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Appeal Procedures and Responsibilities of the Parties

This statement of appeal procedures provides an informational summary of the applicable procedures and the parties' responsibilities in an appeal before OIP pursuant to chapter 2-73, Hawaii Administrative Rules (HAR). The procedures described here are more fully set out in chapter 2-73 itself, which controls in the event of any inconsistency between its language and the language of this informational summary.

A party may contact OIP to request an extension of a deadline.

1. Agency response (HAR §§ 2-73-14 and -15)

The agency's written response is due ten business days after it receives the notice of appeal from OIP. Its written response must include:

- (1) A concise statement of the factual background;
- (2) An explanation of the agency's position, including its justification for the actions taken with citations to the specific statutory sections and other law supporting the agency's position;
- (3) Any evidence necessary to support the agency's argument; and
- (4) Contact information for the agency officer or employee who is authorized to respond and make representations on behalf of the agency concerning the appeal.

If checked, the agency's response must include, for OIP's *in camera* review, an unredacted copy of

- the records to which access was denied
- the minutes of the relevant meeting
- other records.

Where the agency claims that a record is protected by the attorney-client privilege, the agency may request to submit to OIP the record in redacted form in order to preserve this privilege. OIP will generally allow such a request where the application of the claimed privilege can be determined by review of the redacted record.

2. Other submissions to OIP (HAR § 2-73-15)

In addition to the information and materials submitted as part of the appeal, OIP may ask the person who filed the appeal, or any other parties participating in the appeal, to submit a written statement or statements. If OIP does so, OIP will also let all the parties know when the statement is due, whether there are any requirements as to the form it takes or what it includes, and when any response by the agency or other parties is due.

OIP can consider information or materials submitted by any person, not just parties to the appeal. However, if someone other than the person who filed the appeal and the responding agency wants to participate in the appeal as a party or in some other way, that person must submit a written request and must explain the reason for the request, and OIP will then determine whether to allow such participation.

Because an appeal before OIP is an informal proceeding, a party's or third person's communication with OIP can be *ex parte*, *i.e.*, outside the presence of the other party or parties. However, OIP does have the option to require the parties to copy each other on submissions.

3. OIP's Decision (HAR §§ 2-73-15, -17, -18, and -19)

OIP's written decision on the appeal will be sent to all parties when it is issued. There is no specific deadline set for OIP's decision on an appeal.

A party can request that OIP reconsider its decision. The deadline to request reconsideration is ten business days after the date the decision was issued. If a party misses the deadline for reconsideration or if OIP declines to reconsider the opinion, the party still has the option of appealing the decision to court. Section 92F-43, Hawaii Revised Statutes (HRS), sets out the standard for an agency's appeal of an OIP decision. For a record requester or Sunshine Law complainant, appeal to court is provided by section 92F-15, HRS (denial of general record request), section 92F-27, HRS (denial of a personal record request), or sections 92-11 and -12, HRS (Sunshine Law complaint).

In some instances, OIP may issue a notice dismissing all or part of an appeal, instead of issuing a written decision. The circumstances in which OIP can dismiss an appeal are listed in section 2-73-18. OIP may also ask (but will not require) the parties to mediate the appeal, or an issue within the appeal, as an alternative means to resolve the appeal.