

GOVERNMENT OF THE DISTRICT OF COLUMBIA  
REAL PROPERTY TAX APPEALS COMMISSION



April 25, 2017

Councilmember Jack Evans  
Chair, Committee on Finance and Revenue  
1350 Pennsylvania Avenue, NW  
Washington, DC 20001

Dear Councilmember Evans:

I am writing to provide responses to the Real Property Tax Appeals Commission (RPTAC) FY 2018 Budget questions. Please see those responses below.

1. **Please list all program enhancements, technical adjustments, and reductions included within the FY 2018 budget. Please break down these costs by program. In addition, please provide a narrative description and rationale for each, along with associated dollar amounts and FTEs (if applicable). Be sure to include in your response the reclassification of one Full-Time Equivalent position from temporary to continuing full-time status.**

The Real Property Tax Appeals Commission (RPTAC) does not have any program enhancements, technical adjustments or reductions in the FY 2018 budget.

2. **Will the proposed FY 2018 budget allow the agency to meet all statutory mandates? If not, please explain.**

The Commission's proposed operating budget of \$1,714,620.00 should be adequate for RPTAC to meet its statutory mandates.

3. **What does the caseload look like thus far, and what are your predictions, if any, for the caseload?**

The Office of Tax & Revenue reports a total of 10,527 cases filed at the first level for TY 2018. This would suggest that RPTAC's caseload will be approximately 4,500 to 5,000 appeals. Over the past five appeal seasons, the Commission has received approximately 4,000 to 4,500 appeal cases per season. Therefore, RPTAC expects to have about 4,500 filings for TY 2018.

**4. How many full or part time commissioner positions are currently vacant? How many positions have an expiring term in the remainder of 2017 or during 2018?**

The Commission has a statutory composition of 14 Commissioners; consisting of 8 part-time members and 6 full-time members. At the present time, the Commission has one (1) full-time Commissioner (Mr. Frank Sanders) and one (1) part-time Commissioner (Mr. Alvin Jackson), whose appointments expired on April 30, 2017. These two Commissioners are expected to be re-appointed for another 4 year term in the coming weeks. The Commission is also waiting for the appointment of a new part-time Commissioner, Ms. Wendy Gadson, as well. If all goes well, the Commission should have a full complement of 14 Commissioners on board for the coming TY 2018 season.

**5. You have mentioned previously trying a different approach to using part time commissioners during your busy season. Please provide a brief explanation and comment on any funding shifts or additional needs.**

This year, we have discussed with the Mayor, the possibility of changing the composition of the Commission to include one additional full-time Commissioner and reducing the number of part-time Commissioners from 8 to 4 members. The part-time Commissioners would then be required to sign a contract that would hold them to a pre-determined tour-of-duty. The motivation behind this suggestion is to enable the Chair to have greater control of part-time Commissioners' participation. Part-time Commissioners, without a commitment to a tour-of-duty, have proven to be unreliable participants, who, in great part, have kept the Commission from meeting all of its statutory deadlines. The Commission believes that this change would reduce most of the logistical problems – administratively, in the scheduling of hearings, keeping track of the hours of participation, and in processing invoices for payment. Based upon the Commission's Financial Manager's review, the Commission believes that the proposed change in composition could be implemented without exceeding our current budget mark. Although the idea remains under consideration by the Mayor's office, it is unlikely that it will be put in place for TY 2018.

**6. What is new for FY 2018? What, if anything, is being discontinued? Being revised?**

No significant changes or revisions are expected to be implemented for the TY 2018 appeal season.

**7. Please comment on how the recent legislative change made to amend the amount of time provided to the Commission in reviewing assessments for apartment complexes with five or more units went this past season? Was it helpful? Are any other changes needed?**

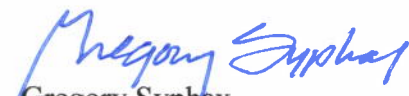
As a relatively new agency, the Commission is always reevaluating its policies and procedures in an effort to make the Commission operate more efficiently – without sacrificing its core values that include being as transparent as we can possibly be (without violating applicable confidentiality statutes), staying knowledgeable of the local real estate market, providing good quality service to the community, and rendering fair and well- written decisions that explain *why* and *how* the Commission made its decision. Every year, the Commission considers what efforts worked, what did not work, and what changes are needed to improve the way we operate as an agency.

This past year the Commission recommended to the Mayor that a legislative change was needed for our statutory decision deadline for *Class 1 – Residential Properties*. Since Class 1 properties include *all* residential properties, regardless of size or type, the current legislation failed to recognize that the valuation of large residential apartment buildings (containing more than 5 units) are complex and should be treated in the same manner as when valuing commercial properties; thereby giving the Commission the same 80-day decision deadline as commercial properties rather than the 30 days provided for deciding small residential property cases (of 1 to 5 units).

The Council's action on the Commission's request to extend the Commission's decision deadline from 30 to 80 days for apartment buildings having six or more units has worked well. The legislative change now allows the Commission to have more time to review and analyze the performance of these investment properties, in the same light that the Commission affords commercial office buildings. The legislation also helps the public understand that Class 1 - residential properties includes both single-family residential dwellings *and* large apartment buildings. In the past, Class 1 properties were often thought to mean just single-family dwellings or dwellings containing no more than 5 units.

Thank you for the opportunity to respond to questions pertaining to the FY 2014 budget. Please feel free to contact me if you should have any additional questions.

Sincerely,

  
Gregory Syphax  
Chairperson