

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.

45 **3. WHAT DO THE MONARCHS DO?** The Monarchs, known in this Realm as Rainier
46 (aka The Emperor) and Olympia (aka The Empress) serve as titular Heads of State of the
47 Imperial Court of Seattle and its Imperial Family (made up of all Titleholders, both elected
48 and appointed). Much like real Constitutional Monarchies (as in the United Kingdom), the
49 Monarchs have no real control over their Realm, but have many responsibilities that impact
50 the daily life of the Court and Community. They set the tone of their Reign, and the Court
51 year is largely seen as a reflection of their talents and abilities. They are responsible for
52 guiding and mentoring their Imperial Family and Court.
53

54 The Monarchs have a hand in ensuring that all the activities and events of the Court and its
55 titleholders are successful. As Heads of State, the Monarchs are also expected to represent
56 the Court of Seattle at multiple functions throughout their year, both within Seattle and
57 across the State and other Realms comprising the International Court System. More specific
58 information about the Duties and Responsibilities of the Monarchy can be found in Section
59 III, Part D of the Pageantry Section of the Operating Guidelines.
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61 **4. WHY DO WE DRESS UP?** We each have our own reasons: for some it
62 is "Theater". The enjoyment comes from creating an illusion. We are actors playing a part.
63 For some it provides a socially acceptable opportunity to express our creative side through
64 costuming, and allowing us to play with new ideas and experiment with a new Persona.
65

66 The issue of cross-dressing has always been a delicate subject, even within the gay
67 community itself. Some feel it is demeaning or politically incorrect. We within the Court
68 feel that the freedom to express our own views in word, dress or deed is essential to
69 maintaining the human spirit.
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71 We hold responsible and civic-minded positions in the community at large. We are a vital
72 part of a vibrant community, which offers Respect to everyone.
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74 **SECTION II – BOUNDARIES**

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

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78 The boundaries of the Olympic and Rainier Empire are open to all. For board of directors
79 offices and voting purposes, the boundaries consist of King and Island counties, Hat Island
80 and the national parks in which Mount Rainier and Mount Olympus are located, including
81 the site of the former Olympia Brewery in Tumwater, WA.
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83 **SECTION III – DETERMINATION AND RIGHTS OF MEMBERS**

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85 The corporation shall have only one class of members. No member shall hold more than
86 one membership in the corporation. Except as expressly provided in or authorized by the
87 Articles of Incorporation, the Bylaws of this corporation, or provisions of law, all
88 memberships shall have the same rights, privileges, restrictions and conditions.
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90 **SECTION IV - MEMBERSHIP QUALIFICATION**
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92 To become a member of the court, you must have acceptable identification and submit an
93 application form at a general membership court meeting. Membership, in good standing,
94 will become effective at the second consecutive regular general court membership meeting
95 that you attend. The exception is the first meeting of the new court year at which time all
96 paid memberships, at that meeting, will result in memberships in good standing. In addition
97 to residents of the Empire as defined in Section II above, any residents of Washington State
98 may become members of the Court of Seattle. Non-residents of the Empire will be allowed
99 to vote and hold the titles of Closets, Hearts or Seas, but will be excluded from holding a
100 position on the Board of Directors and the titles of Gay Seattles, Imperial Prince and
101 Princess and Emperor and Empress.

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103 **A. Age**

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105 1. You must be 21 years of age
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107 2. Associate memberships are available for persons between the ages of 18 and
108 21 and may be approved at the discretion of the Board President.

109 **B. Dues**

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111 1. Your dues must be paid in full for the current year as recorded by the
112 Treasurer.
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114 2. Members of the College of Monarchs and the Imperial Prince and Princess
115 Council (who were elected) and appointed Citizens for Life shall have
116 lifetime membership and are not required to pay dues.

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118 **C. ID Required**

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120 1. You must be a U.S. Citizen or
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122 2. Have proof of legal resident status
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124 **D. Lifetime Membership**

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126 Lifetime membership includes past Emperors and Empresses and past elected
127 Imperial Princes and Princesses.

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129 1. In order to vote at court meeting's they must have maintained membership in
130 good standing.
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132 2. At the first general meeting of the new court year "in good standing" shall be
133 immediately activated.
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135 **SECTION V – MEMBERSHIP IN GOOD STANDING**

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137 **A. Attendance**

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

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- 145 1. At the first general meeting of the new court year, all paid memberships,
146 present at that meeting, will result in memberships “in good standing”.
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148 2. You may have no more than two (2) consecutive excused or unexcused
149 absences from a general court membership meeting within a court calendar
150 year (March – February). Should you miss two (2) consecutive general court
151 meetings, that are not excused, you shall lose your membership “in good
152 standing” status.
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154 3. All requests for “excused” absences must be made to a member of the
155 Executive Committee prior to the meeting. There are no exceptions to this
156 rule. You may notify a member of the Executive Committee by phone, email
157 or text.
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159 4. Tardy attendees are responsible to meet with the Membership Chair at the
160 conclusion of the general court membership meeting to correct the
161 attendance.
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163 5. For members, in good standing, who are unable to attend the regular
164 scheduled meetings, you can request a Leave of Absence for a specific period
165 of time.
 - 166 a. The request must be in writing – e-mail is acceptable
 - 167 b. It must be approved by the Board President. (See Leave of Absence
168 section).
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172 **B. Regaining Membership “in Good Standing”**

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

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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 General Courting’s shall be facilitated by the reigning Monarchs, in their absence, 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 VII – 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.

222 2. Any non-financial Board decision may be challenged by the Court
223 membership but can only be overturned by a 2/3 majority-vote of the
224 membership in good standing.

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226 3. (See Business and Pageantry Section for other voting standards).
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228 **SECTION VIII – (Court Sponsoed) AWARDS**

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

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234 **A. Court Member of the Year**

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

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

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241 This award shall be presented to the recipient during Coronation. Nominees shall be
242 open to all persons. It will be presented to the recipient during Coronation
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245 **C. The “Scott Rodriguez” Business Person Award**

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247 This award is nominated and elected by the court membership in good standing at
248 the first general court meeting in March for presentation to the recipient at The IPP
249 Ball/Investitures by the outgoing Prince and Princess
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251 **D. The “Alex Veltri” Business Award¹**

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

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257 **E. Other Awards**

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259 Refer to Pageantry Operating Guidelines and Business Operating Guidelines for
260 other Awards

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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 October 23, 2017 at The Cuff, in the city of Seattle county of King, State of Washington.