

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 are the elected figureheads of the organization and represent the Court in and out-of-town. A great deal of networking takes place throughout the Community, not only locally, but throughout The International Court

48 System. In spirit and practice, the organization operates much like other social fraternal
49 organizations, such as the Masons or the Elks or Eagles.

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51 It is also similar to a theater group, providing a creative outlet to its members. Many
52 Talented individuals have the opportunity to design elaborate costumes, sets and musical
53 numbers, and have a place to present them.

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55 Finally, the court raises funds for such charitable causes as higher education scholarships,
56 various cancer support organizations, HIV/AIDS support, Gay Youth Programs such as
57 Lambert House, and other 501c3 Organizations in our community.

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

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

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

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72 **SECTION II – BOUNDARIES**

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

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76 The boundaries of the Olympic and Rainier Empire for offices and voting purposes includes
77 King and Island counties and Hat Island. This includes the National Parks in which Mount
78 Rainier and Mount Olympus are located, including the site of the former Olympia Brewery
79 in Tumwater, WA, and free access to these locations.

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81 **SECTION III – DETERMINATION AND RIGHTS OF MEMBERS**

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

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88 **SECTION IV - MEMBERSHIP QUALIFICATION**

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90 To become a member of the court, you must have acceptable identification and submit an
91 application form at a general membership court meeting. Membership, in good standing,
92 will become effective at the second consecutive regular general court member-ship meeting
93 that you attend. The exception is the first meeting of the new court year at which time all
94 paid memberships, at that meeting, will result in memberships in good standing. In addition

95 to residents of the Empire as defined in Section II above, any residents of Washington State
96 may become members of the Court of Seattle. Non-residents of the Empire will be allowed
97 to vote and hold the titles of Closets, Hearts or Seas, but will be excluded from holding a
98 position on the Board of Directors and the titles of Gay Seattles, Imperial Prince and
99 Princess and Emperor and Empress.

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101 **A. Age**

- 102 1. You must be 21 years of age
- 103 2. Associate memberships are available for persons between the ages of 18 and
104 21 and may be approved at the discretion of the Board President.

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107 **B. Dues**

- 108 1. Your dues must be paid in full for the current year as recorded by the
109 Treasurer.
- 110 2. Members of the College of Monarchs and the Imperial Prince and Princess
111 Council and appointed Citizens for life shall have Lifetime membership and
112 are not required to pay dues.
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117 **C. ID Required**

- 118 1. You must be a U.S. Citizen or
- 119 2. Have proof of legal resident status
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125 **D. Lifetime Membership**

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

- 128 1. In order to vote at court meetings they must have maintained membership in
129 good standing.
- 130 2. At the first general meeting of the new court year “in good standing” shall be
131 immediately activated.
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135 **SECTION V – MEMBERSHIP IN GOOD STANDING**

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138 **A. Attendance**

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

- 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”.
- 147 2. You may have no more than two (2) consecutive **excused or** unexcused
148 absences from a general court membership meeting within a court calendar
149 year (March – February). Should you miss two (2) consecutive general court
150 meetings, ~~that are not excused~~, you shall lose your membership “in good
151 standing” status.
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- 153 3. All requests for “excused” absences must be made to the Secretary prior to
154 the meeting. There are no exceptions to this rule.
 - 155 a. You may notify the Secretary by phone leaving a message if
156 necessary, or
 - 157 b. by e-mail
- 158 4. Tardy attendees are responsible to meet with the Secretary at the conclusion
159 of the general court membership meeting to correct the attendance roll call.
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- 161 5. For members, in good standing, who are unable to attend the regular
162 scheduled meetings, you can request a Leave of Absence for a specific period
163 of time.
 - 164 a. The request must be in writing – e-mail is acceptable
 - 165 b. It must be approved by the Board President. (See Leave of Absence
166 section).

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175 **B. Regaining Membership “in Good Standing”**

176 If you lose your “in good standing” status due to unexcused absences, you may
177 regain membership “in good standing” by attending the next two (2) consecutive
178 regular general court membership meeting. “In good standing” is attained at the
179 second consecutive meeting after roll call is taken.
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182 **C. Leave of Absence**

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

- 185 1. You provide a written request to the President for approval
- 186 2. Leave requests may be granted for a period of time of up to six (6) months,
187 and may be extended for a total period of no more than one (1) year.
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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.

199 **SECTION VI – GENERAL COURT MEMBERSHIP MEETINGS**

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201 **A. General Court Membership meetings shall be held in accordance with the**
202 **Bylaws.**

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

223 **SECTION VI I – VOTING**

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225 **A. Voting on Board Resolutions**

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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.¹
 3. (See Business and Pageantry Section for other voting standards).

¹ Declaration of Olympia XXX - Feb.2001
Op. Guidelines – Membership Rev. 10/29/09

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SECTION VIII – GENERAL COMMITTEES

A. Advertising and Marketing Committee

The committee shall consist of at least (1) one Board member, serving as Chairperson, and should not exceed (4) four members as designated by the Board President.

1. This committee shall coordinate and approve all advertising and marketing materials for the organization and its functions.
2. Coordinate and manage the ImperialCourtofSeattle.com and the CourtofSeattle@yahoo.com web sites.

B. Fundraising and Production Committee

The committee shall consist of at least (1) one Board Member, serving as Chairperson, and should not exceed (6) six members as designated by the Board President.

1. This committee shall be responsible for overseeing, producing and/or assisting the production of fundraising events (non-pageants, ball) throughout the year.
2. The committee shall manage, maintain and coordinate inventory of all property located in Court Storage with the exception of Liquor supplies and Court Records.
3. Coordinate with the Board of Directors and the reigning Monarchs the Court Calendar.
4. Order all yearly regalia needed for all Court Titles.

C. Operating Guidelines and Bylaw Review Committee:

This committee is given the responsibility of reviewing the Operating Guidelines and Bylaws, as needed, to ensure consistency and compliance with each other and the Laws of the State of Washington.

1. The committee will be chaired by the Vice-President, unless otherwise designated by the President.
2. The committee will consist of no more than 7 members as drawn from the Board of Directors and the general membership.

- 284 3. The chairperson of the committee will make quarterly reports to the general
285 membership at the appropriate court membership meeting as needed.
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287 4. With the exception of Financial and Business decisions of the Board, the
288 membership will be able to reject any changes that have been made.
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290 5. Per the Operating Guidelines, the general membership can overturn any non-
291 financial/business decision of the Board by a 2/3 majority vote of the
292 membership “in good standing” present at that meeting.
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296 **D. Finance Committee**

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298 1. This committee shall be chaired by the Treasurer and is to include the Vice-
299 President and shall not exceed 5 members.
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301 2. It will be the responsibility of this committee to review and make
302 recommendations with regards to the Yearly Operating Budget for the Court
303 and all Event Budgets (with input from the Event Producers).
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305 **E. For all other committees, please see the Business and Pageantry Sections of the**
306 **Guidelines.**

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308 **SECTION IX – TITLES**

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310 **A.** The following are the Recognized Titles of the Imperial Court of Seattle.²
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312 **Empress – Olympia**
313 **Emperor – Rainier**
314 **Imperial Princess**
315 **Imperial Prince**
316 **Miss Gay Seattle**
317 **Mr. Gay Seattle**
318 **Ms. Gay Seattle (retired title)**
319 **Queen of the Seas**
320 **King of the Seas**
321 **Queen of Hearts**
322 **King of Hearts**
323 **Closet Ball Queen**
324 **Closet Ball King**

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326 **B. Qualifications to run for Titles, refer to Business and Pageantry Operating**
327 **Guidelines**
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² Declaration of Olympia XXX - Feb 2001
Op. Guidelines – Membership Rev. 10/29/09

329 C. Duties and Responsibilities of Titles, refer to Pageantry and Business Operating
330 Guidelines

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335 **SECTION X – AWARDS**

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

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

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

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

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

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351 **C. The “Scott Rodriguez” Business Person Award³**

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

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357 **D. The “Alex Veltri” Business Award⁴**

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

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363 **E. Other Awards**

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365 Refer to Pageantry Operating Guidelines and Business Operating Guidelines for
366 other Awards

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368 **SECTION XI - DISCIPLINARY ACTION**

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370 **A. Initiated by a Court Member**

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³ Declaration of Olympia XXXII Rainier XXVIII of Feb 03

⁴ Declaration of Olympia XXXII Rainier XXVIII of Feb 03

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1. Any court member, “in good standing, may, at any time, request the Board Officers to initiate a disciplinary hearing.
 2. The member must write a Letter of Inquiry with the pertinent information, requesting Board action, and provide the Board Officers with all information that can be verified.
 3. The Letter of Inquiry must be in written form and may not be presented to the Officer of the Board at any public forum.
 4. E-mails and electronic transfer of information are not acceptable.
 5. For more information please see the Business Section.

386 **B. Termination of Membership**

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1. Termination of membership, titles and positions and all rights and privileges of any titles from the organization shall be automatic with a conviction of a misdemeanor or felony crime against this organization.
 2. This statement will remain true regardless of rank or position, and shall include all current general court members, the Board of directors, reigning and past title holders, and lifetime title holders and citizen for life.
 3. See Business Operating Guidelines and Pageantry Operating Guidelines for more information.

399 **SECTION XII – AMENDMENTS TO THE OPERATING GUIDELINES**

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401 **A. Initiated by a Court Member**

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1. Any member, in good standing, may submit an Operating Guidelines amendment(s) to Chair of the Operating Guidelines Committee.
 2. Submissions of amendment(s) must be completed using the attached format. (See attachments.)
 3. The committee may invite the member who has submitted amendment(s) to speak about their proposal.
 4. The committee will review the requested amendments. Those approved, by the committee, will be submitted to the Board for review and will be subject to a 2/3 majority of the Board members present at that meeting for approval
 5. The chairperson of the committee will make quarterly reports to the general membership at the appropriate court membership meeting, as needed.

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6. With the exception of Financial and Business decisions of the Board, the membership will be able to reject any changes that have been made.
 7. Per the Operating Guidelines, the general membership can overturn any non-financial/non-business decision of the Board by a 2/3 majority vote of the membership “in good standing” present at that meeting.
 8. All updates to the Operating Guidelines and By-Laws will be posted on the CourtofSeattle@Yahoogroups.com in the “files” section, and are available through the Secretary as needed.

430 **B. Obtaining hard copies of the Operating Guidelines, Bylaws and updates.**
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1. Electronic copies are available for printing on line at the CourtofSeattle@Yahoogroups.com, in the “files” section.
 2. Copies may also be requested from the Secretary as necessary.
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AMENDMENT TO THE OPERATING GUIDELINES

Any member, in good standing, of the Court of Seattle may submit Operating Guidelines amendment(s) to the Chair of the Operating Guidelines Committee. Submissions of amendment(s) must be completed using the following format. One amendment per Form, please.

I, _____ hereby submit the following amendment to the Court of Seattle Operating Guidelines:

Line Numbers that this Amendment would affect _____ Through _____

Operating Guidelines as they read now:

Proposed changes to the wording of the Operating Guidelines:

Proposal by: _____ Date _____
Signature of Person

Contact Information: (phone, e-mail, etc) _____

(You may attach additional sheets, if needed, to include proper wording of both present and proposed wording.)