the county. She is resigning her position on the commission.
 - Commission needs to find a second person from South King County to fill position 5. That is now an open position. Aneeka also fulfilled the requirement of having a commissioner with experience investigating civil rights.



- b. Introductions: Senayet Negusse, Civil Rights Program Manager
 - She has been at the county for 6 years in March; came to spearhead language access efforts and equity in public health. Served on the Immigrant and Refugee Commission. She leads the County's Civil Rights program which investigates and enforces under the following County ordinances: Open Housing, Fair Employment Practices, Discrimination in Places of Public Accommodation, Contracting and Citizenship Status Ordinance.
- c. Additional Issues Related to Vacancies:
 - Evelyn reached out to the executive's team to get approval on the person we selected for the 11th Commissioner. They have not reached out to the person yet.
 - We need to think about how we want to approach filling the positions for Position 5 and 11 because we need to make sure we have someone with experience investigating civil rights.
 - Allison asks about process for filling vacancies. Senayet is going to look into this. She also put together some files for all of us. We have these in our Outlook emails, but she printed out hard copies of some of these documents (e.g., the bylaws). Selecting new commissioners is a pretty hefty process, and it's a bit complicated since it's so early in the tenure of the commission, so Evelyn and Senayet are going to explore this and get back to us.

Action Item: Senayet is going to research vacancy filling process, review the ordinance and code, and see what both prescribe for the vacancy process. She is hoping to get back to all of us in the next week or so.

- 3) Update on Leadership Positions (10 mins)
 - Co-Chairs: Jennifer Karls and Daisy Wong
 - Vice-Chair: Betelhem Michaels
 - Secretary/Historian: Allison Hastings
- 4) Review and Finalize Bylaws (20 mins)
 - Jennifer provides a summary of the process for developing the bylaws. Reviewed the bylaws of the Women's Advisory Board and the Immigrant and Refugee Commission. We reviewed them twice as a commission and went back and reworked them based on feedback.
 - Senayet thinks the annual election is not required by code. She is looking at the by-laws, page 5, Article 6, Section C. She says we don't need to specify a specific date or meeting for the elections. Betelhem asks for time to discuss whether we want to amend. Allison agrees we don't need to pigeonhole ourselves. The Commission can revise the bylaws at any time.



Action Item: Senayet will finish her review and flag anything that catches her eye for the Commission's consideration, and we can revisit.

5) Overview of Deliverables (10 mins)

- Deliverable 1: Annual Activities Report due April 15, 2026
 - This really means March 15th because of the approval processes
 - This should be pretty simple—a recap of how we've spent the last 6 months

- Deliverable 2: HCRC Powers and Duties Report due September 29, 2026
 - We will need to include an analysis of the program, our recommendation for the placement of the Civil Rights Program, our recommendations for ensuring the independence and objectivity of the program, recommendations on amending the county's list of protected classes, and recommendations on establishing interlocal agreements (All of this is detailed on Slide 5 of the PPT that Evelyn sent along with the agenda for this meeting). There are specific documents we need to review; many or all are in our onboarding documents. Senayet has also printed out one of the reports as well.
 - Jennifer: Is this an annual report?
 - Senayet: This is a one-time report unless there's a request for a follow-up. Senayet says she and her office are here to support and resource us.
 - This should also be drafted a month before the deadline.
 - Allison asks about how we evaluate the civil rights program.
 - This document provides some history and evaluation: Seattle University's Fred T. Korematsu Center for Law and Equality's report entitled *Research and Recommendations Regarding the King County Civil Rights Commission, Briefing 2019-B0149*.
 - Program was essentially not staffed during Covid as there many staff members were deployed to support the COVID response, and there were a lot of conversations about where this work should live. Executive Constantine suggested that maybe this work should be moved elsewhere in the county, but the council didn't act at that time.
 - Senayet came in 2024 and began tackling the backlog of allegations and rebuilding the program. There's been a lot of work to restructure it and to make it more functional. Backlog has now been cleared. They have staff—an operations specialist who has created an organized a system that keeps things on track, two part-time investigators that make up one FTE, and one full-time investigator. They do a lot of systems and resource navigation.



Action Item: Senayet and/or Evelyn will upload these reports to the onboarding documents:

- **The Disability Equity Action Plan, Attachment A to Motion 15954; and**
- **The Gender Identity and Sexual Orientation Inclusion Task Force Strategy Report and Recommendations, Attachment A to Motion 16389.**

(Betelhem has to leave early.)

- a. Work Plan (45 mins)
 - i. Developing Subcommittees
 - ii. Meeting cadence

Commission Discussion:

- What do you need to complete the work?
 - Senayet says to think about connections they could help make, historical documents, resources, data, scheduling, etc.
- Do you want to create subcommittees or working groups? If so, for what purpose?
 - Jacob thinks subcommittees would be helpful. Mona and Jennifer agree.
 - Jennifer thinks we could have a subcommittee that focuses on what kind of outreach and what nonprofits or people we'd want to hear from, and maybe we'd want a committee to help build an understanding of what pieces we're missing beyond community.
 - Jacob: Knowing that there are these bigger reports we have to complete, how can the subcommittees facilitate the gathering of information to expedite the process? Have people come back and say "we've reached out to X people" or "we've done Y."
 - Allison asks for clarification about subcommittees.
 - Jacob: Create an arm of the commission that provides a channel for people to have direct contact with the commission. Perhaps creating listening sessions to hear what folks are interested in and what work is taking place. This would be part of our community engagement – and prioritizing outreach to people from historically disadvantaged communities – which is outlined in code as part of our duties.
 - Evelyn: We could put together a community engagement subcommittee. Subcommittees should be 4 people or less.
 - Vanessa: Are there data already about the types of inquiries you're getting for investigations? Senayet says there are some data, but they're not perfect, and a lot is based on voluntary disclosure/participation. Has some data they could share. The data are related to employment cases. Civil Rights Program is required to provide an annual report on employment complaints to the Council.



- How often should the commission meet to accomplish its deliverables? Either as a whole or subcommittees? (We didn't get into this question.)
 - What roles or tasks will each commissioner take on? (We didn't get into this question.)
- b. Break for 10 minutes. Daisy has to leave.
- Allison shares that she doesn't think we should start naming people to committees since we're down 4 people. Mona agrees.
 - We will start filling out draft work plan and continue to discuss potential topics for subcommittees. Evelyn shares her screen and fills out the activities described below.
 - Deliverables on Draft Work Plan:
 - Annual Activity Report: Senayet says she can share a copy of the Immigrant and Refugee Commission Annual Activity Report. Their report will be a little bit different because they submit directly to the Council, whereas our commission submits through the Executive.
 - Powers and Duties Report (discussed above and in the PPT)
 - Appointment of Commissioners to Position 5, 11
 - Create and Adopt Bylaws
 - Subcommittee Ideas:
 - Vanessa suggests splitting community engagement into external and internal community engagement. Jacob likes that idea.
 - Jacob suggests monitoring legislation/assessing effectiveness of current laws. This might be a really big task. This could be research/policy monitoring.
 - Vanessa thinks some sort of committee around drafting would be helpful. Report Drafting Subcommittee. Senayet says the Powers and Duties Report is broken down into 5 sections, but maybe it could be 3. (She is referring to Slide 5 in the PPT that Evelyn included with the agenda for the meeting.) Senayet says we will need to think about how we want to organize and break down the work.
 - She mentions that the interlocal agreements, for example, is a significant piece of work. There are currently no interlocal agreements tied to the Civil Rights Program. There aren't always a lot of good local options for folks, so many times the King County Office gets complaints or allegations that are out of jurisdiction/county, and they have to give them to the state because there's not a civil rights program in the incorporated City /jurisdiction where the alleged incident took place. A lot of other jurisdictions don't have capacity or haven't invested in civil rights programs. Senayet says she can provide information on the current landscape so the Commission has a better understanding of the current landscape.



- 6) Next steps (5 minutes)
 - a. Next meeting is all virtual: Thursday, January 22nd, 6-8 PM. We will continue our work and discussions that we started tonight.

Human & Civil Rights Commission (HCRC) Deliverables

JANUARY 21, 2026

Key Duties

Advising on Policy – Advise the executive, the council, and the public to implement and carry out the purposes and provisions of King County Code 2.31.

Engaging with Communities – Gather input from historically disadvantaged groups to inform county decisions.

Reviewing Civil Rights Protections – Assess the effectiveness of current laws and recommend improvements.

Monitoring Policy Impacts – Ensure County policies promote fairness and do not disproportionately harm marginalized communities.

Supporting Equity Efforts – Provide input on legislation, equity plans, and resource allocations to advance justice.

Crafting Annual Reports – Prepare annual reports for the Executive and Council on commission activities, progress, and plans including recommendations on commission independence, Civil Rights Program compliance analyses, and the Program’s placement within the Executive branch.

- Ordinance 19770 (codified at [K.C.C. 2.31.020](#))

2026 Key Deliverables

Adopt Bylaws

Establish leadership for HCRC

Appoint the 11th Member of the Commission

Develop a Work Plan for 2026

- Deliverable 1: Annual Activities Report due April 15, 2026
- Deliverable 2: HCRC Powers and Duties Report due September 29, 2026

Annual Report

Due: April 15, 2026

Beginning in 2026, provide an annual report to the executive and council that shall include, but not be limited to, a quantitative and qualitative summary of completed and ongoing commission activities as required in this chapter, progress on the work program outlined in the prior calendar year annual report, and a work program for the following calendar year.

On behalf of the commission, the executive shall electronically file the report by April 15 of each year with the clerk of the council, who shall retain an electronic copy and provide an electronic copy to all councilmembers, the council chief of staff, and the lead staff for the law and justice committee or its successor. The report shall be publicized widely, in particular to those historically disadvantaged communities who have historically lacked power to influence policies for the community.

Publicity methods shall include, but not be limited to, the official county newspaper, newspapers of general circulation within each council district, King County civic television, television news outlets, social media platforms, non-English language newspapers and periodicals distributed in the county, and the county's website.

The commission should provide annual briefings to media and elected officials representing cities, the county, and the state to ensure that the commission's lessons learned and achievements are shared with the public and policy makers.

HCRC Powers & Duties Report

Due Date: September 29, 2026

The commission shall provide a report recommending changes to the powers and duties of the human and civil rights commission. The report shall include, but not be limited to, the following:

Analysis of the county's civil rights program, including, but not limited to, activities related to assisting departments in complying with the federal Americans with Disabilities Act of 1990, the federal Rehabilitation Act of 1973, Section 504, and other legislation and rules regarding access to county programs, facilities, and services for people with disabilities, to identify strengths, weaknesses, and opportunities;

Recommendations on the placement of the county's civil rights program within the organizational structure of the executive branch and any changes to the duties of the civil rights program based on the analysis as required by subsection A.1.

Recommendations on ensuring the independence and objectivity of the work of the commission and its staff, which shall include, but not limited to, the following:

- creating a new position of executive director of the commission who would be responsible for the day-to-day operations of the commission and for the appointment and supervision of staff; and establishing an independent staff, led by the executive director and separate from other offices in the executive branch, supported by sufficient moneys and resources to accomplish the goals and workload as required of the commission;

Recommendations on amending the county's list of protected classes in both the King County Charter and the King County Code to expand protections to additional classes of people to ensure equal treatment for broader segments of the population; and

Recommendations on establishing interlocal agreements with municipalities located within the county that do not have the resources to enact or enforce their own civil rights laws

September 2026 Report – Source Documents

The report shall consider, but not be limited to, recommendations from the following:

- Seattle University's Fred T. Korematsu Center for Law and Equality's report entitled Research and Recommendations Regarding the King County Civil Rights Commission, Briefing 2019-B0149;
- The Disability Equity Action Plan, Attachment A to Motion 15954; and
- The Gender Identity and Sexual Orientation Inclusion Task Force Strategy Report and Recommendations, Attachment A to Motion 16389.
- The executive shall draft legislation based on the recommendations in the report as described in this section.

On behalf of the commission, **the executive shall electronically file the report and draft legislation within one year of the first meeting of the commission**, with the clerk of the council, who shall retain electronic copies and provide electronic copies to all councilmembers, the council chief of staff, and the lead staff for the law and justice committee or its successor.

Commission Discussion

- What do you need to complete the work?
- Do you want to create subcommittees or working groups? If so, for what purpose?
- How often should the commission meet to accomplish its deliverables? Either as a whole or subcommittees.
- What roles or tasks will each commissioner take on?
- How can staff best support the commission (e.g., scheduling, research, materials)?

Attachment: draft work plan template

HCRC Commission Work Plan (draft)

Purpose: The commission is established to advance the human rights, including civil rights, of all county residents by representing the residents' interests and to ensure the principles of the United Nations Universal Declaration of Human Rights are applied in all the county does in order to achieve equity and protect county residents from discrimination.

Statutory Authority: Ordinance 19770 (codified at [K.C.C. 2.31.020](#))

Deliverables & Timeline

Deliverable	Lead	Due Date	Status

Structure & Meetings

Meetings	Purpose	Frequency	Decision Making Method	Members
Regular Commission Meeting (RCM)		Monthly?	Majority Vote	<i>All members of the HCRC</i>
Sub-Committee				
Sub-Committee				
Sub-Committee				

Information & Support Needed

Information/Support Requested	Notes
Stakeholder Input	
Staff support	
Historical References/Documents	
Key data, briefings, or resources	

