

Policies for Public Access,



Complaint Procedures,



Public Information Request



Runnels County Appraisal District
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Policies for Public Access, Complaint Procedures, and Public Information Request,

General Information

The Runnels County Appraisal District (RCAD) appraises taxable property for seventeen entities in Runnels County; including the county, cities, school districts, and special districts (such as the Runnels Emergency Services District #1). The District appraises more than 20,000 property parcels annually. The District also administers exemptions and special appraisals, and determines the taxable situs of property. The chief executive officer of the Appraisal District is the Chief Appraiser.

The governing body of the district is the Appraisal District's Board of Directors. The Appraisal District also has an Appraisal Review Board, which hears property owner protests regarding values and other related matters.

Board of Directors

A board of five directors governs the Appraisal District. Board members select the Chief Appraiser, adopt the annual district budget, select Appraisal Review Board officers, and ensure that the District follows the policies and procedures required by law. The Board's authority over appraisal matters is limited. The Board does not appraise property; make decisions affecting the appraisal roll, or review values on individual properties. The Property Tax Code assigns these tasks to the Chief Appraiser and the Appraisal Review Board.

Chief Appraiser

The Chief Appraiser is the chief administrator of the appraisal office. The Chief Appraiser and his staff appraise the properties in the appraisal district. All personnel of the appraisal office are employees of the appraisal district and are accountable to the Chief Appraiser.

Appraisal Review Board

The Appraisal Review Board is responsible for hearing and resolving protests from property owners concerning appraisal of their properties. The ARB's duties are governed by the Texas Property Tax Code.

External Reviews

Property Value Study

At least once every two years, the Comptroller conducts a study in each appraisal district to determine the degree of uniformity of and the median level of appraisals by the appraisal district within each major category of property. The Comptroller shall publish a report of the findings of the study, including in the report the median level of appraisal for each major category of property, and any other standard statistical measures that the Comptroller considers appropriate.

Financial Audits

External Audits of Runnels County Appraisal District's finances are conducted each year by external auditors. The operations portion of the district's finances are audited in addition to the agency fund. The agency fund audit covers the monies collected and disbursed by RCAD on behalf of the seventeen taxing units contracted with RCAD.

Public Access

Public Access to the Board of Directors

It is the policy of the Board of Directors to provide the public with reasonable opportunity to address the Board concerning the policies and procedures of the Appraisal District and on any issue within the Board's jurisdiction. Generally, the Board's statutory functions involve: 1. adopting the appraisal district's annual operating budget, 2. contracting for necessary services, 3. hiring a Chief Appraiser, 4. selecting Appraisal Review Board officers, 5. making general policies on the appraisal district's operation, and 6. biennially developing a written plan for the periodic reappraisal of all property.

Board Meetings

The Board of Directors of the Runnels County Appraisal District (RCAD) will meet in regular session at least six times per year in a public meeting. The meetings will be at the call of the Chairman of the board and shall be designated at the beginning of each calendar year and so posted as scheduled Board meetings. Meetings are typically on the second Thursday of the month. An agenda of such meetings shall be made public in compliance with the Texas Open Meetings Act and posted on the RCAD public website, at its office location, and at the County Courthouse. At each regularly scheduled meeting, the Chairman will announce that each person wishing to address the Board on appraisal district policies, procedures, or issues under the Board's jurisdiction may have time to speak.

Interpreters

The District will provide an interpreter at a meeting if a person who does not speak English or communicates by sign language notifies the Chief Appraiser in writing at least three business days before the meeting. The person must indicate that he or she desires to address the Board and is unable to provide an interpreter.

Access by Disabled Persons

The RCAD office is located at 505 Hutchings Avenue, Ballinger, Texas and, has van accessible parking spaces for the handicapped in front of the building. The board and ARB meeting room is also wheelchair accessible. A person who needs additional assistance for entry or access should notify the Chief Appraiser in writing at least three business days before the meeting.

Public Access Policy for Meetings

Pursuant to Section 6.04(d), Texas Property Tax Code, a reasonable period of time at the end of each meeting of the Appraisal District Board of Directors shall be provided for public comment. The period of time shall be determined at the discretion of the Chairman of the Board of Directors at each meeting.

Pursuant to Section 6.04(e), Texas Property Tax Code, the following policies have been adopted to provide public access to the Board of Directors for purposes of testimony at public meetings:

- Any non-English speaking person, deaf person, or person who has any physical, mental, or development disability desiring to appear before the Board must file a written request with the Chief Appraiser, who will schedule the person to present testimony at the next regularly scheduled board meeting. The request should indicate any special assistance or arrangement required to make the presentation to the Board possible.
- The Chief Appraiser shall have a bilingual person in the county serve as an interpreter. An interpreter shall attend any meeting of the Board of Directors in which a non-English speaking person is scheduled to testify and shall be paid an amount equal to that paid to members of the Appraisal Review Board.
- The Chief Appraiser shall coordinate with the area service council of the Texas Commission for the Deaf, in obtaining services and shall have an interpreter to attend any meeting of the Board of Directors in which a deaf person is scheduled to testify. The interpreter shall be paid an amount equal to that paid to members of the Appraisal Review Board.

Complaint Procedures

Policies for Resolving Complaints

The Board will consider written complaints about the policies and procedures of the appraisal district, the Appraisal Review Board (ARB), the Board of Directors, and any other matter within its jurisdiction. The board will not consider complaints addressing any matter that could be grounds for a challenge, protest, or correction motion before the ARB as set out in the Texas Property Tax Code. The Board has no authority to overrule the Chief Appraiser or the Appraisal Review Board's decision on a value, correction, or protest.

Complaints should be filed with:

- **Chairman, Board of Directors**
Runnels County Appraisal District
P.O. Box 524
Ballinger, Texas 76821

Any complaint requiring action by the Board must be filed through the Chief Appraiser. Said complaints will be investigated by the Chief Appraiser, who will act as the intermediary between the complaint and the Board of Directors. In order to file a complaint, the necessary steps must be taken:

1. File a written report with the Chief Appraiser. The complaint should adequately describe the situation, the person(s) involved, and the action(s) the complaint would like the Board to review.
2. The Chief Appraiser will research each complaint for all possible remedies. If the Chief Appraiser and the complainant are able to resolve the problem, the Chief Appraiser will report the problem and its resolution in the report to the Board at their next regular scheduled meeting.
If the Chief Appraiser and complainant are not able to resolve the problem, the Chief Appraiser will place the item on the agenda for their next regularly scheduled meeting.
3. In order for an unresolved complaint to be placed as an action item on the Board's agenda, adequate time must be given to notify all parties involved in the complaint, and to allow proper time to comply with Section 551.000 et sq. of the Texas Government Code concerning the Open Meetings Act.
4. If a complainant has an impairment and cannot present the complaint in writing, the complaint will be recorded and played for the Board in lieu of the written report.
5. If the complaint involves a district employee, including the Chief Appraiser, the employee will be notified of the complaint and must submit written response to be presented along with the complaint at the next regularly scheduled meeting of the Board of Directors.

If an unresolved complaint involves the operation of the Appraisal Review Board or of its members, the complaint will be submitted to the ARB Chairperson and the member of the ARB involved in the complaint, if applicable. The ARB will place on the agenda of its next regularly scheduled meeting to address the matters outlined in the complaint. The ARB Chairperson must submit a written response to a complaint concerning the operations of the Appraisal Review Board and the member involved in the complaint must submit a written response to a complaint regarding a member of the ARB. The written response will be presented along with the complaint at the next regular scheduled meeting of the Board of Directors.

All parties involved in the complaint will be allowed an opportunity to address the Board of Directors in person.

6. After hearing all the evidence in the complaint, the Board of Directors will take appropriate action beginning with appointing investigation committee and presenting the facts of the investigation to the Board at a later open meeting date. If facts in the complaint warrant legal counsel being present, the

Board reserves the discussion of the case and possible action discussion in a closed session as outlined in the Texas Government Code concerning Open Meetings Act.

7. In the event that the complaint is against the Chief Appraiser please file the through the:
Chairman, Board of Directors
Runnels County Appraisal District
P.O. Box 524
Ballinger, Texas 76821

All actions outlined in Steps 1 – 6 above will be followed.

Hearing impaired persons, deaf persons, or deaf-blind persons who have a TDD, TTY, VCO, computer, or mobile device may contact relaytexas.com or dial 7-1-1 and have a complaint delivered to the Board. At each regularly scheduled meeting, the Chief Appraiser will report to the Board on the nature and the status of all complaints filed, if there are any. Board deliberations concerning complaints will comply with the provisions of the Texas Open Meetings Act, Chapter 551, Government Code. Until final disposition of a complaint, the Board is to notify the parties at least quarterly on the status of a complaint unless notice would jeopardize an investigation.

Public Information Request

Public Information Request (Open Records Request)

The Public Information Act (formerly known as the Open Records Act) provides a mechanism for citizens to inspect or copy government records. It also provides for instances in which governmental bodies may withhold government records from the public.

Upon receipt of a public information request, a governmental body is required within ten business days to either provide access to the requested information or request an attorney general ruling on whether the information can be withheld.

If a governmental body fails to respond to your request for information or request an attorney general ruling within ten business days, you may file a written complaint with Open Records Division of the Office of the Attorney General. Please be sure to include with your complaint a copy of the original request for information and any other supporting documentation that may help us resolve your complaint. For more information on the Public Information Act, including the requirements for a valid request for public information, please see our Public Information Handbook.

Complaints can also be filed against governmental bodies that fail to comply with an attorney general ruling. Therefore, if after a reasonable amount of time, a governmental body does not release information to you in accordance with an attorney general ruling, we encourage you to send a written complaint to the Open Records Division.

Additionally, complaints may be filed against governmental bodies if requestors believe they are being overcharged for a copy or inspection of public information. The attorney general promulgates cost rules regarding the charges and methods of calculations. These rules are mandatory for all governmental bodies, except to the extent that other laws establish charges for specific kinds of information.

A complaint of overcharges must be filed no later than ten business days after the requestor knows of the occurrence of the alleged overcharge. Be sure to include a copy of the original request and any correspondence from the governmental body stating the charges. Complaints may be sent directly to Cost Rules Administrator of the Open Records Division.

Steps In Requesting Public Information (Open Records Request)

1. Your request must be in writing to the Runnels County Appraisal District (RCAD). Only written requests trigger governmental body's obligations under the Public Information Act.
2. Your request should be for documents or other information that is already in existence. RCAD is not required to answer questions, perform legal research, or comply with a continuing request to supply information on a periodic basis, as such information is prepared in the future.

Steps In Requesting Public Information (Open Records Request) CONTINUED

3. RCAD recommends all requests be sent by U.S. mail and a copy of the original request and proof of its receipt by the governmental body be kept.
4. RCAD recommends that all requests be addressed to the Chief Appraiser. Requests made by facsimile or electronic mail must be addressed to the Chief Appraiser in order to trigger an obligation under the Public Information Act.
5. If you believe that RCAD has not responded as required by the Public Information Act, we recommend that you contact the Open Records Division Hotline at (512) 478-6736 or toll-free (877) 673-6839, your local district attorney, or local county attorney.

After A Request Is Made

- RCAD must “promptly” produce public information in response to your request. “Promptly” means that a governmental body may take a reasonable amount of time to produce the information, which varies depending on the facts in each case. The amount of information you have requested is highly relevant to what makes for reasonable response time.
- The Public Information Act prohibits RCAD from asking you why you want the information you have requested. RCAD may however, ask you to clarify your request if they are uncertain as to what you want, and they may discuss with you how the scope of your request may be narrowed if you have requested a large amount of information.

If RCAD wishes to withhold information from you, it must:

1. Seek an attorney general decision within ten business days of its receipt of request and state the exceptions to disclosure that it believes are applicable. RCAD must also send you a copy of its letter to the attorney general requesting a decision within ten business days. If RCAD does not notify you of its request for an attorney general decision, the information you requested is generally presumed to be open to the public.
2. Within fifteen business days of your receiving request, RCAD must send the attorney general its arguments for withholding the information you requested and copies of the information you have requested. You are entitled to receive this notice however, if the letter to the attorney general contains the substance of the information requested, you may receive a redacted copy of the letter. If RCAD does not send you a copy of this letter, you may request it from the attorney general by writing to:

Every attempt will be made by RCAD to provide you information to you in a timely manner as required by law. We will communicate with you for any reason we cannot comply as required. Please address all questions concerning our performance in meeting your request directly to the Chief Appraiser.