

# FREESTONE COUNTY APPRAISAL REVIEW BOARD

Minutes of May 12, 2020

Meeting #2020-2

The Freestone County Appraisal Review Board met at the Freestone Central Appraisal District located at 218 North Mount, Fairfield, Texas. Board members present were M J Alford, Eric Samford, Ann Gokey, Wain Glass, Wesley Ratcliff and Ron Brokmeyer. Representing the appraisal district were Bud Black, Chief Appraiser; Don Awalt, Deputy Chief Appraiser; and Carol Clark, ARB Clerk, Notary.

Ms. Gokey, chairman, called the meeting to order at 1:00 p.m.

Ms. Gokey requested proof of the posting of public notice of this meeting in accordance with Chapter 551, Texas Government. Mr. Black pointed out that the notice was posted by Ms. Clark on the website and the office front door well in advance of the required seventy-two-hour notice of the public meeting. Mr. Black added that included on the agenda were links to the YouTube broadcast and a toll-free phone number providing the public the ability to attend the meeting virtually.

Mr. Black verified that the Appraisal Review Board was in compliance with the Governor's Executive Order to meet under special provisions limiting the number of people in a public meeting to follow the social distancing guidelines.

Ms. Gokey asked that each board member state their name for the record and declared a quorum of the board present.

Consideration and action were taken on the approval of the Temporary Changes to the 2020 ARB Hearing Rules & Procedures. Mr. Black explains to the board that with the district preparing appraisal notices he has included an insert encouraging people to call for an informal discussions due to the social distance requirements. Property owners are also encouraged to appear before the board by affidavit or by telephone to minimize contamination. In the past call affidavits had to be notarized for evidence; now the law states that the property owner can give oral statements and not be required to produce oral testimony prior to a telephone hearing when giving oral evidence.

Ms. Gokey asks Mr. Black if the board can request a property owner for a copy of their driver's license. Mr. Black states that property owners appearing in person are required to show form of identification at the front desk before signing in. Mr. Samford added that the property owner needs to verify that they own the property before being heard.

Ms. Gokey asks Mr. Black to explain why he has requested for written statements to be submitted from property owners without being notarized. He explains that some property owners may not have access to a notary unless they are agents.

Mr. Brokmeyer suggests to the board to change the request for evidence to be received by the ARB at least one hour as stated under the heading 'Telephone Hearings' to 3 to 4-hour time frame. After a short discussion the board agrees that evidence should be submitted three hours prior to the scheduled telephone hearing time instead of one hour.

Mr. Sanford suggests that number one under the title 'Appearance by Affidavit' be reworded to say that 'The ARB will encourage but not require notarized statements for evidence.' Mr. Black suggests omitting number one and determine whether to consider an affidavit of evidence that has not been notarized at the beginning of the hearing. After further discussion Mr. Samford made a motion on the Approval of the Temporary changes to the 2020 ARB Hearing Rules & Procedures with revisions. Ms. Alford seconded the motion, and the motion carried.

Consideration and action were taken on Establishing ARB Panels to Hear 2020 Protests. Mr. Black explains to the board that approximately 10,000 notices were mailed that has substantial changes. Property Tax Assistance Division (PTAD) performs ratio studies showing 75% for commercial properties, 92% single family residence, 89% of rural land all in Fairfield. Wortham single family residence was at 85% of market value. Mr. Black added that the district was unable to protest Fairfield ISD as school districts have the authority to request an appeal on property value studies. Wortham ISD was out of the confidence level but will receive \$21,000 more in state funding.

Mr. Black continued to explain that some of the gas companies will not accept their 2020 values without adjustments in value due to the COVID-19 Pandemic. Numerus attempts have been made to the Governor and Attorney General

to allow the districts to roll 2019 values forward but have not been successful. The Governor reminded the districts that state law requires values to be determined as of January 1, 2020.

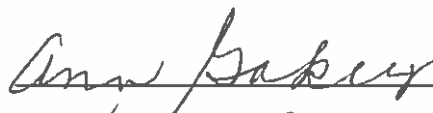
Due to no relief from the Governor Mr. Black recommends that the board meet in panels of three as stated in Sec. (D) Effective September 1, 2020. Each panel will make a recommendation to the full board then inform the property owner of the board's decision once motions have been made. The full board will not hear each testimony as the panel will make their recommendations on testimonies that have been presented. Mr. Black also recommends that one panel meet in the morning, then the second panel meet in the afternoon. During their discussion Mr. Samford recommends that scheduling is delayed until the board considers it necessary to meet in panels; Mr. Black explains that scheduling begins once appraisal notices are mailed out. Mr. Samford suggests that the board meet between June 15 and June 30 to determine whether it would be beneficial to have panels or to hear protests as a full board. After further discussion, the board made the decision to remain as a full board for 2020 protest hearings.


The board then considered selecting additional hearing dates for ARB hearings. Mr. Black reviewed the calendar with the board members pointing out the adopted dates set for June 30, July 2, July 14, and July 9 as an alternate day. After brief discussion the board selected July 7, and July 16 as additional hearing dates and changed the scheduled hearing times to begin at 10 a.m. on each day.

Mr. Black states that there are changes in the way evidence is presented. All evidence that may be used during an oral testimony will have to be made available to the property owner. A list of sales with all properties sold, sales information and appraisal cards may be created in book form for the board to have access to all the evidence that may be included while the appraiser's present evidence.

There were no public comment via teleconference or YouTube.

There being no further business the meeting was adjourned at 2:01 p.m.

  
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Chairman

  
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Secretary