

**SUBCHAPTER G: REQUESTS FOR CONTESTED CASE HEARING AND
PUBLIC COMMENT ON CERTAIN APPLICATIONS**

**§§55.250 - 55.256
Effective March 24, 2016**

§55.250. Applicability.

This subchapter applies to applications filed with the commission except applications filed under Texas Water Code, Chapter 26 or 27, Texas Health and Safety Code, Chapter 361 or 382, Texas Water Code, Chapter 13, or Texas Water Code, §§11.036, 11.041, or 12.013. Any permit application that is declared administratively complete on or after September 1, 1999 is subject to this subchapter.

Adopted September 29, 1999

Effective October 20, 1999

§55.251. Requests for Contested Case Hearing, Public Comment.

(a) The following may request a contested case hearing under this section:

- (1) the commission;
- (2) the executive director;
- (3) the applicant; and
- (4) affected persons, when authorized by law.

(b) A request for a contested case hearing by an affected person must be in writing and be filed by United States mail, facsimile, or hand delivery with the chief clerk within the time provided by subsection (d) of this section.

(c) A hearing request must substantially comply with the following:

(1) give the name, address, and daytime telephone number of the person who files the request. If the request is made by a group or association, the request must identify one person by name, address, daytime telephone number and, where possible, fax number, who shall be responsible for receiving all official communications and documents for the group.

(2) identify the person's personal justiciable interest affected by the application, including a brief, but specific, written statement explaining in plain language the requestor's location and distance relative to the activity that is the subject

of the application and how and why the requestor believes he or she will be affected by the activity in a manner not common to members of the general public;

(3) request a contested case hearing; and

(4) provide any other information specified in the public notice of application.

(d) Deadline for hearing requests; public comment period. A hearing request must be filed with the chief clerk within the time period specified in the notice. The public comment period shall also end at the end of this time period. The time period shall end as specified in §55.152 of this title (relating to Public Comment Period).

(e) Documents that are filed with the chief clerk that comment on an application but that do not request a hearing will be treated as public comment.

(f) Late filed hearing requests and public comment, extensions.

(1) A hearing request or public comment shall be processed under §55.254 of this title (relating to Hearing Request Processing) or under §55.253 of this title (relating to Public Comment Processing), respectively, if it is filed by the deadline for hearing requests and public comment. The chief clerk shall accept a hearing request or public comment that is filed after the deadline but the chief clerk shall not process it. The chief clerk shall place the late documents in the file for the application.

(2) The commission may extend the time allowed for filing a hearing request.

(g) There is no right to a hearing on an application for a weather modification license or permit under Texas Water Code, Chapter 18.

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Effective October 20, 1999

§55.252. Request by Group or Association.

(a) A group or association may request a contested case hearing only if the group or association meets all of the following requirements:

(1) one or more members of the group or association would otherwise have standing to request a hearing in their own right;

(2) the interests the group or association seeks to protect are germane to the organization's purpose; and

(3) neither the claim asserted nor the relief requested requires the participation of the individual members in the case.

(b) The executive director, the public interest counsel, or the applicant may request that a group or association provide an explanation of how the group or association meets the requirements of subsection (a) of this section. The request and response shall be filed according to the procedure in §55.254 of this title (relating to Hearing Request Processing).

Adopted September 29, 1999

Effective October 20, 1999

§55.253. Public Comment Processing.

(a) The chief clerk shall deliver or mail to the applicant, the executive director, the public interest counsel, the Office of Public Assistance, and the Alternative Dispute Resolution Office, copies of all documents filed with the chief clerk in response to public notice of an application.

(b) The commission may designate an agency office to process public comment under this subsection.

(1) The Office of Public Assistance may evaluate and respond to public comment and hearing requests, when appropriate.

(A) If the application and timely hearing requests are considered by the commission, the designated office will prepare any required response to public comment, no later than ten days before the commission meeting at which the commission will evaluate the hearing requests. The response shall be made available to the public and filed with the chief clerk.

(B) If the application is approved by the executive director under Chapter 50, Subchapter G of this title (relating to Action by the Executive Director), any required response to public comment should be made no later than the time of the executive director's action on the application.

(2) The Office of Public Assistance shall hold a public meeting when there is a significant degree of public interest or when otherwise appropriate to assure adequate public participation. A public meeting is intended for the taking of public comment, and is not a contested case under the APA. The applicant shall attend any

such public meeting held by the designated office. When the designated office holds a public meeting it shall respond to public comment either by giving an immediate oral response or by preparing a written response. The response shall be made available to the public.

Adopted September 29, 1999

Effective October 20, 1999

§55.254. Hearing Request Processing.

(a) The requirements in this section and §55.255 of this title (relating to Commission Action on Hearing Request) apply only to hearing requests that are filed within the time period specified in §55.251(d) of this title (relating to Requests for Contested Case Hearing, Public Comment).

(b) The executive director shall file a statement with the chief clerk indicating that technical review of the application is complete. The executive director will file the statement with the chief clerk either before or after public notice of the application is issued.

(c) After a hearing request is filed and the executive director has filed a statement that technical review of the application is complete, the chief clerk shall process the hearing request by both:

(1) referring the application and hearing request to the alternative dispute resolution director. The alternative dispute resolution director shall try to resolve any dispute between the applicant and the person making the request for hearing; and

(2) scheduling the hearing request for a commission meeting. The chief clerk shall attempt to schedule the request for a commission meeting that will be held approximately 44 days after the later of the following:

(A) the deadline to request a hearing specified in the public notice of the application; or

(B) the date the executive director filed the statement that technical review is complete.

(d) The chief clerk shall mail notice to the applicant, executive director, public interest counsel, and the persons making a timely hearing request at least 35 days before the first meeting at which the commission considers the request. The chief clerk shall explain how the person may submit public comment to the executive director, describe

alternative dispute resolution under commission rules, explain that the agency may hold a public meeting, and explain the requirements of this chapter.

(e) The executive director, the public interest counsel, and the applicant may submit written responses to the hearing request no later than 23 days before the commission meeting at which the commission will evaluate the hearing request. Responses shall be filed with the chief clerk, and served on the same day to the applicant, the executive director, the public interest counsel, the Office of Public Assistance, and any persons filing hearing requests.

(f) The person who filed the hearing request may submit a written reply to a response no later than nine days before the scheduled commission meeting at which the commission will evaluate the hearing request. A reply may also contain additional information responding to the letter by the chief clerk required by subsection (d) of this section. A reply shall be filed with the chief clerk, and served on the same day to the executive director, the public interest counsel, and the applicant.

(g) The executive director or the applicant may file a request with the chief clerk that the application be sent directly to SOAH for a hearing on the application. If a request is filed under this subsection, the commission's scheduled consideration of the hearing request will be canceled. An application may only be sent to SOAH under this subsection if the executive director, the applicant, the public interest counsel and all timely hearing requestors agree on a list of issues and a maximum expected duration of the hearing.

Adopted September 29, 1999

Effective October 20, 1999

§55.255. Commission Action on Hearing Request.

(a) The determination of the validity of a hearing request is not, in itself, a contested case subject to the Texas Administrative Procedure Act (APA). The commission will evaluate the hearing request at the scheduled commission meeting, and may:

(1) determine that a hearing request does not meet the requirements of this subchapter, and act on the application;

(2) determine that the hearing request does not meet the requirements of this subchapter, and refer the application to a public meeting to develop public comment before acting on the application;

(3) determine that a hearing request meets the requirements of this subchapter, and direct the chief clerk to refer the application to the State Office of Administrative Hearings (SOAH) for a hearing; or

(4) direct the chief clerk to refer the hearing request to SOAH. The referral may specify that SOAH should prepare a recommendation on the sole question of whether the request meets the requirements of this subchapter. The referral may also direct SOAH to proceed with a hearing on the application if the judge finds that a hearing request meets the requirements of this chapter. If the commission refers the hearing request to SOAH it shall be processed as a contested case under the APA.

(b) A request for a contested case hearing shall be granted if the request is:

(1) made by the applicant or the executive director; or

(2) made by an affected person if the request:

(A) complies with the requirements of §55.251 of this title (relating to Requests for Contested Case Hearing, Public Comment);

(B) is timely filed with the chief clerk; and

(C) is pursuant to a right to hearing authorized by law.

(c) The commission may refer an application to SOAH if there is no hearing request complying with this subchapter, if the commission determines that a hearing would be in the public interest.

(d) A decision on a hearing request is an interlocutory decision on the validity of the request and is not binding on the issue of designation of parties under §80.109 of this title (relating to Designation of Parties). A person whose hearing request is denied may still seek to be admitted as a party under §80.109 of this title if any hearing request is granted on an application. Failure to seek party status shall be deemed a withdrawal of a person's hearing request.

(e) If all requests for contested case hearing are denied, §80.272 of this title (relating to Motion for Rehearing) applies. A motion for rehearing in such a case must be filed not later than 25 days after the date that the commission's final decision or order is signed, unless the time for filing the motion for rehearing has been extended under Texas Government Code, §2001.142 and §80.276 of this title (relating to Request for Extension to File Motion for Rehearing), by agreement under Texas Government Code, §2001.147, or by the commission's written order issued pursuant to Texas Government Code, §2001.146(e). If the motion is denied under §80.272 and §80.273 of this title (relating to Motion for Rehearing and Decision Final and Appealable), the commission's decision is final and appealable under Texas Water Code, §5.351, Texas Health and Safety Code, §401.341, or under the APA.

Adopted March 3, 2016

Effective March 24, 2016

§55.256. Determination of Affected Person

(a) For any application, an affected person is one who has a personal justiciable interest related to a legal right, duty, privilege, power, or economic interest affected by the application. An interest common to members of the general public does not qualify as a personal justiciable interest.

(b) Except as provided by §55.103 of this title (relating to Definitions), governmental entities, including local governments and public agencies, with authority under state law over issues contemplated by the application may be considered affected persons.

(c) All relevant factors shall be considered, including, but not limited to, the following:

(1) whether the interest claimed is one protected by the law under which the application will be considered;

(2) distance restrictions or other limitations imposed by law on the affected interest;

(3) whether a reasonable relationship exists between the interest claimed and the activity regulated;

(4) likely impact of the regulated activity on the health, safety, and use of property of the person;

(5) likely impact of the regulated activity on use of the impacted natural resource by the person; and

(6) for governmental entities, their statutory authority over or interest in the issues relevant to the application.

Adopted April 11, 2012

Effective May 3, 2012