

**A CITIZEN GUIDE**  
**TO THE**  
**OFFICE OF HEARING EXAMINER**

**Appealing a Decision**  
**and**  
**Participating in a Hearing**

Original Printing May 1991  
Reprinted October 1991  
Revised January 1993  
Revised and Reprinted August 1994  
Revised and Reprinted January 2006

Dear Citizen:

As explained in the pages that follow, the Hearing Examiner's job is to review decisions made by various City agencies to ensure that they are consistent with the laws governing those decisions. Thus, Hearing Examiner decisions can have a substantial impact on applicants and others concerned about, or affected by the City agency decision or recommendation reviewed by the Hearing Examiner.

Because appeal hearings are legal proceedings, and parties are often represented by attorneys, the hearings may appear both formal and formidable to those without a legal background. Individual rights and property are at stake in appeal hearings. The structured format of the hearings acknowledges the seriousness of the matters appealed and ensures a fair opportunity for all affected parties to participate. However, these factors are not incompatible with citizen participation, and the hearing process should not be mysterious.

*A Citizen Guide to the Office of Hearing Examiner* is intended as a handbook for citizens who want to understand and participate in hearings before the Hearing Examiner. The format is question-answer, and the tone is conversational. The information presented here is intended primarily for those who will participate in an appeal or other hearing before the Hearing Examiner, but it may be helpful for anyone interested in understanding the hearing process and the work of the Hearing Examiner.

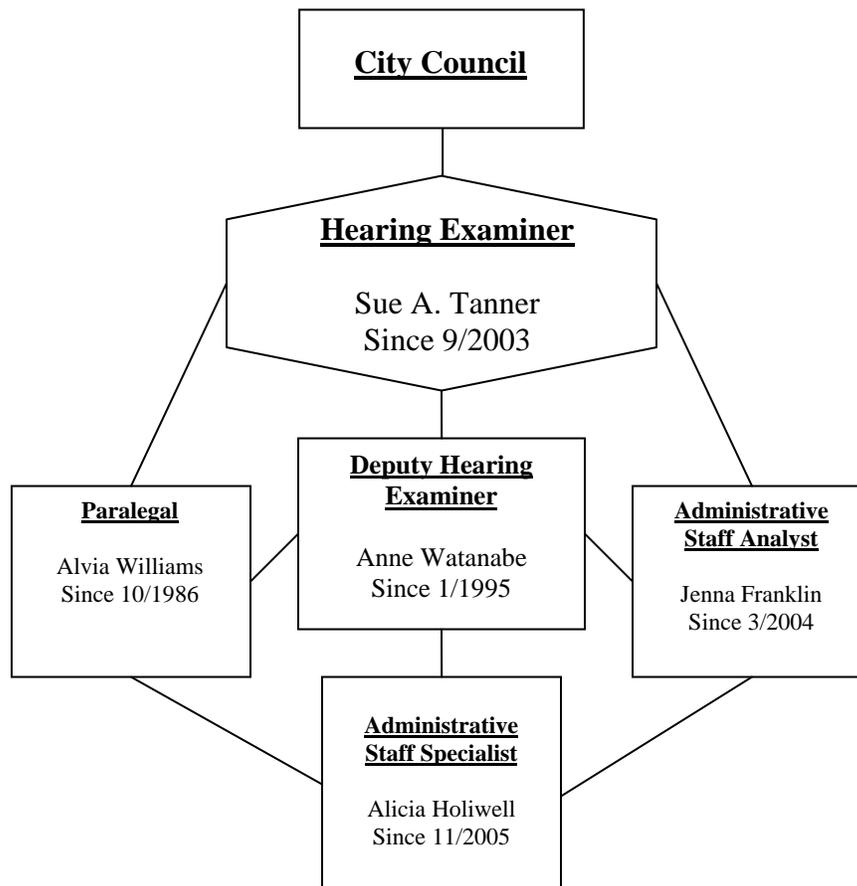
NOTE: The conduct of hearings is governed by the *Hearing Examiner Rules of Practice and Procedure*. You should review these rules if you participate in an appeal. They are available from the Office of Hearing Examiner and on the Office's website at: <http://www.seattle.gov/examiner>

If you have comments or suggestions on the format or information presented in this *Citizen Guide*, please let me know.

Sue A. Tanner  
Hearing Examiner

# OFFICE OF HEARING EXAMINER

## Organization



## NON-DISCRIMINATION POLICY

It is the policy of the Hearing Examiner that the Office of Hearing Examiner be free from discrimination on the basis of race, color, sex, marital status, sexual orientation, political ideology, age, creed, religion, ancestry, national origin, or any sensory, mental, or physical disability. No person shall be excluded from employment or lawful participation in the activities of this Office based upon any of those conditions.

The Office of Hearing Examiner provides barrier-free access and will provide communications and other access as is reasonably necessary to ensure participation by people with disabilities and will provide reasonable accommodations for job applicants and employees with disabilities.

# TABLE OF CONTENTS

<b>THE OFFICE OF HEARING EXAMINER</b>	<b>1</b>
What is the Office of Hearing Examiner?	1
What does the Hearing Examiner do?	1
What decisions can be appealed to the Hearing Examiner?	1
<b>APPEALING A DECISION</b>	<b>2</b>
How do I appeal a decision?	2
Do I have to have an attorney?	4
What happens if more than one appeal is filed regarding the same decision?	4
If I'm not sure about what to do, whom should I ask?	4
What if later I change my mind about appealing?	4
<b>THE APPEAL HEARING</b>	<b>5</b>
When will the hearing be held? What notice is given?	5
Can the date established for a hearing be changed?	5
How long will the hearing last?	6
Where will the hearing be held?	6
How do I get there? Where can I park?	6
Who will participate in the hearing?	7
What can I do if I have an interest in the outcome but didn't appeal?	7
Is there an established agenda or order to the hearing?	8
What should I do to prepare for the hearing?	8
Who speaks at the hearing?	9
Should I bring photographs, drawings, models, written materials?	9
What happens if someone objects to some testimony or exhibit?	10
What should I do if I have questions about what is happening, or I don't know what I'm supposed to do during the hearing?	10
Are there restrictions on talking to the examiner?	10
What is a Prehearing Conference?	10
<b>What should I do to prepare for the Prehearing Conference?</b>	<b>11</b>
What are "motions" and "orders"?	11
Are there "rules" for the participants?	12
<b>THE HEARING EXAMINER'S DECISION</b>	<b>12</b>
What does the examiner consider when making the decision?	12
What is in a decision?	12
When is the decision issued?	12
Who gets the decision?	12
If I'm not satisfied with the decision, how do I appeal?	13
<b>OTHER KINDS OF HEARINGS</b>	<b>14</b>
What other kinds of hearings does the Hearing Examiner conduct?	14
How are these hearings different from appeal hearings?	14
<b>HEARING EXAMINER'S JURISDICTIONS</b>	<b>15</b>
<b>LAND USE/SEPA DECISION APPEAL FORM</b>	<b>17</b>

# A CITIZEN GUIDE TO THE OFFICE OF HEARING EXAMINER

## THE OFFICE OF HEARING EXAMINER

### What is the Office of Hearing Examiner?

The Office of Hearing Examiner is the City department established to conduct hearings on decisions made by City agencies. Before the Office was created in 1973, some of these matters were heard by the City Council, while others went directly to court. The Office of Hearing Examiner is Seattle's forum for reviewing whether the law, including City code requirements, has been correctly applied. Not every decision of every department can be appealed to the Hearing Examiner. The Hearing Examiner can hear and decide appeals only where the City's code has given the Examiner authority (*i.e.*, "jurisdiction") to do so.

The Hearing Examiner is an independent official selected directly by the City Council through a procedure prescribed in Seattle's Municipal Code. The Hearing Examiner is authorized to appoint deputy examiners, temporary examiners, and other staff. Temporary, or *pro tempore* examiners (also referred to as "Pro Tems"), can be appointed in instances when the regular examiners are not available. All of the examiners must be licensed attorneys with experience in administrative hearings.

### What does the Hearing Examiner do?

The basic functions of the Hearing Examiner are similar to those of a judge. ("Administrative Law Judge" is another title for this kind of position.) In the course of an appeal, the examiner is authorized to regulate the conduct of the hearing, administer oaths, issue subpoenas, decide procedural questions, receive evidence, hold conferences, and prepare decisions.

### What decisions can be appealed to the Hearing Examiner?

More than fifty sections of the City's code authorize the Hearing Examiner to hold hearings and decide the outcome of appeals filed by citizens regarding decisions **and recommendations** made by City agencies. The following is a brief description of the some of the types of decisions that can be appealed. A list of the Hearing Examiner's jurisdictions begins on page 15.

Many of the matters considered by the Hearing Examiner relate to land use and environmental decisions made by the Department of Planning and Development (DPD). Appeal hearings include land use **code interpretations** and **master use permit decisions** (*e.g.*, environmental determinations for, and conditioning of development projects, short plats, variances, conditional uses). The Hearing Examiner holds a public hearing and makes a final decision on subdivision applications. If someone interested in or significantly affected by the subdivision seeks further consideration of the DPD recommendation on the subdivision, or files an appeal of DPD's environmental determination for the subdivision, the hearings on the request and/or appeal will

be consolidated with the public hearing on the subdivision. The Hearing Examiner also holds public hearings on **rezones, council conditional uses, and major institution master plans**, and makes a recommendation to the City Council for final decision.. Other DPD decisions appealable to the Hearing Examiner include: **Tenant Relocation Assistance Program eligibility, critical areas exceptions, design review decisions, Land Use Code Citations, grading permits**, and **stop work orders**. **Floating home moorage fee increases** are also appealable to the Hearing Examiner.

**State Environmental Protection Act (SEPA) determinations**, including the adequacy of environmental impact statements, are appealable to the Hearing Examiner whether they are prepared by DPD or any another City department.

Decisions made by the Department of Neighborhoods and its advisory boards and commissions regarding **historic landmarks** and **special districts** are also appealable. Landmarks Preservation Board decisions on the issuance or denial of certificates of approval for changes in landmarks, and the Board's recommendations for **landmark controls**, are subject to appeal, as are decisions on **certificates of approval** for changes to structures or uses in special districts (e.g., **Pioneer Square** and **International District** Special Review Districts, **Pike Place Market** Historical District).

The Hearing Examiner also hears and decides complaints brought by individuals and the Human Rights Department under the **City's Fair Employment** and **Unfair Housing Practices** ordinances.

Appeals from **licensing** decisions and **Business and Occupation Tax assessments** made by the Department of Finance, Revenue and Consumer Affairs Division, and the Department of Public Health's determinations of **noise** and **radiation ordinance violations** are all within the Hearing Examiner's jurisdiction. The Hearing Examiner also hears appeals of enforcement of the City's **Nuisance Ordinance**.

## APPEALING A DECISION

### How do I appeal a decision?

Appeals must be submitted in writing and received by the Office of Hearing Examiner prior to 5 p.m. on the last day of the appeal period, accompanied by any required filing fee.

**In Writing:** All appeals must be in writing. The Hearing Examiner has a form that may be used for an appeal of a DPD land use or environmental decision. (A copy of this form is included at the end of this booklet.) If you want to appeal a different type of decision, other forms are available on the Hearing Examiner's website: <http://www.seattle.gov/examiner/> If a form is not available, or you don't want to use a form, a letter of appeal is acceptable.

Correspondence to the Hearing Examiner is best addressed "Dear Hearing Examiner". .

**Identify who is appealing:** Include the name, address, and phone number of the person appealing (*i.e.*, the "appellant"). If one appeal is made jointly by several individuals, list the name, address, and phone number for each person and specify one person as the official

contact person. If the appeal is made on behalf of an organization, identify the organization by name, and indicate the name, address, and phone number of the official contact person.

**Identify the decision being appealed:** Name the department which made the decision being appealed; date of decision; decision number (if any has been provided); and address, if property is involved. If only part of the decision is being appealed, indicate which parts..

**State your interest in the decision or how you are affected by it,** i.e., how the decision affects your property, your eligibility, your neighborhood, etc.

**State your objections to the decision:** Briefly explain or describe what you believe to be incorrect about the decision. What is wrong with it? Be brief, but be as specific as you can. Note any errors, omissions, etc.

**State what you want the Hearing Examiner to do:** What relief do you seek? Examples: reverse the decision, modify conditions, require an EIS, etc.

**Mail the Appeal to:**

or

**Deliver the Appeal to:**

**Office of Hearing Examiner  
P.O. Box 94729  
Seattle, Washington 98124-4729**

**Office of Hearing Examiner  
Seattle Municipal Tower  
700 Fifth Avenue, Suite 4000  
Seattle, Washington**

**Important Note:** In order for the Hearing Examiner to be able to consider an appeal, it **MUST BE RECEIVED** BY THE OFFICE OF HEARING EXAMINER **BY 5 PM** OF THE LAST DAY OF THE APPEAL PERIOD. A postmark on the last day is **not** sufficient. The length of an appeal period is established by the ordinance that governs the decision being appealed. **The Hearing Examiner does not have the authority to change or extend an appeal period. If the appeal is not filed in time, the Hearing Examiner must reject it.** It is best to submit your appeal well before the appeal deadline, especially if you are submitting it by mail. If you wait until the last minute, you could miss the deadline and lose the opportunity to appeal.

If you are not sure when an appeal period will end, contact the department that issued the decision you want to appeal. The notice of decision should list a contact person and telephone number. If the notice of decision does not have this information, call the Office of Hearing Examiner; we may be able to help.

**Required Fee:** A filing fee is required for most appeals. Exceptions to this general rule include: tenant relocation assistance, discrimination complaints, and landmarks controls and incentives. If you are not sure of the amount of the fee or whether a fee is required, check with the Office of Hearing Examiner.

An appeal is not complete without the required fee. A check (made out to the City Treasurer) is preferred. If you file in person, cash is acceptable, but please do not send cash through the mail. The filing fee is nonrefundable. The Hearing Examiner may waive a required filing fee if the person filing the appeal demonstrates that the fee poses a financial hardship for them.

**Do I have to have an attorney?**

Appeal hearings are legal proceedings, in that they are established by law and result in decisions that have legal force and effect. Some persons involved in appeal hearings have lawyers to represent them, but many citizens and City agencies represent themselves. It is not necessary to have an attorney, and you don't have to be an attorney to represent yourself or someone else in a proceeding before the Hearing Examiner. To make the process more accessible and "user friendly" for non-lawyers, the examiners explain various aspects of the hearing during their opening remarks and encourage procedural questions. They also encourage the use of everyday English in the hearings..

In recognition of the importance of the issues to those involved, as well as the legal effect of the outcome, hearings do have a structured format. That structure, and the examiner's control of the proceedings, help to ensure that all participants have a fair opportunity to present their points of view.

Although representation by an attorney is never required, it may be advisable for some complex appeals with difficult legal and factual issues..

### **What happens if more than one appeal is filed regarding the same decision?**

When this happens, and it often does with land use and environmental decisions, the Hearing Examiner will consolidate the appeals. This means that one hearing will be held and one decision issued, but each party who has appealed will have an opportunity to make a presentation and to question witnesses. Sometimes those who appeal separately will voluntarily join together to make a joint presentation at the hearing.

### **If I'm not sure about what to do, whom should I ask?**

You can always check with the Office of Hearing Examiner when you have questions. When you are participating in a hearing, and you are unsure of the procedure or what you should be doing, you can ask the examiner to explain. Before and after the hearing, you may have to direct your questions to someone on staff other than the examiner who is hearing the appeal. This is necessary to avoid violating the prohibition on communicating with the examiner outside the actual hearing (such communications are referred to as *ex parte* contacts and are prohibited by law).

Questions about how to put together your presentation, what questions to ask which witness, who to select as a witness, whether to get a lawyer to help, etc., are not the kind of issues that the Office of Hearing Examiner can help you with. We can answer procedural questions, explain the process, describe how hearings usually run, and what to expect. Staff of the Office of Hearing Examiner cannot assist with, or give advice on someone's presentation because this could be interpreted as advocating for that person's position.

### **What if later I change my mind about appealing?**

If you change your mind and do not want to go through with an appeal, notify the Hearing Examiner in writing. You do not have to explain why you are withdrawing your appeal, but a withdrawal needs to be in writing and signed by the person who filed the appeal. (One person can withdraw an appeal made by several individuals, or by a group, only if that person has the

permission of those he or she represents.) If there is not enough time to get the written withdrawal to the Office of Hearing Examiner before the scheduled hearing, you should telephone the Office and then immediately follow-up with your letter of withdrawal. (The filing fee is nonrefundable.)

## **THE APPEAL HEARING**

**NOTE:** In addition to "appeal hearings" held regarding appeals of decisions made by City agencies, the Hearing Examiner also holds "public hearings" prior to issuing a final decision on subdivision applications, and as a part of preparing recommendations for the City Council on rezone requests, master plans, landmarks controls, and similar matters. In these "public hearings" the examiner's function is different than it is with appeal hearings. The following section describes the appeal hearing; public hearings are discussed on page 13.

### **When will the hearing be held? What notice is given?**

When an appeal is filed, the Hearing Examiner schedules a hearing on the first available date that is consistent with the minimum time required for notice. (When an "automatic" appeal is provided by law, the hearing date is included in the notice of violation.) The minimum number of days that must be allowed between notice of a hearing and the holding of the hearing, varies with the type of appeal. (Many appeals require a 20-day notice prior to hearing, but there are also other lengths of time.) Hearings must be set far enough in advance to allow the required notice period.

When there are many appeals to be heard, considerably more time than the minimum notice period elapses between the filing of an appeal and the holding of the hearing. Three or more months between filing and the actual hearing used to be the norm, but recently, the time between filing and hearing has been reduced to 4 to 8 weeks. Some types of appeals must be heard within a certain number of days and therefore must be scheduled in a specific time-frame. In extraordinary circumstances a matter may be heard out of turn.

After a hearing date has been scheduled in response to the filing of an appeal, a notice is distributed. With most land use and environmental appeals, DPD is responsible for sending the notice. With other matters, the Office of Hearing Examiner will send a notice to the person(s) who appealed and others directly involved. The notices are sent by regular mail.

### **Can the date established for a hearing be changed?**

After receiving the notice of hearing, if a participant or some one else important to the presentation is unable to attend on the date specified, the participant should write a letter to the Hearing Examiner, explain the conflict and request that a different hearing date be scheduled. (This is referred to as a "continuance"). The person making the request must also send a copy of it to the other participants. (These names and addresses can be obtained from the Office of Hearing Examiner.) The Hearing Examiner will determine whether a continuance is warranted. If the request is granted, the Hearing Examiner may respond by providing several possible dates and requiring the party who requested the change to contact the other participants to arrange a mutually satisfactory date.

## **How long will the hearing last?**

There is no set time limit (minimum or maximum) for hearings. They rarely take less than a few hours, and only infrequently take more than a day. The length of the hearing is determined primarily by the complexity of the issues that need to be presented. One of the examiner's responsibilities is to keep the proceedings moving and avoid undue delay by not allowing irrelevant or repetitive testimony.

## **Where will the hearing be held?**

Hearings are held in the Office of Hearing Examiner which is located on the 40th Floor of Seattle Municipal Tower, 700 5<sup>th</sup> Avenue, Suite 4000. There are two rooms used for hearings: the main Hearing Room (Room 4009) and the Small Hearing Room (Suite 4000). To locate a hearing, come to the 40th floor and check the hearing schedule posted outside the main Hearing Room. You may also inquire at the Office of Hearing Examiner's reception desk.

## **How do I get there? Where can I park?**

Located in Seattle Municipal Tower, at 700 5<sup>th</sup> Avenue, Suite 4000, between Cherry and Columbia Streets in downtown Seattle, the Office of Hearing Examiner is wheelchair accessible.

Metro bus lines run along Second and Third Avenues. If you need assistance with determining which bus routes to use, call Metro at 553-3000. Tell them you want to get to 5<sup>th</sup> Avenue between Cherry and Columbia, and they can tell you which bus to take. You can also use the Metro Trip Planner on line at <http://transit.metrokc.gov>

Parking on the street in the vicinity is very limited. The on-street spaces have meters which often have a two-hour maximum. The Seattle Municipal Tower also offers garage parking, and the entrance is at rear of the building on 6<sup>th</sup> avenue between Columbia and Cherry. If you decide to drive, parking at one of the nearby private facilities is the best choice despite the cost. Some lots have special "early bird" rates if you arrive by 9:30 a.m. Car-pooling and sharing the cost of parking can reduce the expense and eliminate a great deal of frustration and worry.

Several other private parking lots and garages are located within a few blocks. The cost for parking in these private facilities varies depending on the time you enter and how long you park:

- Bank of America 5<sup>th</sup> Avenue Building, enter on Columbia between Sixth and Fifth Avenues
- Bank of America Tower, enter on Columbia between Fifth and Fourth Avenues
- Garage on Cherry Street between Second and Third Avenues
- Lot in 500 block of Second Avenue between James Street and Yesler
- Garage/lot at corner of Fourth Avenue and Cherry Street
- Garages at NW & SW corners of Fourth Avenue and Columbia Street

There are small loading zones on the north and south sides of Seattle Municipal Tower, on Columbia Street and Cherry Street, and another one across the street, in front of the Columbia Tower on 5<sup>th</sup> Avenue. If you need to drop off passengers or materials, these may be helpful, but note that cars in these areas may not be left unattended..

## **Who will participate in the hearing?**

Unlike the familiar "public hearing", where anyone who has information or an opinion has an opportunity to share it with the decision-makers, testimony at an appeal hearing generally comes only from the participants and those called as witnesses. However, all appeal hearings are open to the public so that anyone interested in the proceedings can observe them.

The participants are referred to as "parties". The party who appeals is the "appellant". In most appeals, the City agency responsible for the decision is a "respondent," i.e., the one who must respond to the objections raised in the appeal. If the appeal involves a permit or a license,, and the applicant for that permit or license is not the appellant, the applicant is also a party who has a right to participate in the hearing as a respondent. Parties have certain rights in the hearing process, including the right to notice and participation (presenting evidence and questioning witnesses). If more than one person appeals a decision, each appellant is considered a "party." However, a group that files one appeal is one party and must select one person to represent the group in the proceedings.

The Hearing Room, where most hearings are held, has several large tables in the front. Although it is subject to change, the arrangement of parties is generally as follows. The examiner and an assistant sit at the front table, facing the audience. When called to testify, each witness sits at the table facing the examiner. Parties to the appeal (appellant and respondent) sit at the tables to the right and left of the examiner, facing one another. When there are three parties -- appellant, applicant (either as appellant or respondent), and City agency -- the City representative sits at the table facing the examiner, sharing that table with the witness.

## **What can I do if I have an interest in the outcome but didn't appeal?**

The Hearing Examiner is required to make decisions on appeals based on the record made at hearing. The decision has to be based on facts and the applicable law. The Hearing Examiner can neither uphold nor overturn a City agency decision because of popular opinion or public comment. Therefore, although appeal hearings are open to the public, only the parties to the appeal, and persons called by the parties as witnesses, have the opportunity to testify.

Upon a showing of substantial interest (not otherwise represented by the parties), someone who has not appealed can request to become an "intervenor". An intervenor becomes a participant in the hearing and, like the original parties, has a right to appeal the Hearing Examiner's decision. The Hearing Examiner may grant intervenor status if participation by the intervenor will not add issues to the appeal or unduly complicate or lengthen the appeal process. Requests for intervention are not always granted and must be made well before the hearing date so the parties have a fair opportunity to respond.

## **Is there an established agenda or order to the hearing?**

Generally the order of an appeal hearing is:

1. Hearing Examiner's opening remarks
2. Opening statement by each party (briefly indicate what will be presented; this is optional)
3. Appellant's presentation of evidence (witness testimony, exhibits)
4. City agency's presentation of evidence (witness testimony, exhibits)
5. Applicant's presentation of evidence (if applicant is not appellant; witness testimony, exhibits))
6. Rebuttal by each party
7. Closing arguments by each party (summarizing how the evidence presented supports the party's position)

### **What should I do to prepare for the hearing?**

All parties to an appeal (appellant, applicant, City agency representative) try to show the examiner that two things -- the facts and the law -- support their view. To do this, the parties should prepare by finding out about both. There is no set formula for what to do in preparation for a hearing. The effort necessary is normally proportional to the number and nature of the issues on appeal. Preparing may simply involve figuring out what you want to say in your own testimony, or it may be more complicated, requiring that a number of lay witnesses and experts be organized and coordinated so that each covers a different facet of the presentation.

Basic suggestions for what to do when preparing for hearing are:

Review the decision that is being appealed. Get a copy of the decision from the City agency that issued it. (If you have difficulty getting a copy of the decision, call the Hearing Examiner's Office, we may be able to help.) The decision is central to the appeal; examine it to find the area(s) which you believe are incorrect. If there is a file kept by the City agency regarding the decision, reviewing it is also helpful.

Review the part(s) of the Seattle Municipal Code that control the decision being appealed. Most branches of the City library system have a copy of the Code (call your local branch first to be sure it's there). **The Office of Hearing Examiner has excerpted some pertinent sections of the Code and copies are available upon request (there is a charge for copying and mailing).** See pages 15 through 16 for a listing of many of the applicable code sections.

Find people who are knowledgeable about the situation that is the subject of the decision being appealed. For example, if there are environmental issues on appeal, you could talk with others who live nearby to learn more about the existing conditions in the area. If there are technical issues, you may want to seek expert advice.

Review the information in this section about participating in the hearing. Decide what evidence you want to present about the issues on appeal and who you want to have testify.

### **Who speaks at the hearing?**

As mentioned above, unlike a "public hearing" where anyone who wishes to speak has that opportunity, the only a limited number of persons have a right to speak at an appeal hearing. The participants, or "parties", and those persons called by the parties as witnesses, have the opportunity to speak during the hearing. A representative of each party sits at the front table, coordinates the party's presentation, introduces and asks questions of the party's witnesses (taking care to avoid repetitive testimony), asks questions of the other parties' witnesses at the appropriate time, and talks with the examiner about procedural concerns if any arise during the hearing. If you are representing yourself in the appeal, you are the party representative. When it's your turn to present evidence, you can give testimony yourself, as well as asking others to appear as witnesses.

Often in master use permit appeals of environmental decisions, different witnesses testify about different subjects. For example, in an appeal hearing, witnesses for the neighborhood appellant group were: a neighbor who gave information about traffic conditions in the neighborhood and the results of a parking study that the neighbors had prepared; a neighbor who described the neighborhood and presented photographs; and a neighbor with a degree in geology, who testified about problems of slope stability. The party representative called each witness and got the testimony started by indicating the topic (e.g., "Mr. Smith will talk about the parking study conducted by the neighbors...").

You should know what your witnesses are going to say. It is a good idea to get together before the hearing and discuss the testimony of the witnesses and even practice. This allows you to coordinate the presentation and to anticipate questions that will be asked of each witness. Witnesses are required to take an oath or affirmation to tell the truth. All witnesses can be questioned by the other parties; this is called "cross-examination."

### **Should I bring photographs, drawings, models, written materials?**

Such materials are not required, but they are frequently offered by parties because they can illustrate or make a point, or add clarity and understanding. Such items are called "exhibits". Each exhibit is given a number so that everyone will know which exhibit is being discussed.

**NOTE:** Because you will be submitting your exhibits to the Hearing Examiner, it is important that you bring copies of the exhibits for yourself AND for the other parties. Generally this means that you need to have the exhibit and at least three copies. It is not necessary to bring copies of large exhibits, that are difficult to copy, but it is a good idea to arrange with the other parties for them to review such exhibits before the date of the hearing.

During the course of your presentation when you use the exhibits, it is helpful to refer to them by the numbers given to them by the examiner ("Here is a photograph of the garage, it is marked as Exhibit #4."). If you want an item to be included in the record, you should offer it as an exhibit and the examiner will decide if it is admissible (see the next question regarding objections). The other parties can ask questions about an exhibit ("When was the photograph taken?" "What is the scale of this drawing?"), and about the reliability of its source ("Where did you get the height information you used to draw my house?").

If there is no appeal of the Hearing Examiner's decision, exhibits can be released to the party who submitted them 60 days after the end of the appeal period specified in the decision. Unclaimed exhibits that are too large to be stored with the file will be discarded. If you want particular exhibits returned, you need to make written arrangements to pick them up from the

Office of Hearing Examiner. If there is an appeal of the Hearing Examiner's decision, all the exhibits stay as part of the file until that appeal is finally resolved.

### **What happens if someone objects to some testimony or exhibit?**

The rules regarding what evidence can be used in administrative hearings are not as strict as those used in court. Basically, anything that is relevant, comes from a reliable source, and has value in proving something at issue in the appeal, can be used. If a party believes some testimony or exhibit is not admissible, that party may object to it coming into the record to be considered by the examiner. Also, when someone wants to have an exhibit put into the record, the examiner will ask if anyone objects. When there is an objection, the examiner may ask the parties to comment, then will decide (or "rule") on the objection.

For example, during an appeal of a variance decision for a deck in a required yard, if someone wanted to present evidence about the occupation of the applicant, there might be an objection that such information is not relevant. The examiner would "sustain" the objection if he/she agrees that the information is not relevant. If the examiner disagrees, the objection would be "overruled" and the information would become part of the record. If an objection is made, and you are not sure what it means, ask the examiner to explain.

### **What should I do if I have questions about what is happening, or I don't know what I'm supposed to do during the hearing?**

As mentioned above, if you have questions or are unsure of what to do, you should ask the examiner. The examiner is not allowed to help present anyone's case, but will explain or clarify what is going on.

### **Are there restrictions on talking to the examiner?**

By law, no one is to talk to the examiner about the merits of an appeal except during the hearing. Talking with the examiner outside of the hearing is prohibited except for procedural matters. This is to prevent people from trying to influence the examiner or add information that is not presented at hearing where all parties can discuss and question it.

If questions or problems arise outside of the hearing, you should ask to speak to someone other than the examiner assigned to hear your appeal.

### **What is a Prehearing Conference?**

This is a meeting held prior to the hearing to help sort out, simplify, and clarify the issues and procedural aspects of the hearing. Typical topics for a pre-hearing conference would include the issues on appeal, whether the subjects included in the appeal are within the Hearing Examiner's jurisdiction, who the witnesses will be, and how long the presentations are expected to take. Any party may request that a prehearing conference be scheduled, and the Hearing Examiner may schedule one without such a request.

### **What should I do to prepare for a Prehearing Conference?**

The following suggestions may help you prepare for the matters to be covered in the prehearing conference:

Carefully read the City decision you are appealing and any City code sections cited in it.

Ask the City decision-maker for any other code sections or Director's Rules that were considered in reaching the decision, and read those.

Consider the issues stated in your appeal in light of what you have read – are there any that should be dismissed? Are the remaining issues clear? If not, consider how you can clarify them, since it is likely that you will be asked to do so at the prehearing conference. (Note: except in limited circumstances, you cannot raise new appeal issues after the deadline for filing the appeal. See Hearing Examiner Rule 3.05.)

Determine generally what evidence (witness testimony and exhibits) you will need to present to prove the claims in your appeal statement.

Contact your potential witnesses, discuss the general nature of their testimony with them, and get a copy of their schedules for the time period from the prehearing conference through approximately one month after the hearing date if one has been scheduled. It may be necessary to discuss continuing the hearing date, so you will need to know your witnesses' availability.

You will not need a final list of witnesses and exhibits at the prehearing conference, but you should have a preliminary list.

### **What are "motions" and "orders"?**

A "motion" is a request, a way of asking the Hearing Examiner for something. You do not need to call your requests "motions". For example, if you were going to be out of town on the scheduled hearing date, you could write to the Hearing Examiner and state: "I will be out of town on the date scheduled for the hearing, so I request that you change the date to sometime after July 9th." A lawyer might submit a "Motion for Continuance" with the same information, which is just a different way of saying the same thing. Either approach is acceptable.

If you are a party to an appeal, you might receive a copy of a motion that another party has submitted to the Hearing Examiner. (Any party who writes to the Hearing Examiner must send a copy of the correspondence to each of the other parties.) Do not be thrown by the legal format. Read through the motion to determine what the Hearing Examiner is being asked to do. If you disagree with the motion, you should send a written response/comment to the Hearing Examiner within seven days. Unless a different time is specified in a particular case, parties who do not respond to a motion within seven days are presumed to agree with the motion.

An "order" is direction to the parties from the Hearing Examiner. Be sure to read all orders carefully. Call the Office of Hearing Examiner if you have questions.

### **Are there "rules" for the participants?**

The Hearing Examiner has adopted rules, the *Hearing Examiner Rules of Practice and Procedure*, which govern proceedings before the Hearing Examiner. The Rules establish the procedural framework for handling appeals and conducting hearings. For a copy of the Rules, contact the Office of Hearing Examiner, (there is a small charge), or go to the Office of Hearing Examiner's website: <http://www.seattle.gov/examiner>

Everyone who participates in a hearing is expected to be punctual, courteous, and prepared. When addressing the examiner, it is equally acceptable to use that person's name or title (e.g., "Ms. Smith" or "Ms. Hearing Examiner"). Other parties are addressed by their last names or by party status (e.g., "Mr. Smith" or "the Appellant"). No smoking, food, beverages or cell phone use is allowed in the hearing rooms.

## **THE HEARING EXAMINER'S DECISION**

### **What does the Hearing Examiner consider when making the decision?**

In reaching a decision on an appeal, the examiner considers the evidence presented at the hearing in light of what the law requires.. (The examiner will also inspect property in environmental, land use, and certain other types of appeals.) The Hearing Examiner does not have authority to change or create law, and it is not unusual for a decision to differ from that which an examiner might personally prefer.

### **What is in a decision?**

A caption, showing the name of the appellant, the nature of the appeal, and other identifying information is at the top of the first page. The body of the decision follows, beginning with an "Introduction" presenting basic background and procedural information. The next section is "Findings of Fact" -- the individual pieces of evidence that the examiner has found relevant, credible, and necessary for the conclusions and decision. Based upon those Findings, the examiner draws "Conclusions" which comprise the next section and determine the outcome. The "Decision" section is last, followed by a postscript as to how the decision can be appealed.

### **When is the decision issued?**

Some decisions have deadlines imposed by the City code. The record may be left open for a site visit or for information to be filed after the hearing. You may request to be notified by telephone as soon a decision is issued.

### **Who gets the decision?**

A copy of the decision is sent to each party representative, and to others who specifically ask to receive it.

### **If I am not satisfied with the decision, how do I appeal?**

The postscript at the end of the decision indicates what opportunity there is for further review. Most decisions must be appealed directly to court.

## OTHER KINDS OF HEARINGS

### What other kinds of hearings does the Hearing Examiner conduct?

In addition to appeal hearings previously described, the Hearing Examiner also holds public hearings regarding the following:

- Subdivisions
- Council conditional use and other Council land use actions;
- ;Rezone proposals;
- Major institution master plans;
- Planned unit developments; and,
- Landmark controls and incentives.

### How are these hearings different from appeal hearings?

The fundamental and most important distinction between these hearings and the appeal hearing previously described is that the Hearing Examiner holds a public hearing in order to gather information. The hearing informs the Hearing Examiner's final decision on a subdivision application, and recommendation to the Council on the other types of land use actions listed above. On all but subdivision applications, the hearing also forms part of the record that will be sent to the City Council for final decision.

Generally, anyone who wishes to be heard will have an opportunity to speak, but it may be necessary to limit the amount of time available to each speaker. Written comments are acceptable and, in the case of a Hearing Examiner's recommendation, become part of the record sent on to the City Council. The Hearing Examiner tries to arrange the order of presentation in these hearings so that members of the public may speak before lengthy presentations by the City agency and applicant.

After the end of the hearing, for all but subdivision applications, the examiner prepares findings, conclusions and a recommendation, which is sent to the City Council along with all the exhibits and other materials in the hearing record. The City Council will use these as the basis for its decision. For subdivisions, the Hearing Examiner issues a final decision. The Hearing Examiner's recommendation, or final decision on a subdivision application, will be sent to those who request a copy.

## HEARING EXAMINER JURISDICTIONS

### LAND USE & ENVIRONMENTAL [Administered by Department of Planning and Development]

#### Appeals:

- Downtown Housing Maintenance appeals (SMC 22.220.140)
- Environmental Determinations (SMC 25.05.680)[Admin. by any City dept. as lead agency]
  - Determinations of Non-Significance(DNS)/ No EIS required (SMC 25.05.340)
  - Determinations of EIS Adequacy (SMC 25.05, Subchp. IV)
  - SEPA Conditions in MUP decisions (SMC 25.05.660)
- Fire & Safety Standards Citations (SMC 22.207.006)
- Land Use Code Citations (SMC 23.91.006)
- Land Use Code Interpretations (SMC 23.88.020)
- Master Use Permit [Type II] land use decisions (SMC 23.76.022):
  - Administrative Conditional Uses
  - Consistency with Planned Action Ordinance
  - Design Review
  - Establishing Light Rail Transit Facilities
  - Establishing Monorail Transit Facilities
  - Major Phased Developments
  - Short Subdivisions
  - Special Exceptions
  - Temporary Uses
  - Variances
- Building Unfit for Habitation (SMC 22.208.050)
- Environmentally Critical Areas Reasonable Use Exceptions (SMC 25.09.300)
- Housing & Building Maintenance Code violations (SMC 22.208.050)
- Pioneer Square Minimum Maintenance violations (SMC 25.28.300)
- Relocation Assistance: (City action causes displacement) (SMC 20.84.160)
- Stop Work Orders (SMC 23.76.034)
- Stormwater, Grading & Drainage exceptions/enforcement (SMC 22.808.040)
- Tenant Relocation Assistance Eligibility Determinations (SMC 22.210.150)

#### Original Jurisdiction [Type III] land use decisions (DPD rec., Hearing Examiner decision)

- Subdivisions (SMC 23.76.024 and SMC 23.22.052)

#### Recommendations to Council on Type IV land use decisions (SMC 23.76.036):

- Council Conditional Uses
- Downtown Planned Community Developments
- Major Institution Master Plans
- Public Facilities Master Plans
- Rezone Petitions

### SCHOOL REUSE & DEPARTURES [Administered by Department of Neighborhoods]

- School Development Standard Departures (SMC 23.79.012) within MUP decision
- School Reuse/SUAC (SMC 23.78.014) within MUP decision

### CIVIL RIGHTS COMPLAINTS [Administered by the Office of Civil Rights]

- Employment Discrimination Complaints (SMC 14.04.170)
- Fair Housing/Business Practice Complaints (SMC 14.08.170)

### CONTRACTUAL RELATIONS [Administered by the Executive Administration]

- Boost Program Sanctions (SMC 20.49.100)
- WMBE Sanctions (SMC 20.46A.190)

**PUBLIC NUISANCE**

- Graffiti Nuisance Violations (SMC 10.07.050) [Administered by Seattle Public Utilities]
- Public Nuisance Abatements (SMC 10.09.100) [Administered by Seattle Police Department]

**LANDMARKS AND SPECIAL DISTRICTS** [Administered by the Dept. of Neighborhoods]

- Certificates of Approval for Designated Landmarks (SMC 25.12.740)
- Landmark Controls & Incentives (SMC 25.12.530) [Recommendations to City Council]
- Landmarks Code Interpretations (SMC 25.12.845)
- Special Review Districts’ Certificate. of Approval and Code Interpretations
  - Pioneer Square Historical District (SMC 23.66.030)
  - International District (SMC 23.66.030)
  - Pike Place Market Historical District (SMC 25.24.080 & SMC 25.24.085)
  - Harvard Belmont Landmark District (SMC 25.22.130 & SMC 25.22.135)
  - Ballard Avenue Landmark District (SMC 25.16.110 & SMC 25.16.115)
  - Columbia City Landmark District (SMC 25.20.110 & SMC 25.20.115)

**HEALTH CODE VIOLATIONS** [Administered by Seattle-King County Public Health]

- Health Code Permit actions (SMC 10.01.220)
- Noise Ordinance variance appeals (SMC 25.08.770) [Administered by DPD]
- Radiofrequency Radiation Ordinance violations (SMC 25.10.540)

**CITY TAXES AND LICENSES** [Admin. by Executive Admin., Revenue & Consumer Affairs]:

- Admission Tax Exemptions (SMC 5.40.085)
- All Ages Dance and Venues (SMC 6.295.180)
- Bond Claims (SMC 6.202.290)
- Business and Occupation Tax assessments (SMC 5.55.140)
- Horse Drawn Carriage Licenses (SMC 6.315.430)
- License denials, suspensions & revocations (SMC 6.02.080, 6.02.290 and 6.202.270)
  - Adult Entertainment (SMC 6.270)
  - For-Hire Vehicles & Drivers (SMC 6.310.635)
  - Pawnshops (SMC 6.288)
  - Panorama and Peepshows (SMC 6.42.080)
  - Unit Pricing (SMC 7.12.090)
  - Animal Control:
    - Animal License Denials (SMC 9.25.120)
    - Determinations of Viciousness/Order of Humane Disposal (SMC 9.25.036)

**CABLE COMMUNICATIONS** – [Administered by the Office of Cable Communications]

- Franchise Termination (SMC 21.60.180)
- Rates and Charges Increases (SMC 21.60.310)

**MISCELLANEOUS JURISDICTIONS**

- Civil Service Appeals (SMC 4.04.250) [Delegation from Civil Service Commission]
- Ethics Code Violations (SMC 3.70.100) [Delegation from Ethics & Elections Commission]
- Improvement District Assessment Appeals as provided by Ordinance
- LID Assessment Rolls (SMC 20.04.090) [Administered by Dept. of Transportation]
- Petitions For Review of Floating Home Moorage Fee Increase (SMC 7.20.080)
- Property Tax Exemption Elimination (SMC 5.72.110) [Administered by Office of Housing]
- Side Sewer Contractor Registration Appeal (SMC 21.16.065) [Admin. by SPU]
- Street Use Ordinance Citation Appeals (SMC 15.91.006.) [Admin. by Dept. of Transport.]
- Third Party Utility Billing Complaints (SMC 7.25.050)

(over)

**LAND USE/SEPA DECISION APPEAL FORM**

You do not have to use this form to file an appeal. However, if you do not use it, please make

sure that your appeal includes all the information requested on this form. The appeal, along with any required filing fee, must reach the Office of Hearing Examiner, no later than 5:00 p.m. of the last day of the appeal period.

**APPELLANT INFORMATION** (Person or group making appeal)

**1. Appellant:**

If several individuals are appealing together, list the additional names and addresses on a separate sheet and identify a representative in #2 below.. If an organization is appealing, indicate group's name and mailing address here and identify a representative in #2 below.

Name \_\_\_\_\_

Address \_\_\_\_\_

Phone: Work: \_\_\_\_\_ Home: \_\_\_\_\_

Fax: \_\_\_\_\_ Email Address: \_\_\_\_\_

**2. Authorized Representative:**

Name of representative if different from the appellant indicated above. Groups and organizations must designate one person as their representative/contact person.

Name \_\_\_\_\_

Address \_\_\_\_\_

Phone: Work: \_\_\_\_\_ Home: \_\_\_\_\_

Fax: \_\_\_\_\_ Email Address: \_\_\_\_\_

**DECISION BEING APPEALED**

1. **Decision appealed** (Indicate MUP #, Interpretation #, etc.): \_\_\_\_\_

2. **Property address** of decision being appealed: \_\_\_\_\_

3. **Elements of decision being appealed.** Check one or more as appropriate:

\_\_\_\_\_ Adequacy of conditions \_\_\_\_\_ Variance

\_\_\_\_\_ Design Review and Departure \_\_\_\_\_ Adequacy of EIS

\_\_\_\_\_ Conditional Use \_\_\_\_\_ Interpretation (See **SMC 23.88.020**)

\_\_\_\_\_ EIS not required \_\_\_\_\_ Short Plat

\_\_\_\_\_ Major Institution Master Plan \_\_\_\_\_ Rezone

\_\_\_\_\_ Other (specify: \_\_\_\_\_)

**APPEAL INFORMATION**

Answer each question as completely and specifically as you can. Attach separate sheets if needed and refer to questions by number.

1. What is your interest in this decision? (State how you are affected by it)

\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

2. What are your objections to the decision? (List and describe what you believe to be the errors, omissions, or other problems with this decision.)

\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

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3. What relief do you want? (Specify what you want the Examiner to do: reverse the decision, modify conditions, etc.)

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Signature \_\_\_\_\_

Date \_\_\_\_\_

Appellant or Authorized Representative \_\_\_\_\_

**Deliver or mail appeal and appeal fee to:**

**City of Seattle**

**OFFICE OF HEARING EXAMINER**

**P.O. Box 94729**

**Seattle WA 98124-4729**

*SEATTLE MUNICIPAL TOWER - 700 5th Avenue, Suite 4000*

**Phone: (206) 684-0521 Fax: (206) 684-0536**

**[www.seattle.gov/examiner](http://www.seattle.gov/examiner)**