

2021 Budget Hearing Statement

Patricia Jackowiak, Director /Chief Administrative Law Judge

Department of Administrative Hearings

Monday, November 9, 2020

Good morning Chairman Dowell and members of the City Council. Thank you for the opportunity to appear today. As for all departments, 2020 was significantly shaped by the impact of COVID 19 for DOAH.

On 3/16/20 a “General Order” was entered continuing all matters for a minimum of 60 days and until further Order of Court. The Order also specified that no adverse action would be taken in any case. DOAH staff have been on site since 3/16/20 to ensure these Court Orders were mailed to the Respondents. This instilled confidence that no adverse action had been taken in these matters.

In order to remain in compliance with occupancy limits, DOAH has implemented several procedures which diverted foot traffic but still allowed us to provide hearing related services for the public. For example, Motions can now be filed online. Pre-trial settlement conferences with the City attorneys are now conducted via email, and DOAH posted email addresses by case type on its website. Those who have pending Building code violations can now email photos, receipts, paid invoices, permits and a sworn statement attesting to full compliance to the Building Department representative at DOAH. If the property owner demonstrates they are in full compliance, the Law Department transmits a request to non-suit the case.

On July 9, 2020 DOAH began in-person hearings for certain case types which had been continued since March 16th. Respondents can now participate in contested trials and present their evidence to the Administrative Law Judge. DOAH’s legal help desk has also been available to pro se litigants during this time. The Coordinated Advice & Referral Program for Legal Services (CARPLS) attorneys staff a dedicated phone line and virtual advice desk for DOAH cases. Language Line translation services have also remained operational at all DOAH facilities.

DOAH is currently working with AIS to establish the capability to conduct remote hearings. DOAH is researching the logistics of how evidence will be transmitted to the court prior to hearing, obtaining electronic contact information for the Respondents and processing in-person vehicle hearing requests which are currently not scheduled for a specific date or time but rather in one week intervals. We will continue this work to efficiently and effectively serve residents in these changing times.

Thank you.