

2024 Budget Hearing Statement

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Department of Administrative Hearings

Friday October 27, 2023

Good morning, Chairman Ervin, Vice chairman Lee and members of the City Council. Thank you for the opportunity to appear today and update you on the Department of Administrative Hearings (DOAH).

Several customer service modifications which were made during COVID-19 still continue at DOAH. These modifications ensure Respondents have easier access to the Administrative Hearings process. For example, Respondents can file motions to set-aside default judgments online. Previously, these motions could only be filed in person. Also, those who have pending Building code violations can email photos, receipts, paid invoices, permits and a sworn statement attesting to full compliance. If the property owner is in compliance, the Law Department transmits a request to non-suit the case.

DOAH also continues to offer virtual hearings as an option. In 2022, there were 13,738 virtual hearings conducted for parking, speed and red-light camera cases. This represented 25% of the total in-person vehicle hearings conducted in 2022. As of September 30, 2023 DOAH conducted 10,517 virtual vehicle hearings, representing 24% of the total in-person vehicle hearings. Virtual hearings are also available for other DOAH case types.

Respondents log into their assigned Courtroom and are connected with a City representative for a pre-trial conference.

The Coordinated Advice and Referral Program for Legal Services (CARPLS) which staffed a virtual advice desk during Covid returned to on-site consultations in June 2023. They assist Respondents Monday through Thursdays at 400 West Superior. CARPLS also has a dedicated phonenumber for Respondents who have matters pending at our two (2) satellite hearing locations. CARPLS provides practical “how to” advice to Respondents in presenting their defenses to the alleged violations and in preparing any applicable motions. The legal help desk also promotes equal access and understanding of the Administrative Hearings process for Respondents who are self-represented litigants at DOAH.

DOAH also utilizes Language Line translation services to ensure that those whose first language is not English can fully participate in their Administrative Hearings. The top three (3) languages for 2022 and year to date 2023 are Spanish, Mandarin and Polish. Language line offers translation services in one hundred seventy (170) languages/dialects.

DOAH remains committed to achieving its core mission in 2024 – providing a forum for fair and impartial adjudication, maintaining an exceptionally high level of courteous, respectful, and prompt customer service for the public. In furtherance of this mission, DOAH in collaboration with the Mayor’s Office for Peoples with Disabilities, required all full-time staff and Administrative Law Judges to attend a Disability Awareness and Etiquette training program. The DOAH team members obtained a deeper understanding and increased awareness of disability and learned to appropriately assist an individual with a disability.

On July 26, 2023, Administrative Law Judges (ALJs) attended an Unconscious Bias training presented by Retired Judge Derek Mosley. This seminar challenged the ALJs to recognize their unconscious biases and employ techniques to mitigate said biases in their decision-making roles.

In August 2006, DOAH accepted its first electronic case filings for Department of Streets and Sanitation (DSS) violations in collaboration with Departments of Law (DOL) and DSS. The e-filing system has been updated and enhanced over the past seventeen (17) years. It is anticipated that the City will electronically file cases at DOAH for Department of Transportation (CDOT) violations by the first quarter 2024 and vacant property cases by year-end 2024.

DOAH's 2024 budget provides for increased funding for two (2) students to work year-round instead of only during the summer breaks. These students will gain invaluable customer service experience in a Courthouse environment. They will serve as DOAH's community engagement ambassadors as we strive to effectively and efficiently serve all who appear at DOAH.

Thank You.