
ENGROSSED SUBSTITUTE SENATE BILL 6574

State of Washington

66th Legislature

2020 Regular Session

By Senate Local Government (originally sponsored by Senators Takko and Short; by request of Office of the Governor)

READ FIRST TIME 02/05/20.

1 AN ACT Relating to clarifying the respective administrative
2 powers, duties, and responsibilities of the growth management
3 hearings board and the environmental land use and hearings office;
4 and amending RCW 36.70A.250, 36.70A.252, 36.70A.260, 36.70A.270, and
5 43.21B.005.

6 BE IT ENACTED BY THE LEGISLATURE OF THE STATE OF WASHINGTON:

7 **Sec. 1.** RCW 36.70A.250 and 2010 c 211 s 4 are each amended to
8 read as follows:

9 (1) ((A)) (a) There is hereby created within the environmental
10 and land use hearings office established by RCW 43.21B.005 a growth
11 management hearings board for the state of Washington ((is created)).
12 The board shall consist of ((seven)) five members qualified by
13 experience or training in pertinent matters pertaining to land use
14 law or land use planning and who have experience in the practical
15 application of those matters. All ((seven)) five board members shall
16 be appointed by the governor((, ~~two each residing respectively in the~~
17 central Puget Sound, eastern Washington, and western Washington
18 regions, ~~plus one board member residing within the state of~~
19 Washington)). At least three members of the board shall be admitted
20 to practice law in this state, one each residing respectively in the
21 central Puget Sound, eastern Washington, and western Washington

1 regions. At least (~~three~~) two members of the board shall have been
2 a city or county elected official, one each residing respectively in
3 (~~the central Puget Sound,~~) eastern Washington(~~r~~) and western
4 Washington (~~regions~~). (~~After expiration of the terms of board~~
5 ~~members on the previously existing three growth management hearings~~
6 ~~boards,~~ ~~no~~) No more than (~~four~~) three members of the (~~seven-~~
7 ~~member~~) five-member board may be members of the same major political
8 party. No more than two members at the time of their appointment or
9 during their term may reside in the same county. Board members shall
10 operate on a full-time basis, shall receive an annual salary to be
11 determined by the governor pursuant to RCW 43.03.040, shall receive
12 reimbursement for travel expenses incurred in the discharge of their
13 duties in accordance with RCW 43.03.050 and 43.03.060, and shall be
14 considered employees of the state of Washington subject to chapter
15 42.52 RCW.

16 (2) Each member of the board shall be appointed for a term of six
17 years, and until their successors are appointed. A vacancy shall be
18 filled by appointment by the governor for the unexpired portion of
19 the term in which the vacancy occurs. (~~Members of the previously~~
20 ~~existing three growth management hearings boards appointed before~~
21 ~~July 1, 2010, shall complete their staggered, six-year terms as~~
22 ~~members of the growth management hearings board created under~~
23 ~~subsection (1) of this section. The reduction from nine board members~~
24 ~~on the previously existing three growth management hearings boards to~~
25 ~~seven total members on the growth management hearings board shall be~~
26 ~~made through attrition, voluntary resignation, or retirement.))~~

27 **Sec. 2.** RCW 36.70A.252 and 2010 c 210 s 15 are each amended to
28 read as follows:

29 (~~(1)~~) On July 1, 2011, the growth management hearings board is
30 administratively consolidated into the environmental and land use
31 hearings office created in RCW 43.21B.005. The chair of the growth
32 management hearings board shall continue to exercise duties and
33 responsibilities pursuant to RCW 36.70A.270(11). The environmental
34 and land use hearings office shall be responsible for all other
35 administrative functions pertaining to the growth management hearings
36 board including making case assignments to board members in
37 accordance with the board's rules of procedure in order to achieve a
38 fair and balanced workload among all board members.

1 ~~((2) Not later than July 1, 2012, the growth management hearings~~
2 ~~board consists of seven members qualified by experience or training~~
3 ~~in matters pertaining to land use law or land use planning, except~~
4 ~~that the governor may reduce the board to six members if warranted by~~
5 ~~the board's caseload. All board members must be appointed by the~~
6 ~~governor, two each residing respectively in the central Puget Sound,~~
7 ~~eastern Washington, and western Washington regions and shall continue~~
8 ~~to meet the qualifications set out in RCW 36.70A.260. The reduction~~
9 ~~from seven board members to six board members must be made through~~
10 ~~attrition, voluntary resignation, or retirement.))~~

11 **Sec. 3.** RCW 36.70A.260 and 2010 c 211 s 5 are each amended to
12 read as follows:

13 (1) Each petition for review that is filed with the growth
14 management hearings board shall be heard and decided by a regional
15 panel of growth management hearings board members. Regional panels
16 shall be constituted as follows:

17 (a) Central Puget Sound region. A three-member central Puget
18 Sound panel shall be selected to hear matters pertaining to cities
19 and counties located within the region comprised of King, Pierce,
20 Snohomish, and Kitsap counties.

21 (b) Eastern Washington region. A three-member eastern Washington
22 panel shall be selected to hear matters pertaining to cities and
23 counties that are required or choose to plan under RCW 36.70A.040 and
24 are located east of the crest of the Cascade mountains.

25 (c) Western Washington region. A three-member western Washington
26 panel shall be selected to hear matters pertaining to cities and
27 counties that are required or choose to plan under RCW 36.70A.040,
28 are located west of the crest of the Cascade mountains, and are not
29 included in the central Puget Sound region. Skamania county, if it is
30 required or chooses to plan under RCW 36.70A.040, may elect to be
31 included within either the western Washington region or the eastern
32 Washington region.

33 (2)(a) Each regional panel selected to hear and decide cases
34 shall consist of three board members, at least a majority of whom
35 shall reside within the region in which the case arose, unless such
36 members cannot sit on a particular case because of recusal or
37 disqualification, or unless the ~~((board administrative officer))~~
38 director of the environmental and land use hearings office determines
39 ~~((that there is an emergency including, but not limited to,))~~

1 otherwise due to caseload management determinations or the
2 unavailability of a board member due to illness, absence, or
3 vacancy(~~, or significant workload imbalance~~). The presiding officer
4 of each case shall reside within the region in which the case arose,
5 unless the board (~~(administrative officer)~~) chair determines that
6 there is an emergency.

7 (b) Except as provided otherwise in this subsection (2)(b), each
8 regional panel must: (i) Include one member admitted to practice law
9 in this state; (ii) include one member who has been a city or county
10 elected official; and (iii) reflect the political composition of the
11 board. The requirements of this subsection (2)(b) may be waived by
12 the board (~~(administrative officer)~~) chair due to member
13 unavailability, significant workload imbalances, or other reasons.

14 **Sec. 4.** RCW 36.70A.270 and 2019 c 452 s 2 are each amended to
15 read as follows:

16 The growth management hearings board shall be governed by the
17 following rules on conduct and procedure:

18 (1) Any board member may be removed for inefficiency,
19 malfeasance, and misfeasance in office, under specific written
20 charges filed by the governor. The governor shall transmit such
21 written charges to the member accused and the chief justice of the
22 supreme court. The chief justice shall thereupon designate a tribunal
23 composed of three judges of the superior court to hear and adjudicate
24 the charges. Removal of any member of the board by the tribunal shall
25 disqualify such member for reappointment.

26 (2) (~~Each board member shall receive reimbursement for travel~~
27 ~~expenses incurred in the discharge of his or her duties in accordance~~
28 ~~with RCW 43.03.050 and 43.03.060. Each member shall receive an annual~~
29 ~~salary to be determined by the governor pursuant to RCW 43.03.040.))
30 The principal office of the board shall be located in (~~Olympia~~)
31 Thurston county, but it may hold hearings at any other place in the
32 state.~~

33 (3) Each board member shall not: (a) Be a candidate for or hold
34 any other public office or trust; (b) engage in any occupation or
35 business interfering with or inconsistent with his or her duty as a
36 board member; and (c) for a period of one year after the termination
37 of his or her board membership, act in a representative capacity
38 before the board on any matter.

1 (4) A majority of the board shall constitute a quorum for
2 adopting rules necessary for the conduct of its powers and duties or
3 transacting other official business, and may act even though one
4 position of the board is vacant. One or more members may hold
5 hearings and take testimony to be reported for action by the board
6 when authorized by rule or order of the board. The board shall
7 perform all the powers and duties specified in this chapter or as
8 otherwise provided by law.

9 (5) The board may use one or more hearing examiners to assist the
10 board in its hearing function, to make conclusions of law and
11 findings of fact and, if requested by the board, to make
12 recommendations to the board for decisions in cases before the board.
13 Such hearing examiners must have demonstrated knowledge of land use
14 planning and law. The board shall specify in its rules of practice
15 and procedure, as required by subsection (7) of this section, the
16 procedure and criteria to be employed for designating hearing
17 examiners as a presiding officer. Hearing examiners used by the board
18 shall meet the requirements of subsection (3) of this section. The
19 findings and conclusions of the hearing examiner shall not become
20 final until they have been formally approved by the board. This
21 authorization to use hearing examiners does not waive the requirement
22 of RCW 36.70A.300 that final orders be issued within one hundred
23 eighty days of board receipt of a petition.

24 (6) The board shall make findings of fact and prepare a written
25 decision in each case decided by it, and such findings and decision
26 shall be effective upon being signed by two or more members of the
27 regional panel deciding the particular case and upon being filed at
28 the board's principal office, and shall be open for public inspection
29 at all reasonable times.

30 (7) All proceedings before the board, any of its members, or a
31 hearing examiner appointed by the board shall be conducted in
32 accordance with such administrative rules of practice and procedure
33 as the board prescribes. The board shall develop and adopt rules of
34 practice and procedure, including rules regarding expeditious and
35 summary disposition of appeals and the assignment of cases to
36 regional panels. The board shall publish such rules it renders and
37 arrange for the reasonable distribution of the rules. Except as it
38 conflicts with specific provisions of this chapter, the
39 administrative procedure act, chapter 34.05 RCW, and specifically

1 including the provisions of RCW 34.05.455 governing ex parte
2 communications, shall govern the practice and procedure of the board.

3 (8) The board must ensure all rulings, decisions, and orders are
4 available to the public through the environmental and land use
5 hearings office's web sites as described in RCW 43.21B.005. To ensure
6 uniformity and usability of searchable databases and web sites, the
7 board shall coordinate with the environmental and land use hearings
8 office, the department of commerce, and other interested stakeholders
9 to develop and maintain a rational system of categorizing its
10 decisions and orders.

11 (9) A board member or hearing examiner is subject to
12 disqualification under chapter 34.05 RCW. The rules of practice of
13 the board shall establish procedures by which a party to a hearing
14 conducted before the board may file with the board a motion to
15 disqualify, with supporting affidavit, against a board member or
16 hearing examiner assigned to preside at the hearing.

17 (10) All members of the board shall meet on at least an annual
18 basis with the objective of sharing information that promotes the
19 goals and purposes of this chapter.

20 (11) The board shall annually elect one of its members to be the
21 board ~~((administrative—officer))~~ chair. The duties and
22 responsibilities of the ~~((administrative—officer))~~ chair include
23 ~~((handling day-to-day administrative, budget, and personnel matters
24 on behalf of the board, together with making case assignments to
25 board members in accordance with the board's rules of procedure in
26 order to achieve a fair and balanced workload among all board
27 members. The administrative officer of the board may carry a reduced
28 caseload to allow time for performing the administrative work
29 functions))~~ developing board procedures and managing board meetings.

30 **Sec. 5.** RCW 43.21B.005 and 2019 c 452 s 1 are each amended to
31 read as follows:

32 (1) There is created an environmental and land use hearings
33 office of the state of Washington. The environmental and land use
34 hearings office consists of the pollution control hearings board
35 created in RCW 43.21B.010, the shorelines hearings board created in
36 RCW 90.58.170, and the growth management hearings board created in
37 RCW 36.70A.250. The governor shall ~~((designate one of the members of
38 the pollution control hearings board or growth management hearings
39 board to be the))~~ appoint a director of the environmental and land

1 use hearings office during the term of the governor. Membership,
2 powers, functions, and duties of the pollution control hearings
3 board, the shorelines hearings board, and the growth management
4 hearings board shall be as provided by law.

5 (2) The director of the environmental and land use hearings
6 office may appoint one or more administrative appeals judges in cases
7 before the environmental boards and, (~~with the consent of the chair~~
8 ~~of the growth management hearings board,~~) one or more hearing
9 examiners in cases before the land use board comprising the office.
10 The administrative appeals judges shall possess the powers and duties
11 conferred by the administrative procedure act, chapter 34.05 RCW,
12 have a demonstrated knowledge of environmental law, and shall be
13 admitted to the practice of law in the state of Washington. The
14 hearing examiners possess the powers and duties provided for in RCW
15 36.70A.270.

16 (3) Administrative appeals judges are not subject to chapter
17 41.06 RCW. The administrative appeals judges appointed under
18 subsection (2) of this section are subject to discipline and
19 termination, for cause, by the director of the environmental and land
20 use hearings office. Upon written request by the person so
21 disciplined or terminated, the director of the environmental and land
22 use hearings office shall state the reasons for such action in
23 writing. The person affected has a right of review by the superior
24 court of Thurston county on petition for reinstatement or other
25 remedy filed within thirty days of receipt of such written reasons.

26 (4) The director of the environmental and land use hearings
27 office may appoint, discharge, and fix the compensation of such
28 administrative or clerical staff as may be necessary.

29 (5) The director of the environmental and land use hearings
30 office may also contract for required services.

31 (6) The director of the environmental and land use hearings
32 office must ensure that timely and accurate (~~growth management~~
33 ~~hearings~~) board rulings, decisions, and orders are made available to
34 the public through searchable databases accessible through the
35 environmental and land use hearings office web sites. To ensure
36 uniformity and usability of searchable databases and web sites, the
37 director must coordinate with the (~~growth management hearings~~
38 ~~board~~) relevant boards, the department of commerce, and other
39 interested stakeholders to develop and maintain a rational system of
40 categorizing (~~growth management hearings~~) board rulings, decisions,

1 and orders. The environmental and land use hearings office web sites
2 must allow a user to search growth management hearings board
3 decisions and orders by topic, party, and geographic location or by
4 natural language. All rulings, decisions, and orders issued before
5 January 1, 2019, must be published by June 30, 2021.

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