

MEMBERSHIP SECTION OPERATING GUIDELINES

SECTION I - THE COURT

1. **BRIEF HISTORY OF THE ORGANIZATION:** It may now be said that we are one of the oldest continuing organizations within the Gay and Lesbian community. It has also been said that among gay organizations, The Court System "is the most controversial, the most misunderstood". This brief history is designed to answer questions commonly asked about the Court and will hopefully clear up some of the misunderstandings.
2. **WHERE DID THE COURT SYSTEM BEGIN?** The Court System was started in San Francisco, which is known for its outrageous personalities and colorful figures. So it was, in that city that **Empress I, Jose** declared himself the Dowager Widow of the Emperor Norton - Empress of San Francisco and the Protectress of Mexico. Emperor Norton is a historical figure of the 1800's, a product of the first wave of gold miners to the Barbary Coast. An eccentric, he made a fortune in gold, lost a fortune in rice, and finally declared himself the Emperor of San Francisco.

Jose Sarria was notorious in 1965. He was, perhaps the first openly gay political candidate when he ran for city supervisor in 1961. At the same time, he was doing this, a group of gay bar owners were organizing **The Tavern Guild**. This organization was designed to provide support in coping with an anti-gay political machine operating in San Francisco at that time. The Tavern Guild sought out a hostess for its functions; Jose was indeed the logical choice. Jose was instrumental in bringing the various factions to her home for her now infamous "Brunches" where she would hostess, (some say hostage taking) between the parties and bring about a consensus beneficial to the Community as a whole, Straight & Gay.

The standard of fun, glamour and irreverence attracted many. The Court system was growing up and down along the West Coast. In Seattle, George Ray and colleagues from the **Queen City Business Guild**, a group of gay bar owners traveled to San Francisco and petitioned Jose for permission to establish a Court. In 1971 Seattle became the fourth Empire of the International Court System, in which there are more than (60) sixty in the United States and Canada. The Court of Seattle has mounted many campaigns to lead the fight for Gay Rights, which Jose I, in general terms, believes are indeed nothing more than Human Rights.

In 1998 the Court filed for and received its 501.c3 Non-Profit status and became known as The Court of Seattle Organization. The purpose of the Court is to maintain pageantry and heraldry for the Monarchy by means of electing titles and other such positions; to create goodwill, to organize charitable social events, to hold fundraising activities, and to provide for the enjoyment and benefit of its members and for the social community in which it exists. The Court still maintains its initial focus of ensuring equal treatment for all members of the Lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgender community.

3. **WHAT DO THE MONARCHS DO?** The Monarchs, known in this Realm as Rainier and Olympia serve as titular Heads of State of the Imperial Court of Seattle and its Imperial Family (made up of all Titleholders, both elected and appointed). Much like real Constitutional Monarchies (as in the United Kingdom), the Monarchs have no real control over their Realm but have many responsibilities that impact the daily life of the Court and Community. They set the tone of their Reign, and the Court year is largely seen as a reflection of their talents and abilities. They are responsible for guiding and mentoring their Imperial Family and Court.

The Monarchs have a hand in ensuring that all the activities and events of the Court and its titleholders are successful. As Heads of State, the Monarchs are also expected to represent the Court of Seattle at multiple functions throughout their year, both within Seattle and across the State and other Realms comprising the International Court System. More specific information about the Duties and Responsibilities of the Monarchy can be found in Section III, Part D of the Pageantry Section of the Operating Guidelines.

4. **WHY DO WE DRESS UP?** We each have our own reasons: for some it is "Theater". The enjoyment comes from creating an illusion. We are actors playing a part. For some it provides a socially acceptable opportunity to express our creative side through costuming and allowing us to play with new ideas and experiment with a new Persona.

The issue of cross-dressing has always been a delicate subject, even within the gay community itself. Some feel it is demeaning or politically incorrect. We within the Court feel that the freedom to express our own views in word, dress or deed is essential to maintaining the human spirit.

We hold responsible and civic-minded positions in the community at large. We are a vital part of a vibrant community, which offers Respect to everyone.

SECTION II – BOUNDARIES

The Court of Seattle is the Mother Court of the State of Washington.

For the purpose of board of director offices, voting and running for titles, the following boundaries consist of King, Pierce, Thurston, Mason, Kitsap, Grays Harbor, and Island counties, Hat Island and the national parks in which Mount Rainier and Mount Olympus are located, including the site of the former Olympia Brewery in Tumwater, WA.

SECTION III – DETERMINATION AND RIGHTS OF MEMBERS

The corporation shall have only one class of members. No member shall hold more than one membership in the corporation. Except as expressly provided in or authorized by the Articles of Incorporation, the Bylaws of this corporation, or provisions of law, all memberships shall have the same rights, privileges, restrictions, and conditions.

SECTION IV - MEMBERSHIP QUALIFICATION

To become a member of the court, you must have acceptable identification and submit an application form at a general membership court meeting. Membership, in good standing, will become effective at the second consecutive regular general court membership meeting that you attend. The exception is the first meeting of the new court year at which time all paid memberships, at that meeting, will result in memberships in good standing. In addition to residents of the Empire as defined in Section II above, any residents of Washington State may become members of the Court of Seattle. Non-residents of the Empire will be allowed to vote and hold the titles of Closets, Hearts, or Seas, but will be excluded from holding a position on the Board of Directors and the titles of Gay Seattles, Imperial Prince and Princess, Rainier, or Olympia.

A. Age

1. You must be 21 years of age.
2. Associate memberships are available for persons between the ages of 18 and 21 and may be approved at the discretion of the Board President.

B. Dues and Fees

1. Upon completion of an application for membership, a fee will be due for new members.
2. The board shall, during the first board meeting of a newly elected board, set the fee for new members. This fee shall be the fee for all new members until a new board is elected.
3. Annual membership dues shall be paid annually at the beginning of the corporation's calendar year.
4. The board shall, during the first board meeting of a newly elected board, set the annual due for renewing members. This due shall be the due for all renewing members until a new board is elected.
5. Members of the College of Monarchs and the Imperial Prince and Princess council (who were elected) and appointed Citizens for Life shall have lifetime membership and are not required to pay dues.

C. ID Required

1. You must be a U.S. Citizen or

2. Have proof of legal resident status

D. Lifetime Membership

Lifetime membership includes past monarchs and past elected Imperial Princes and Princesses.

1. In order to vote at court meetings, they must have maintained membership in good standing.
2. At the first general meeting of the new court year “in good standing” shall be immediately activated.

SECTION V – MEMBERSHIP IN GOOD STANDING

A. Attendance

Your membership, in good standing, will become effective at the second consecutive regular general court membership meeting that you attend. You must be a member “in good standing” and meet the voting attendance requirements to vote at general Court membership meetings. To become a member “in good standing,” you must meet the following criteria:

1. At the first general meeting of the new court year, all paid memberships, present at that meeting, will result in memberships “in good standing.”
2. You may have no more than two (2) consecutive excused or unexcused absences from a general court membership meeting within a court calendar year (March – February). Should you miss two (2) consecutive general court meetings, which are not excused, you shall lose your membership “in good standing” status.
3. All requests for “excused” absences must be made to a member of the Executive Committee prior to the meeting. There are no exceptions to this rule. You may notify a member of the Executive Committee by phone, email, or text.
4. Tardy attendees are responsible for meeting with the Membership Chair at the conclusion of the general court membership meeting to correct the attendance.
5. For members, in good standing, who are unable to attend the regular scheduled meetings, you can request a Leave of Absence for a specific period of time.
 - a. The request must be in writing – e-mail is acceptable.

- b. The Board President must approve it. (See Leave of Absence section).

B. Regaining Membership “in Good Standing”

If you lose your “in good standing” status due to unexcused absences, you may regain membership “in good standing” by attending the next two (2) consecutive regular general court meeting. “In good standing” is attained at the second consecutive meeting.

C. Leave of Absence

Leaves of absence from either the Board of Directors or General Membership with maintenance of “Good Standing” status may be granted when:

1. You provide a written request to the President for approval.
2. Leave requests may be granted for a period of time of up to six (6) months and may be extended for a total period of no more than one (1) year.
3. At no time shall a leave of absence be granted beyond the current court calendar year (March to February)
4. Should you be denied a leave of absence by the Board President, you may appeal such decision to the full Board of Directors, whose decision shall be final.

SECTION VI – GENERAL COURTS

A. General Court meetings shall be held in accordance with the Bylaws.

1. The order of business at the general court meetings shall be determined by the President of the Board of Directors, (See Bylaws, Article 12, and Section 9).
2. The reigning Monarchs shall facilitate the General Court meetings, in their absence, the Board President shall facilitate.
3. All meetings of the general court shall be open to the general public.
4. Quorum for all general court meetings shall be one-quarter (1/4) of the total membership in good standing.
5. Quorum for the first general p meeting shall be one-quarter (1/4) of the total membership “in good standing” as of the end of the previous December.

SECTION VI I – VOTING

A. Voting on Board Resolutions

1. Resolutions of the Board of Directors pertaining to financial and contractual matters will be final and not subject to ratification by the general membership.
2. Any non-financial Board decision may be challenged by the Court membership but can only be overturned by a 2/3 majority vote of the membership in good standing.
3. (See Business and Pageantry Section for other voting standards).

SECTION VIII – (Court Sponsored) AWARDS

The following are awards voted on by members “in good standing.” Nominees are open to all Court Members “in good standing.” Nominations and voting shall be held at the first general court meeting in January.

A. Court Member of the Year

Voted on by the general membership in good standing and presented each year, during Coronation, by the outgoing Monarchs.

B. The “Anthony J. Schmidt” Citizen of the Year Award

This award shall be presented to the recipient during Coronation. Nominees shall be open to all persons. It will be presented to the recipient during Coronation.

C. The “Scott Rodriguez” Business Person Award

This award is nominated and elected by the court membership in good standing at the first general court meeting in March for presentation to the recipient at The IPP Ball/Investitures by the outgoing Prince and Princess

D. The “Alex Veltri” Business Award

This award is nominated and elected, in January, by the court membership in good standing and shall be presented to the recipient during Coronation by the outgoing Monarchs or their designees.

E. Other Awards

Refer to Pageantry Operating Guidelines and Business Operating Guidelines for other Awards.

RATIFICATION

The Membership Section of the Operating Guidelines of the Imperial Sovereign Court of Seattle; the Olympic and Rainier Empire, Inc. were duly ratified by a majority vote of the General Membership meeting on January 9, 2019, at Pantages House, in the city of Seattle County of King, State of Washington.