

HUMAN AND CIVIL RIGHTS COMMISSION

MINUTES FOR THE JULY 21, 2026 REGULAR MEETING

Date:	Tuesday, July 21, 2026
Time:	6:00 PM – 7:00 PM
Virtual Meeting Link (ZOOM):	https://kingcounty.zoom.us/j/82402137397
Meeting ID:	9824 0213 7397
Password:	406692
On site location:	None for this meeting.

Meetings are open to the public. Meeting minutes will be made available on [King County's HCRC Website](#) once approved.

KING COUNTY STAFF LIAISON

Senayet Negusse and Scarleth Lever Ortiz; Sandra Gallagher facilitating today's meeting, King County Executive's Office

Member	Roles	Present/Excused/Absent/Vacant
Position 1: Betelhem Michael	Vice-Chair and member of Sub-Committee #2	Absent; Withdrawing from the commission
Position 2: Emily Huynh	Commissioner and member of Sub-Committee #1	Excused
Position 3: Allison Hastings	Secretary/Historian and member of Sub-Committee #1	Present
Position 4: Jacob Joens-Poulton	Commissioner and member of Sub-Committee #3	Present
Position 5: Vacant	Vacant	Vacant
Position 6: Jennifer Karls	Chair and member of Sub-Committee #3	Present
Position 7: Mona Jaber	Commissioner and member of Sub-Committee #2	Present
Position 8: Steven Sawyer	Commissioner and member of Sub-Committee #1	Present
Position 9: Daisy Wong	Co-Chair and members of Sub-Committee #3	Present
Position 10: Vanessa Sanchez-Mexicano	Commissioner and member of Sub-Committee #2	Excused
Position 11: Vacant	Vacant	Vacant

AGENDA

TIME	ITEM	PRESENTER & ACTION
6:00 PM (5 mins)	Call to Order Called to order: 6:05pm	HCRC CO-CHAIR KARL Administrative
6:05 PM (5 mins)	Public Comments No one from the public is in attendance.	HCRC CO-CHAIR KARL Administrative
6:10 PM (2 mins)	Review and Approval of <u>Meeting Minutes for June 16th mtg.</u> - Approved <u>condensed bios</u>: We need to postpone approval because not all commissioners have approved the bios. Approval of Meeting Minutes: Yes (Motion introduced by Jennifer and seconded by Daisy) Votes: 6 (all who are present)	HCRC CO-CHAIRS KARL Action Item: 1. Scarleth will post packet.
6:12 PM (5 mins)	HCRC Updates - Message from Betelhem that she will be withdrawing from the commission. - Study Sessions/Retreat Survey Responses: Tentative List of Study Sessions & Schedule—majority requested them at noon or 6pm. Sandra shared the big picture plan for the study sessions via PPT. - At this point, they're going to release the dates for an all-day retreat. Bishop Sawyer thinks a hybrid all-day retreat would be helpful to allow people to pop in and out, as they're able. - Councilmember Baron updated protected classes in 2025. - Tuesday study session at 7:45am is about the county budget. It's still open, and up to 4 commissioners can join. It will also be recorded. Scarleth will send out a form for signing up for the study sessions. - Welcome Isabella Boparai, <i>Civil Rights Program Intern</i>: Technical difficulties have prevented her from joining, but Sandra will send out a bio for her. - KCIRC Community Event is tomorrow in Seattle. Scarleth sent an invitation. Anyone can go. There are no issues related to quorum. Sandra will send the details after the meeting. Bishop Sawyer suggests there be badges made to identify who we are and that we're part of this commission for events like this.	STAFF LIASION Sandra Gallagher Action Item: 1. Sandra will talk to Scarleth about requesting an extension for the powers and duties report. 2. Scarleth will report back to the commission on deadline extension request. 3. Sandra will share the Protected Classes matrix as an attachment. File also in SharePoint. Deadline: 7/31/26, given the aggressive timeline. 4. Sandra will share Isabella's bio 5. Sandra will share details of KCIRC summer gathering.

	- Changes to Power & Duties Report Tentative Outline & Timeline. The timeline is aggressive, and commissioners are concerned about it being doable. We've had previous discussions about this (most commissioners chimed in), and the commissioners have been concerned about the timeline for some time. In the leadership team meeting, they discussed that if we can't get an extension, we could provide a report of what we've done to date. If there's a formal process to request an extension, commission hasn't been informed of it. If we don't have all of the information we need to make informed recommendations, we could do more harm than good. - Question about the change that occurred in June 2026. Reorganization of the Executive Office happened in June 2026, but we will still make recommendations about where the work should live. We are outside of the government and giving the government our opinion. We don't need to be stifled by the decisions made in June 2026—we can be strategic about how we make recommendations. - Commission Recruitments (D4-D5), Position 11 Appointment & Position 10 Re-Appointment; we will have another vacancy with Betelhem's withdrawal. Vanessa has asked for re-appointment, so they will work on that. Once Lalita is appointed, she will be the newest member for Position 11.	6. Scarleth will request badges for Commissioners.
6:17 PM (5 mins)	Current Civil Rights and HCRC Structure (PPT) - Background Refresh - Power & Duties - Year-to-Date Data Overview – Interactive dashboard is under development with data from (Jan-Jun 2026), which includes 181 records.	STAFF LIASION Sandra Gallagher Action Items: 7. Scarleth will share link to Interactive Dashboard to gather Commissioners feedback
6:22 PM (30 mins)	Subcommittee Report Outs - #1 County Operations (Sawyer, Hastings, Huynh) Updates Regarding protected classes and the civil rights program. Protected classes: WA's list is broad, includes more classes than the federal government, and is considered among the top tier states for its inclusivity. The areas of protection are employment, housing and real estate, places of public accommodation, credit, and insurance.	HCRC Subcommittee Chairs or Representatives Action Items: 8. Scarleth will share the draft of the "Changes to Power and Duties" outline as an attachment.

	We have some questions about whether we need to expand the classes and/or study the existing classes more to see if there's more definition we can give them. Christopher Bhang had suggested more study/definition for existing list (e.g., veterans) would be helpful. We think it would be helpful to have a follow-up conversation – either our subcommittee or the full commission – with Christopher to probe this issue more and ask for ideas for other people to talk to who have thoughts about what's working or not working about this list. Civil Rights Program: We need an understanding of how the current program is already shifting under the new executive, what the goals are for any changes and any potential unintended consequences: will work that was done prior to his election be lost? Our recommendations need to be informed by what's happening on the ground with an eye towards what might be lost or gained with the changes. Shannon Harris articulated some tensions in the work of the program—need for authority, which they get from being in the Executive's Office, but they also work at the will of the Executive. There could be benefits to them being structured or housed differently, so that they have more independence and don't work at the will of the Executive, but they could lose some of their authority and countywide reach. Bishop Sawyer has done some thinking and research and shared a document during the meeting. Key question: What structure would be most beneficial to the county? If we were to make a recommendation, what is appropriate scale-wise? - #2 Community Engagement (Sanchez-Mexicano, Michael, Jaber) In their first meeting, they focused on drafting an email to nonprofits to introduce the commission. Mona would like to focus on outreach and next steps. - #3 Governance and Systems (Joens-Poulton, Karls, Wong) They met on June 23rd with members from the Seattle Human Rights Commission, and they were able to share about how they're structured as a way to hold government accountable. The way they operate is focused on complaints and the appeals process. They advocate for people during the appeals process. They have an outreach component as well and do policy review.	File is available in SharePoint. 9. Jennifer will create a Google Doc or Shared File to work in. 10. Scarleth will suggest more dates for a retreat ½ day in-person retreat. Deadline: 7/31/26
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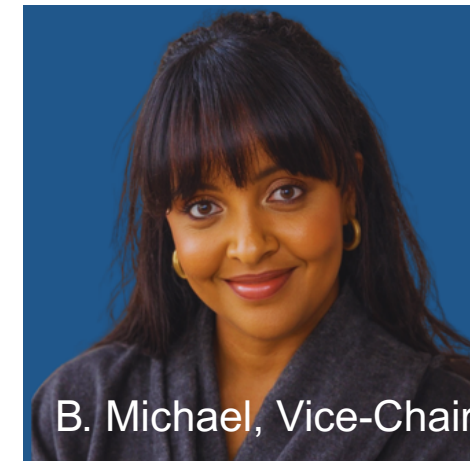
	On June 30th, they met with Erin Warren, who works in ADA compliance with the City of Kirkland. She shared a lot about how their systems work: receiving complaints, how the city responds, and what the processes are for that work. They've been working on how to broaden their reach in Kirkland. Her focus is solely on ADA issues. They are also working to set up a meeting with the human services department for the City of Kirkland. They're going to meet with people from the City of Bellevue and City of Redmond. They're trying to learn more about complaint systems—hoping to be able to use this knowledge to make some recommendations about interlocal agreements. Discussion of how to share information—we could put information in an outline of the powers and duties report to move it forward; we could put it in another living document as well to have the full commission vote on recommendations. It would be helpful to use a retreat to vote on recommendations. Discussion of a Plan B if we can't have a retreat before the report is due. How can we organize ourselves to complete the task, as written, in the ordinance? For the study sessions, we want to prioritize the executive office, legislative office (Dembowski's office, perhaps; Christina Fog might be a good person, as she used to work with Dembowski and is now in the Executive Office), and the folks who can shed light on the reports mentioned in the ordinance. It would be helpful to have 2 study sessions per day. Study sessions align with what we need for the report. We are discussing using a Google Doc since there have been access issues with SharePoint and start working towards creating the report.	
6:52 PM (4 mins)	Recap, Action Items, Future Agenda Topics We still want to request an extension for the report but will do the study sessions and complete what we can towards the August 3rd deadline. Daisy suggests we think about trying to schedule an in-person retreat, if we can. Allison suggests it could be half day for in-person time.	HCRC Co-Chairs KARL Action Item #10
6:56 PM (2 mins)	King County HCRC Commissioner Closing Comments - Opportunity to share events, news, opportunities to engage, etc. - None	HCRC Members Administrative
7:00 PM	Adjourn Adjourned: 8pm	HCRC CO-CHAIRS KARL Administrative

Human & Civil Rights Commission (HCRC)

Tuesday, July 21st Virtual Public Meeting
Operational Updates

Staff Liaison: Senayet Negusse (Scarleth Lever Ortiz/Sandra Gallagher)

Last update: 7/21/2026



B. Michael, Vice-Chair



E. Huynh



A. Hastings, Secretary



J. Joens-Poulton



J. Karls, Co-Chair



M. Jaber



S. Sawyer



D. Wong, Co-Chair



V. Sanchez-Mexicano

Survey | Preliminary Responses

- Released June 17th, closed July 21st
- As of July 21st, eight (8) or 89% have responded

1. Civil Rights Program Background and Structure

- Provide a program overview refresh
- Walk through organizational structure

2. Legal and Policy Framework

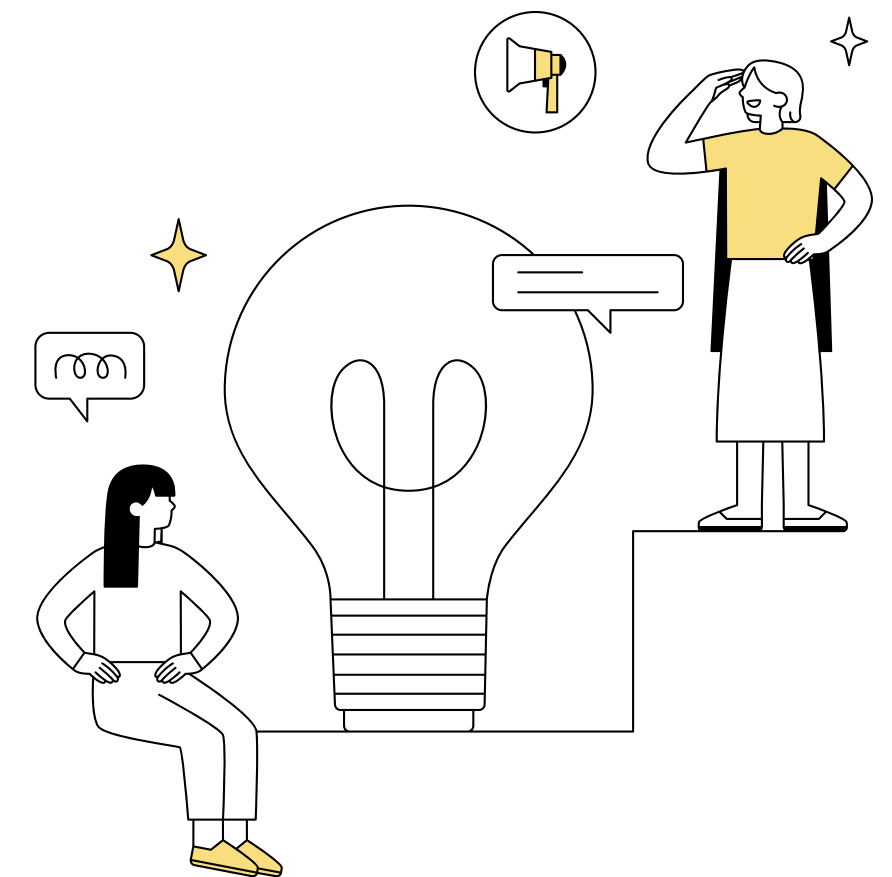
- Review ADA/504 disability materials
- Clarify protected classes in County Charter/Code

3. Interlocal Agreements and Referenced Reports

- Review interlocal agreement examples
- Review access to referenced reports

4. Report Guidance and Expectations

- Review outline
- Review options for ensuring independence/objectivity



Study Sessions:

Tuesdays at Noon or
6:00 PM

All-Day Retreat:

Any weekday or
Saturday



Study Sessions & Retreat

- HCRC Changes to Power and Duties (“CPD”) Report Due September 29th, 2026
- Preliminary Workplan | Tentative Timeline

Korematsu Report
Highlights
Chris Bhang (EEO Officer)

Civil Rights Program
Inquiry & Investigation
Process
Sandra Gallagher (EO)

KC Legislative Branch
Dae Shogren (ESJ Director)

KC OLEO
J. Tugenberg (Community
Engagement & CACLEO Staff
Liaison)

The Gender Identity
and Sexual
Orientation Report
Derek Baker (EO Strategy)

KC Budget Overview
*(Budget Team: July 28th at
7:45 AM)*

KC Executive Branch
TBD

KC Risk Management
(Pam Lewis)

The Disability & Equity
Plan Highlights
*(EO ADA Disability Equity
Team)*

KC Immigration &
Refugee Commission
*Brian Chu, KCIRC Staff Liaison &
Rich Stolz, Policy Advisor*

KC Department of
Local Services (DLS)
Seth Pedersen (OLS)

KC Examiners Office
Devon Shannon (KCC)

KC Ombudsmen
Elise Daniels (KCC)



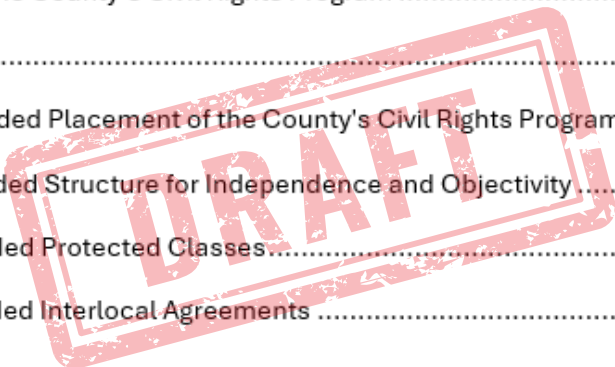
HCRC CPD Report

- Changes to Power & Duties (“CPD”) Report
- Tentative Outline & Timeline

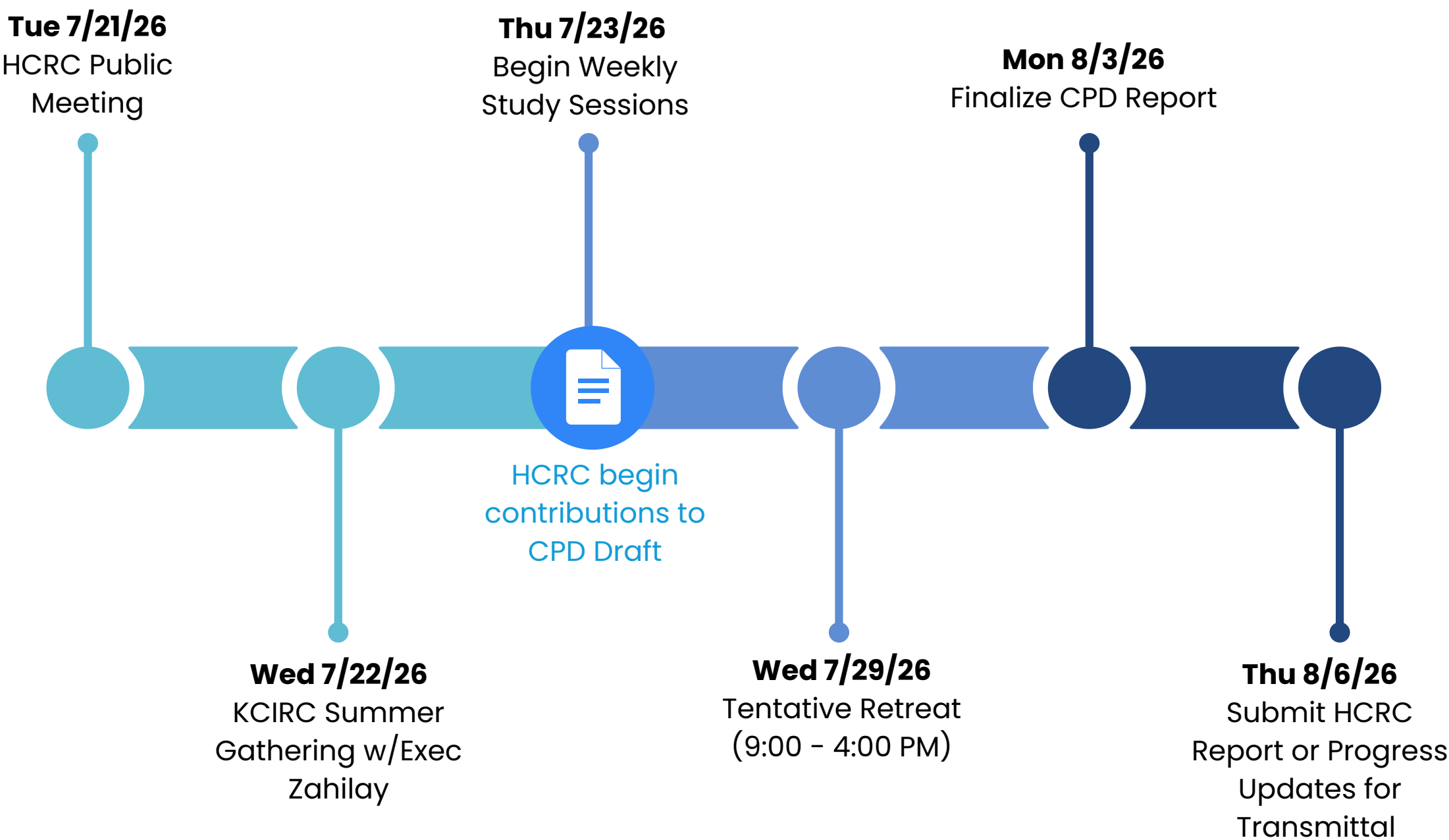
Change of Power & Duties Report

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Tentative Timeline



Open Seats & Reappointments

- District 4 and 5 Application Deadline: July 20th
- District 10: Re-appointment
- Position 11: Upcoming Appointment of Lalita Uppala

2026 HCRC Commissioners					
Position	Name	Dietary Restrictions	Term Expires	Roles	Emergency Contact Information
1	Betlehem Michael (206) 348-0685		July 31, 2028	Vice-Chair and member of Sub-Committee #3	Yonas Woldehaimanot 206-501-0441 yonasw17@gmail.com
2	Emily Huynh (206) 823-4167		July 31, 2028	Commissioner and member of Sub-Committee #1	Emily Huynh 206-823-41671 emilyhuynhpro@gmail.com
3	Allison Hastings (202) 486-4575		July 31, 2027	Secretary/Historian and member of Sub-Committee #1	Jeff Kizner 202-486-4479 jtkizner@hotmail.com
4	Jacob Joens-Poulton (707) 472-6738		July 31, 2026	Commissioner and member of Sub-Committee #2	Sydney Sherk 509-771-0882 sydneysherk@gmail.com
5	Vacant		July 31, 2028	Vacant	
6	Jennifer Karls (425) 417-5579		July 31, 2028	Chair and member of Sub-Committee #2	David Karls 206-909-9393 hooddaddy2010@gmail.com
7	Mona Jaber (619) 551-4832	Halal Diet	July 31, 2028	Commissioner and member of Sub-Committee #3	Motasem Rano 619-635-0226 motasemrano@gmail.com
8	Steven Sawyer (253) 365-7924		July 31, 2028	Commissioner and member of Sub-Committee #1	Melvin Givens 414-350-9122 melvin.givens@gmail.com
9	Daisy Wong (206) 249-7370		July 31, 2027	Co-Chair and members of Sub-Committee #3	Mikael Taib 206-255-4215 miketaib@gmail.com
10	Vanessa Sanchez-Mexicano (541) 288-8092	Lactose Free	July 31, 2026	Commissioner and member of Sub-Committee #2	Briseida Sanchez 541-645-5253 briseidasanchez99@gmail.com
11	Vacant		July 31, 2026	Vacant	

HOME / EXECUTIVE ZAHLAY / EQUITY AND SOCIAL JUSTICE PROGRAMS / KING COUNTY COMMISSIONS FOCUSED ON EQUITY AND SOCIAL JUSTICE / KING COUNTY HUMAN AND CIVIL RIGHTS COMMISSION

King County Human and Civil Rights Commission

POINT OF CONTACT:
Staff Liaison: Senayet Negusse
Email: HCRC@kingcounty.gov

[↓ ABOUT THE COMMISSION](#) [↓ TERM](#)
[↓ KEY DUTIES](#) [↓ TIME COMMITMENT](#)
[↓ MEMBERS](#) [↓ COMPENSATION](#)

Come Join the Commission!

The strength of King County comes from the people who call it home. The Human and Civil Rights Commission helps ensure community voices are heard as we work to build a county where everyone is treated fairly and has the opportunity to succeed.

We are currently seeking applicants from Districts 4 and 5 to serve on the Commission. Commissioners advise county leaders, engage with communities, and provide recommendations on issues affecting human and civil rights across King County.

The Commission plays a key role in promoting fairness, equity, and justice for all residents. We are looking for community members who bring diverse experiences, perspectives, and a strong commitment to advancing civil and human rights.

Key Details

- Stipend: \$75 provided for each monthly meeting, transportation reimbursement available
- Who can apply: Residents of King County Council Districts 4 and 5

Applications close Monday, July 20th: [APPLY NOW](#)

Meeting packets

April 2026 [▼](#)
March 2026 [▼](#)
February 2026 [▼](#)
January 2026 [▼](#)

15 Applicants*

- D4: Seven (7)
- D5: Eight (8)



*as of 7/21/2026

CR Program | Background Refresh

- Milestones
- Current Powers & Duties

County Foundation

1862: King County founded by Oregon Territorial Legislature; named after William Rufus de Vane King.

1968: Home Rule Charter adopted; nine-member County Council established.



Early Equity Efforts

1969: First County Council sworn in; structured legislative process begins.

1976: Affirmative Action Committee (AAC) established

Civil Rights Framework Built

1995: Civil Rights Commission replaced AAC

2006: Commission reduced from 16 to 12 members & tasked with conducting informal investigations

- Civil rights protections broadened across employment, services, and contracting; enforcement strengthened
- County formally reidentifies with Dr. King, culminating in legal renaming and MLK logo adoption

Equity & Social Justice Institutionalization

2010: ESJ embedded into KC Strategic Plan; extended to all departments.

2015: Office of ESJ established

2019: Korematsu Report released while Civil Rights Commission paused activities

2024: Ordinance 19770 establishes a strengthened HCRC

HCRC Revival & Modernization

Sep '25: Inaugural HCRC meeting; expansion of protected classes.

Nov '25: New KC Executive Zahilay elected.

Jun '26: Council approves new Executive Office structure; Civil Rights Program becomes core EO function.

Sep '26: HCRC "Powers & Duties" Report due.

1862 - 1968

1969 - 1979



1980 - 2009



2010 - 2024



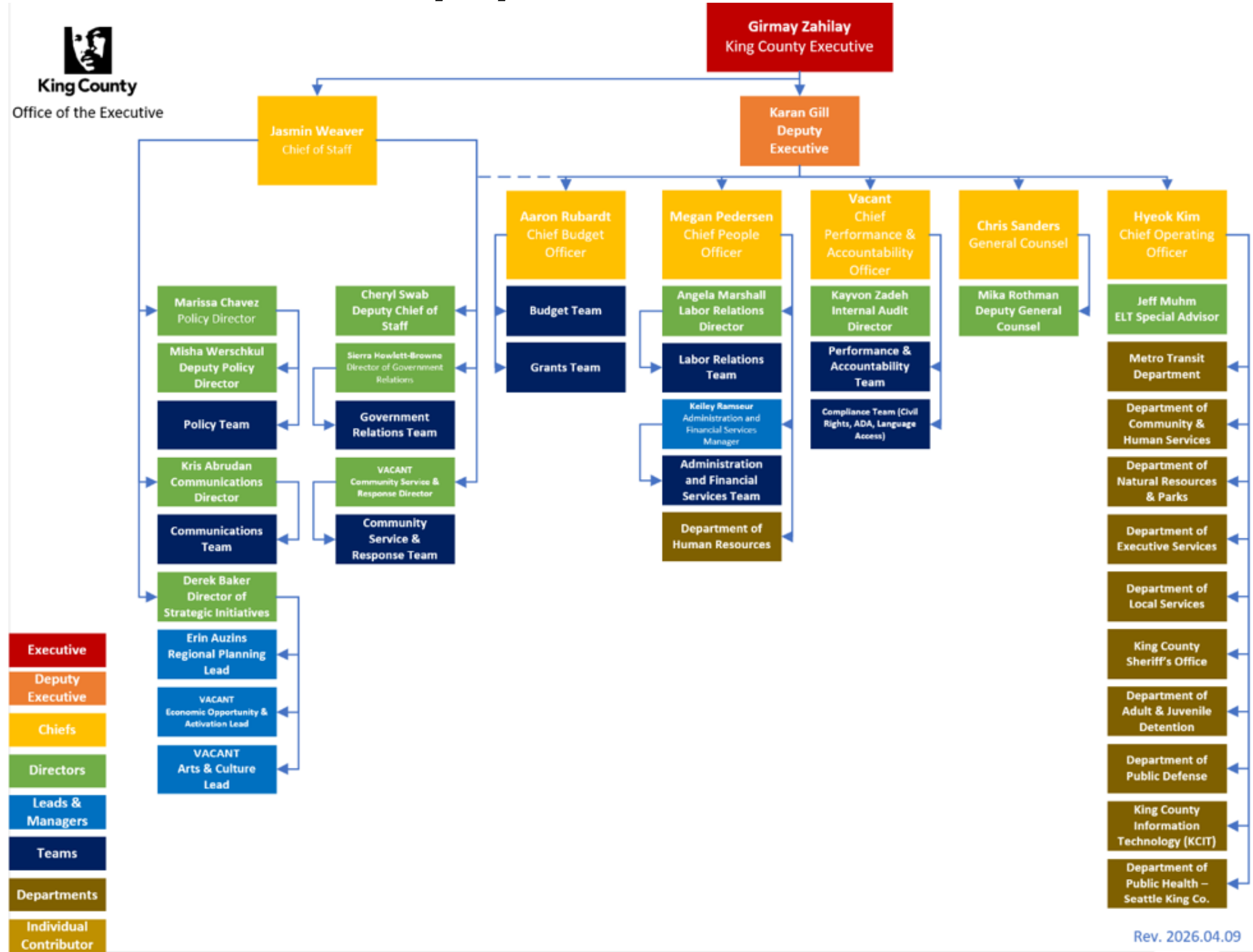
2025 - 2026



CR Program | Background Refresh

- Milestones
- Current Powers & Duties

Executive Office as of 7/13/2026



Civil Rights Team as of 7/13/2026



Senayet Negusse
Manager



Sandra Gallagher
Investigator



Scarleth Lever Ortiz
Operations Specialist



Shannon Harris
Investigator (PT)



Niki Krimmel-Morrison
Investigator (PT)



Isabella Boparai
Intern

CR Program | Background Refresh

- 2026 Data – Interactive Dashboard

