0600-01-.01 DEFINITIONS.

As used in these rules, unless the context otherwise requires:

1. “Administrative judge” means an individual employed or appointed under authority of T.C.A. § 67-5-1505 or otherwise to conduct contested cases with or on behalf of the Board or Commission.

2. “Agent” means a person who is authorized under the provisions of T.C.A. § 67-5-1514 to represent taxpayers and assessors of property in a contested case before the State Board of Equalization.

3. “Assessing authority” means the assessor of property where the assessment at issue is of locally assessed property and the Office of State Assessed Properties of the Comptroller of the Treasury where the assessment at issue involves centrally assessed public utility property.

4. “Board” means the State Board of Equalization created by T.C.A. § 4-3-5101.

5. “Change to Contended Value” means a value submitted by any party that is different from the county board of equalization’s value, the original assessment value in the case of a direct appeal, and the contended value represented on a party’s initial appeal to the State Board of Equalization.

6. “Commission” means the Assessment Appeals Commission created by the Board pursuant to T.C.A. § 67-5-1502.

7. “Contested case” is defined as in T.C.A. § 4-5-102(3).

8. “County board” means a city, county, or metropolitan board of equalization established under T.C.A. §§ 67-1-401, et seq.

9. “Executive Secretary” means the Executive Secretary of the Board appointed under T.C.A. § 4-3-5104.

10. “Party” means a person permitted to participate in a contested case.

11. “Person” means any individual, firm, company, association, corporation, or other artificial or governmental entity.
(12) “Real estate appraiser” means a person who is subject to the State Licensing and Certified Real Estate Appraisers Law, codified at T.C.A. §§ 62-39-101, et seq.

(13) “Reasonable Cause” as used in T.C.A. § 67-5-1412 means a legally sufficient reason outside the party’s control.

(14) “Valuation analysis” means an estimate of value for ad valorem tax purposes which is prepared in conjunction with a contested case before the Board, Commission, or administrative judge.


0600-01-.02 APPLICABILITY.

(1) Unless otherwise provided herein, these rules shall govern the conduct of all contested cases before the Board, the Commission, or an administrative judge.

(2) In the event of any conflict between these rules and the Uniform Rules of Procedure for Hearing Contested Cases Before State Administrative Agencies (Chapter 1360-04-01), the provisions of these rules shall control.


0600-01-.03 INITIATING A CONTESTED CASE.

(1) A contested case before the Board may be initiated by:

(a) Completing and filing a Property Tax Appeal Form approved by the Board if the case relates to action taken or reviewable by a county board;

(b) Completing and filing an Exemption Appeal Form approved by the Board if the case relates to an initial determination of the Board designee on an application for property tax exemption;

(c) Filing a specific written petition or complaint, if neither (a) nor (b) above is applicable; or

(d) Filing data in such computer-readable format as the Board may authorize, subject to technical requirements approved by the Board. Unless excused on the basis of demonstrated hardship, an electronic filing must be used by any taxpayer filing appeals on more than three parcels in a given year, or by any agent or practitioner filing appeals on more than three parcels in a given year.

(2) Any appeal form or written complaint under paragraph (1) of this rule shall be:

(a) Signed and sworn to by the party in whose behalf it is prosecuted, or an authorized representative of such party; and

(b) Accompanied by a copy of any pertinent notice or decision received by the appellant from the assessing authority or county board.
The submission of a written request for an appeal form may be considered an appeal to the Board for purposes of an appeal deadline if it reasonably identifies the property and taxpayer, provided any form required by these rules is completed and filed within 30 days or other deadline specified by the administrative judge.

Contested cases commenced by action of the Board will be initiated by notice to affected parties. In the case of a declaratory proceeding notice shall be supplemented by publication of notice in the Tennessee Administrative Register, including a citation and summary of any rule or statute at issue and a statement of any proposed ruling.

The filing of a complaint for revocation of exemption under Tenn. Code Ann. § 67-5-212 does not commence a contested case until there has been a finding of probable cause for revocation and referral of the matter to an administrative judge.

An appeal form, complaint, or other document constituting part of the record in a contested case before the Board is deemed to be filed:

(a) On the date it is received by the Board; or

(b) If transmitted through the United States mail, on the postmark date.

Filing of a document by electronic mail or facsimile ("fax") transmission is permitted.

The Board, Commission, or administrative judge shall not require an assessing authority or an agent to be compliant with the Uniform Standards of Professional Appraisal Practice ("USPAP") or the State Licensing and Certified Real Estate Appraisers Law when the assessing authority or the agent prepares a valuation analysis.

Any individual appearing as a real estate appraiser before the Board, Commission, or administrative judge shall comply with all provisions of the State Licensing and Certified Real Estate Appraisers Law. An assessing authority or an agent is not required to be a licensed real estate appraiser to testify as to valuation before the Board, Commission, or administrative judge.

The parties in an appeal to the Board concerning the classification and/or valuation of property shall be:
(Rule 0600-01-.06, continued)

(a) The appellant;

(b) The taxpayer with respect to the property at issue (if not the appellant);

(c) The assessing authority responsible for the assessment at issue (if not the appellant); and

(d) Any other person admitted as a party.

(2) The parties in an appeal involving a property tax exemption shall be:

(a) The person claiming exemption;

(b) The assessor of property in the county where the property in question is located;

(c) Any complainant in a proceeding for revocation of exemption; and

(d) Any other person admitted as a party.


0600-01-.07 REPRESENTATION BY AGENT.

(1) Entry of an appearance in a contested case by an agent shall be made by:

(a) The filing of an appeal form or written complaint;

(b) The filing of a notice of appearance; or

(c) Appearance as agent at a hearing or pre-hearing conference.

(2) An agent may not enter an appearance under paragraph (1) of this rule or otherwise act on behalf of a taxpayer in a contested case without valid written authorization. Such authorization must:

(a) Identify the taxpayer;

(b) Identify the property by street address, assessor's identification number, or otherwise;

(c) Be signed and dated by the taxpayer or an individual with authority to act for the taxpayer;

(d) Indicate the signatory's title (if the party represented is a corporation or other artificial entity); and

(e) Specify the tax year to which the authorization applies.

(3) When a party is represented by an agent, only the agent is entitled to question witnesses and present argument at any stage of the case. An agent may not participate in the hearing of an appeal if he or she actually represents another agent or person who is not a party in the proceeding.

(4) Once having entered an appearance in a contested case, an agent who wishes to withdraw from representation shall notify the Board and all parties in writing.
(Rule 0600-01-.07, continued)

(5) All witnesses who testify shall disclose their employment or other financial relationship with either party or a person or entity representing a party in an appeal to the opposing party and the Board, Commission, or administrative judge. All witnesses receiving any compensation from either party or a person or entity representing a party in an appeal shall be subject to examination or cross-examination regarding such employment and the issue of possible bias, which may be addressed in a specific finding by the Board, Commission, or administrative judge.


0600-01-.08 CONDITIONS FOR APPEAL AND HEARING.

(1) Except by written directive of the Executive Secretary, no appeal which is initiated under Rule .03(1), (2), or (4) will be docketed for a hearing or pre-hearing conference before an administrative judge unless the appropriate appeal form appears to have been fully completed in good faith. If the valuation of the subject property is at issue, the appeal form must include, without limitation:

(a) A bona fide estimate of the market value of the property as of the relevant assessment date; and

(b) A brief statement of the basis for that opinion.

(2) For the purpose of determining whether the Board has jurisdiction, a taxpayer or owner will not be deemed to have appealed the property in question to the county board if the taxpayer or owner, or the taxpayer's or owner's authorized representative:

(a) Did not timely appeal the disputed classification and/or value to the county board;

(b) Failed to make a personal or (if permitted) written appearance before the county board; or

(c) Requested the county board to affirm the disputed classification and/or value.

This subsection shall not be construed in derogation of any right of appeal to, or hearing before, the Board under the provisions of state law.

(3) After the delinquency date for payment of any tax levied on real or personal property, no appeal concerning the classification and/or assessment of the property will be heard if the undisputed portion of the tax has not been paid. The “undisputed portion of the tax” is the amount that would be imposed on the basis of the classification and market value (equalized by the prevailing appraisal ratio in the county) claimed on the appeal form.


0600-01-.09 ASSIGNMENT OF CASES.

Except as the Board may otherwise direct, contested cases shall be heard initially by an administrative judge assigned by the executive secretary or his designee, and the initial decision and order of the administrative judge shall be reviewable by the Commission as otherwise provided in these rules.

0600-01-.10 COUNTERCLAIMS.

(1) In a contested case, a party intending to make a Change of Contended Value must file with the State Board of Equalization and send to all other parties a written notice of the change no later than thirty (30) days before the date of a scheduled hearing. It is acceptable to file and send a notice under this rule by email. This rule does not preclude any party at the hearing of the appeal from introducing relevant evidence of a higher or lower value for the property in question than that determined by the county board of equalization, or the assessor in the case of a direct appeal. Failure to file a notice of a Change to Contended Value as required in this rule may limit the relief a party may request to upholding the county board of equalization value, reverting to the original assessment value, or adopting the contended value included on the initial appeal filing, within the discretion of the administrative law judge.

(2) An original real property appeal timely filed at the Board may be amended to include an assessment year or years subsequent to the year for which the original appeal was filed, until the next reappraisal. There is a presumption of reasonable cause when an original real property appeal has not been heard by the time the appellant is due to file an appeal for any subsequent assessment year. The administrative judge, the Commission, or the Board may carry forward the original tax year adjudication of value into subsequent tax years within the same reappraisal cycle, but only if there has been no material change to the property, market conditions, or other circumstances or factors substantially impacting value.

(a) An original real property appeal filed late may be amended to include an assessment year or years subsequent to the year for which the appeal was filed, until the next reappraisal, if

1. The late appeal was nonetheless eligible for a reasonable cause determination under T.C.A. § 67-5-1412; and

2. The written order disposing of the original appeal was entered later than ten (10) days before the deadline for appealing the subsequent year assessment to the county or state boards of equalization.

(b) All other requests to amend shall lie within the discretion of the administrative judge.


0600-01-.11 HEARINGS BEFORE ADMINISTRATIVE JUDGE.

(1) In the hearing of an appeal before an administrative judge concerning the classification and/or assessment of a property, the party seeking to change the current classification and/or assessment shall have the burden of proof.

(2) In the hearing of an appeal from an initial determination on an application for property tax exemption, the party seeking to change the initial determination shall have the burden of proof. In a show cause hearing for revocation of an exemption, the person claiming exemption shall bear the burden of showing by a preponderance of evidence why the exemption should not be revoked. Upon request of a party or order of the administrative judge, the Board designee who made the initial determination under appeal will attend the hearing. The designee may testify and, at the discretion of the administrative judge, examine witnesses or otherwise participate in the hearing. The designee may be permitted to participate by telephone or other electronic means when hearings are conducted at locations other than Nashville.
(3) A record of the hearing of any appeal before an administrative judge will be made by digital recording. Any party may, at its own expense, procure a court reporter to record the oral proceedings or a written transcript of the digital recording.

(4) Parties are encouraged where practicable to achieve any necessary discovery informally, in order to avoid undue expense and delay in the resolution of the matter at hand. When such attempts have failed, or where the complexity of the case is such that informal discovery is not practicable, discovery shall be sought and effectuated in accordance with the Tennessee Rules of Civil Procedure. An example of an informal discovery request follows:

REQUEST FOR INFORMATION

Date:

The periodic reappraisal of this county and all counties in Tennessee is a mass consideration of all parcels in their respective jurisdiction. Data needed and assembled to develop a mass appraisal of the entire county is different from the data necessary for individual property valuation pursuits. Appeals before the State Board of Equalization are filed on an individual parcel basis. In answer to such appeals, valuations are conducted on an individual parcel basis, and testimony is expected to be presented on the same basis.

This information being requested is data used in the Appraisal Industry with methods and theories taught from the textbooks and classrooms of the Appraisal Industry on how to arrive at an estimated value based on the Three Approaches to Value. Any request outside of these parameters is not required.

Learning as much as possible about the subject of each appeal is essential. As a result, the assessor’s office requests very specific data in an effort to gain a clearer understanding of the subject property. Our request is not intended to be burdensome; however, some information is essential to establish a credible appeal. Any information received in response to the Standard Request for Information shall be held confidential pursuant to T.C.A. § 67-5-303(d)(2). Therefore, for the subject property(s) under appeal, we request the following from the subject property(s):

A) If the property under appeal has been under contract to sell or sold within 24 months (before or after) the effective appeal date, please submit a copy of the sales contract. If, during the same period, the property was listed for sale, please submit a copy of the listing sheet together with asking price(s) and any offers.

B) Please submit a copy of all leases for the property under appeal in effect on the effective appeal date (January 1 or Prorate Date). Alternatively, rent roll (tenant and vacant space roster) and complete lease summaries are acceptable. Lease summaries must: identify the individual tenant spaces whether occupied or vacant and list the rentable footage for each space; specify the beginning and ending date of each lease primary term together with any renewals; specify base rent together with rent escalations or reductions and the timing thereof; specify any additional rentals per tenant space such as expense stops and/or expense pass-throughs, percentage rents, parking rents and any other rentals specified by each lease.

C) Please submit property management’s annualized income and expense statements for each of the three years preceding the year under appeal. (For example, if the value under appeal is for Year 2017, the income and expense statements for Years 2014, 2015 and 2016 are required.) Reconstructed operating statements of historical performance in place of management reports are not acceptable. For lodging properties, we also need average daily rate and occupancy rate for each operating year. For retail properties and restaurants in particular where rent is a function of gross
sales, we will need a history of gross sales for the three years immediately preceding the tax year under appeal. (For convenience markets, gross sales will need to be segregated between inside sales and pump sales.)

D) Any additional information deemed relevant by the taxpayer or representative is welcomed, i.e., current appraisal, rent rolls for prior relevant years, permanent property deficiencies not obvious to the assessment office that would be market-recognizable and value-impacting.

E) If the property under appeal is vacant land or an owner-occupied improved property, submission of relevant comparable transfers is requested.

F) Please provide the basis together with supporting data for your contention that the property has been overvalued by the reappraisal staff.

G) Each property is unique. Should, during the course of our investigation, it be found that additional information relative to the subject of the appeal would be helpful toward a resolution of the appeal, we will make that request.

Please provide the requested information by:


0600-01-.12 REVIEW OF INITIAL ORDER.

(1) The Commission may review initial decisions and orders of the administrative judges on its own motion or on appeal of any party. Unless a party has timely appealed or the Commission has acted to review the initial decision and order on its own motion within the time provided for appeal, the initial decision and order will become a final order of the Commission. Final orders of the Commission will serve as the basis of a final certificate of assessments unless further reviewed by the Board.

(2) An appeal of an initial order entered by an administrative judge to the Commission shall be filed with the Executive Secretary. The appeal need not be in any particular form, but must:

(a) Be filed within the period of time allowed under T.C.A. § 67-5-1501(3);

(b) Identify the allegedly erroneous finding(s) of fact and/or conclusion(s) of law in the initial order; and

(c) Identify how the rights of the petitioner have allegedly been prejudiced because the administrative findings, inferences, conclusions, or decisions are:

1. In violation of constitutional or statutory provisions;

2. Made upon unlawful procedure;

3. Arbitrary and capricious or characterized by abuse of discretion; or

4. Unsupported by evidence that is both substantial and material in light of the entire record.
(d) In determining the substantiality of evidence, the Commission shall take into account whatever in the record fairly detracts from its weight, but shall not substitute its judgment for that of the hearing examiner as to the weight of the evidence on questions of fact.

(3) The Executive Secretary or his/her designee shall acknowledge receipt in writing of any appeal under this rule.


0600-01-.13 HEARINGS BEFORE COMMISSION.

(1) An administrative judge assigned by the Executive Secretary and licensed to practice law in the state of Tennessee shall conduct and preside at the hearing of any contested case before the Commission. The administrative judge shall have all of the powers and duties in that capacity which are enumerated in the Uniform Administrative Procedures Act (Tenn. Code Ann. §§ 4-5-101 et seq.) and the Uniform Rules of Procedure for Hearing Contested Cases Before State Administrative Agencies.

(2) Insofar as a party takes exception to an initial order in an appeal, that party shall have the burden of proof in the hearing of the matter before the Commission. The hearing shall be based on the existing record except that additional proof may be taken in cases involving alleged irregularities in procedure that are not shown in the record.

(3) Not less than twenty-one (21) days prior to the scheduled hearing date, the parties shall exchange by Mail, electronic mail or personal delivery copies of all briefs and documents or exhibits they intend to present at the hearing; provided, however, that this requirement does not include:

   (a) Photographs;

   (b) Maps; or

   (c) Records concerning the property under appeal (e.g., property record cards) which are available for public inspection in the assessor’s office.

   Any document or exhibit which is not timely furnished in accordance with paragraph (1) of this rule may be excluded from the record. This subsection shall not apply to whatever extent it may conflict with the terms of a discovery order, pre-hearing conference order, or notice of hearing entered by the administrative judge in the case.

(4) A record of the hearing of any appeal before the Commission will be made by digital recording. Any party may, at its own expense, procure a court reporter to record the oral proceedings or a written transcript of the digital recording.


0600-01-.14 PETITION FOR BOARD REVIEW.

(1) A petition for review by the Board of action taken by the Commission shall be filed with the Executive Secretary. The petition need not be in any particular format, but must:
(Rule 0600-01-.14, continued)

(a) Be filed within the period of time allowed under Tenn. Code Ann. § 67-5-1502(j)(2); and

(b) State its basis and the relief requested.

(2) The Executive Secretary or his/her designee shall acknowledge receipt in writing of any petition under this rule, and send a copy of the petition to each member of the Board. If any member of the Board requests a meeting with respect to the petition, the executive secretary will convene a meeting of the Board to vote on whether to grant review of the petition.


0600-01-.15 HEARINGS BEFORE BOARD.

If, upon its own motion or upon the filing of a petition under Rule 15, the Board decides to review action taken by the Commission, the hearing shall be based solely on the record before the Commission unless the Board otherwise directs.


0600-01-.16 SIGNING OF FINAL ORDERS.

A final order of the Board or Commission shall be signed by the member who acted as its chairperson at the hearing of the case. A duly signed final order is deemed to be entered on the date that it is attested by the Executive Secretary.


0600-01-.17 FEES.

(1) Persons initiating a contested case before the Board shall pay a ten dollar ($10) nonrefundable filing fee.

(2) No fee shall be due from a person who qualifies as an indigent person for purposes of civil actions in the courts of Tennessee and who establishes indigence by filing a uniform affidavit in the form stated in Rule 29 of the Rules of the Supreme Court of Tennessee. No fee shall be due from an appellant who has attained the age of sixty-five (65) years at the time of filing the appeal where the subject property of the appeal is owned by the appellant and used as the appellant’s primary residence and has a value not in excess of $150,000.