

Chapter 2.26 HEARING EXAMINER

Sections:

- 2.26.010 Purpose.
- 2.26.020 Creation of hearing examiner position.
- 2.26.030 Appointment.
- 2.26.040 Qualifications.
- 2.26.050 Removal.
- 2.26.060 Freedom from improper influence.
- 2.26.070 Conflict of interest.
- 2.26.080 Rules.
- 2.26.090 Duties of the examiner – Applications.
- 2.26.100 Reports of city departments.
- 2.26.110 Public hearing.
- 2.26.120 Examiner's decision.
- 2.26.125 Reconsideration of examiner's decision
- 2.26.130 Notice of examiner's decision.
- 2.26.140 Appeal from examiner's decision.
- 2.26.180 Local improvement district assessment roll hearings.

2.26.10 Purpose.

The purpose of this chapter is to establish a system of land use regulatory hearings which will satisfy the following basic needs:

- A. A more prompt opportunity for a hearing and decision on alleged violations of land use regulations, and such other regulations as may be assigned to the hearing examiner;
- B. To provide an efficient and effective system for deciding quasi judicial actions including conditional use applications, variance applications, preliminary subdivision applications, appeals from administrative decisions, and various other procedures as specified in this Code; (RCW 58.17.330)
- C. To help ensure procedural due process and appearance of fairness by holding such hearings before a neutral party, competent in the fields of land use and procedural requirements. (Ord. 550, 1990)

2.26.020 Creation of hearing examiner position.

Pursuant to Chapter 35A.63 RCW, the office of hearing examiner, hereinafter referred to as examiner, is created. All land use matters of a quasi-judicial nature, not requiring a modification of any ordinance or legislation shall be referred to the examiner who shall interpret, review and implement land use regulations in accordance with the procedures set forth herein. (Ord. 701, 1999; Ord. 550, 1990)

2.26.030 Appointment.

The hearing examiner shall be appointed by the mayor from a list of qualified persons approved by the council. The council shall approve the compensation of the hearing examiner as with other professional and consultant positions. (Ord. 701, 1999; Ord. 550, 1990)

2.26.040 Qualifications.

Examiners shall be appointed solely with regard to their qualifications for the duties of their office and will have such training and experience as will qualify them to conduct administrative or quasi-judicial hearings on regulatory enactments and to discharge the other functions conferred upon them. Examiners shall hold no other elective or appointive office of position in the city of Sultan. (Ord. 550, 1990)

2.26.050 Removal.

The mayor with concurrent majority vote of the city council may remove an examiner from office for cause. (Ord. 550, 1990)

2.26.060 Freedom from improper influence.

No person, including city officials, elected or appointed, shall attempt to influence an examiner in any matter pending before him, except at a public hearing duly called for such purpose, or to interfere with an examiner in the performance of his duties in any other way; provided, that this section shall not prohibit the city's attorney from rendering legal service to the examiner upon request. (Ord. 550, 1990)

2.26.070 Conflict of interest.

No examiner shall conduct or participate in any hearing, decision, or recommendation in which the examiner has a direct or indirect substantial financial or familial interest or concerning which the examiner has had substantial prehearing contacts with proponents or opponents. Nor, in considering an examiner's recommendation, shall any member of the council who has such an interest or has had such contacts participate in consideration thereof.

2.26.080 Rules.

The examiner shall have the power to prescribe rules for the scheduling and conduct of hearings and other procedural matters related to the duties of his office. Such rules may provide for cross-examination of witnesses. (Ord. 550, 1990)

2.26.090 Duties of the examiner – Applications.

A. The examiner shall receive and examine available information, conduct fair and impartial public hearings, prepare a record thereof, and enter findings, conclusions, recommendations, or decisions as provided throughout the Sultan Municipal Code.

- B. The examiner is empowered to act in lieu of the board of adjustment, and such other officials, boards or commissions as may be assigned. Whenever existing ordinances, codes or policies authorize or direct the board of adjustment, or other officials, boards or commissions to undertake certain activities which the examiner has been assigned, such ordinances, codes or policies shall be construed to refer to the examiner.
- C. The hearing examiner is empowered consistent with SMC 2.26.120(D) and rules adopted by the hearing examiner to reconsider decisions or recommendations of the hearing examiner.

2.26.100 Reports of city departments.

On any land use issue coming before the examiner, the community development director shall coordinate and assemble the reviews of other city departments, governmental agencies, and other interested parties and shall prepare a report summarizing the factors involved and the planning board and or city council findings and recommendations. At least seven calendar days prior to the scheduled hearing, the report shall be filed with the examiner and copies thereof shall be mailed to the applicant and made available for public inspection. Copies thereof shall be provided to interested parties upon payment of reproduction costs. In the event that information to be provided by the applicant or other parties outside of city control has not been provided in sufficient time for filing seven days in advance of the hearing, the examiner may reschedule the hearing and notify interested parties. (Ord. 550, 1990)

2.26.110 Public hearing.

- A. Before rendering a decision or recommendation on any application, the examiner shall hold at least one public hearing thereon.
- B. Notice of the time and place of the public hearing shall be given as provided in the ordinance governing the application. If none is specifically set forth, such notice shall be given no less than 7 days before the public hearing.
- C. The examiner shall have the power to prescribe rules and regulations for the conduct of hearings under this chapter and also to administer oaths, and preserve order. (Ord. 821-03 § 1; Ord. 550, 1990)

2.26.120 Examiner's decision.

- A. The examiner shall render a written decision within 10 working days of the conclusion of a hearing, unless the applicant or appellant agrees to a longer period in writing. The decision shall include at least the following:
 - 1. Findings of fact and conclusions of law based upon and supported by the record;

2. A decision on the application, or the appeal, to grant, deny, or grant with such conditions, modifications, and restrictions as the examiner finds reasonable to make the application or appeal compatible with its environment, the Sultan Municipal Code, the City of Sultan Comprehensive Plan, other official policies and objectives, and land use regulatory enactments. Examples of the kinds of conditions, modifications, and restrictions that may be imposed include, but are not limited to additional setbacks, screenings in the form of fencing or landscaping, easements, dedications, or additional right-of-way and performance bonds;
3. A statement of the date the decision will become final.

2.26.125 Reconsideration of Examiner’s Decision.

- A. All decisions or recommendations of the hearing examiner are subject to reconsideration, unless reconsideration is waived. Reconsideration is waived unless within seven calendar days of the date of mailing of the decision or recommendation, the applicant, the city, or a party of record submits a written request for reconsideration in accordance with rules issued by the hearing examiner.
- B. Pending reconsideration by the hearing examiner, a decision shall not be deemed final for the purpose of commencement of the period of time in which to commence an appeal.
- C. If reconsideration is waived because no timely request for reconsideration is made, the initial decision of the hearing examiner, subject to any right of appeal, shall be deemed final as of the eighth calendar day after the date of mailing of the decision.
- D. If a timely request for reconsideration is made, the hearing examiner shall grant or deny reconsideration within 10 calendar days of the date of receipt of the request for reconsideration.
- E.

2.26.130 Notice of examiner’s recommendation or decision.

Not later than three working days following the rendering of a written decision, copies thereof shall be mailed to the applicant and to other parties of record in the case. “Parties of record” shall include the applicant and all other persons who specifically request notice by signing a register provided for such purpose at the public hearing, or otherwise provide written request for such notice.

2.26.140 Appeal from examiner’s decision.

Examiner’s decisions may be appealed to Superior Court by a party with standing in accordance with the procedures of Chapter 36.70C RCW, or other court of competent jurisdiction as provided by law.

2.26.180 Local improvement district assessment roll hearings.

- A. As authorized by RCW 35.44.070, the city council hereby provides for delegating the duty of conducting public hearings for the purpose of considering and making recommendations on final assessment rolls and the individual assessments upon property within local improvement districts to a hearing examiner appointed under this section, and the hearing examiner is directed to conduct such hearings and make those recommendations to the city council.
- B. All objections to the confirmation of the assessment roll shall be in writing and identify the property, be signed by the owners and clearly state the grounds of the objection. Objections not made within the time and in the manner prescribed and as required by law shall be conclusively presumed to have been waived.
- C. The hearing examiner shall conduct the hearing to be commenced at the time and place designated by the city council, cause an adequate record to be made of the proceedings, and make written findings, conclusions and recommendations to the city council following the completion of such hearings, which may be continued and recontinued as provided by law whenever deemed proper by the hearing examiner, and the city council shall either adopt or reject the recommendations of the hearing examiner.
- D. The recommendations of the hearing examiner shall be that the city council correct, revise, lower, change or modify the roll or any part thereof, or set aside the roll in order for the assessment to be made de novo, or that the city council adopt or correct the roll or take other action on the roll as appropriate, including confirmation of the roll without change. The recommendations of the hearing examiner shall be filed with the city clerk and be open to public inspection. All persons whose names appear upon the recommended assessment roll who timely filed written objections to their assessments shall receive mailed written notification of their recommended assessments.
- E. Any persons who shall have timely filed objections to their assessments may appeal the recommendations of the hearing examiner regarding their properties to the city council by filing written notice of such appeal with the city clerk within 10 calendar days after the date of mailing of the hearing examiner's recommendations.
- F. The appeal shall be based exclusively upon the record made before the hearing examiner and shall be considered by the city council at a public meeting. No new evidence may be presented. Arguments on appeal shall be either oral or written as the city council may order.
- G. The city council shall adopt or reject the recommendations of the hearing examiner at a public meeting, after considering any appeals, and shall act by ordinance in confirming the final assessment roll.

- H. Any appeal from a decision of the city council regarding any assessment may be made to the superior court within the time and in the manner provided by law.

- I. The procedures set forth in this section are independent of and alternative to any other hearing or review processes heretofore or hereafter established by the city, and shall govern the conduct and review of final assessment hearings conducted before hearing examiners and related proceedings when authorized by the city council. (Ord. 775-01 § 1)

Moved to Chapter 21.12