



BOARD OF TAX APPEALS

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## Public Board Meeting

February 17, 2023

9:30 a.m.

Board of Tax Appeals

### Minutes

**Attendees:** Claire Hesselholt, Chair; Rosann Fitzpatrick, Member; Ross Petersen, Executive Director

**Identified Members of the Public:** Gilda Felizardo, Trish Johnson, Mark Pree, Keri Lamb, Jasmine Bruns, Mathew Randazzo, Rachel McDaniel, Mike Turner, Ashley Rivera, and Thomas Goldsmith

#### Call to Order

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- Meeting called to order at 9:31 a.m.
- Approved agenda
- Approved minutes for December 16, 2022

#### Discussion Topics

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##### Introduction of New Board member Matthew Randazzo

- Matthew Randazzo has been appointed to the Board by the Governor. His six-year term begins March 2, 2023.

##### Director Report

- Case Scheduling Update
  - Rachel McDaniel gave information on cases currently scheduled in March 2023.
  - Case requiring American Sign Language interpreter has been scheduled for April.
  - The Board asked for information on how gaps in the schedule from hearings being canceled or rescheduled are filled.
    - We are required to send a hearing notice no less than 20 days prior to the hearing date, so gaps are filled when time permits.
    - There are also some limitations as to what can be scheduled based on the availability of parties.
- Statistics Update
  - Ross Petersen provided information on the number of cases filed, heard, decided, and closed in the month of January.
  - The statistics for days filed to heard was questioned. The Board would like the process for gathering this information adjusted.
  - Administrative staff will work with Ross and the Board to update how the information for Formal cases is tracked going forward.
- OneNote
  - Keri Lamb gave an update on the progress of converting agency files from DocuPhase to OneNote.

- Administrative staff are on schedule for converting files.
- Updates to the process are being made as feedback from Tax Referees and the Board are received.
- DocuPhase contract expires at the end of June 2023.
- CaTS Replacement
  - Ross and Administrative staff have met with one vendor to review a product for possible replacement of the CaTS program.
  - One more meeting is scheduled for February 27, 2023. Meetings are being scheduled with other vendors as well.
  - Most off the shelf products seem to be geared more toward law firms. Our focus in the meetings is to find a product that features that are most useful to our agency, so we are not paying for features we do not use.
  - The goal is to have a new system by the end of calendar year 2023.
- Personnel Evaluations
  - Annual personnel evaluations are scheduled to begin in March for all staff.
  - Evaluations will be different compared to last year. We will be following DES guidelines and using the approved DES forms.
  - Staff can expect to receive a copy of their Position Descriptions and evaluation forms to review in preparation.
  - The Board discussed possible additions and guidelines for the evaluations.
    - The Board will review the DES forms and provide input on the standards and key points they would like reviewed and discussed for each position.
- Weekly In-Office Workday
  - In preparation of the agency 6-year plan report for OFM, we have been asked to participate in an office usage survey.
  - Most Board employees are currently working in a hybrid capacity and all employees currently have assigned workstations.
  - The type of work done by Tax Referees is not conducive of a shared workspace environment.
  - It is suggested that all employees be required to work in-office at least one a day a week. This will allow for more interaction between employees and scheduling of regular staff meetings.
  - The Board approved and will review the hearing calendar to determine the best day to implement this change.
- Open Tax Referee Positions
  - With the appointment of Matthew to the Board there are now 2 vacant Tax Referee positions.
  - The Board will review the Position Description for the job postings and hope to have the positions posted to careers.wa.gov within the next week.
- Legislative Update
  - Claire gave an update on the progress of SB 5578.

- Miscellaneous Business: Ross discussed the possible dispute of a former employee's unemployment claim. The Employment Security Department (ESD) approved unemployment benefits for a former BTA employee without sending notice to the Board of the claim. The Board followed the available channels to dispute the claim as soon as it became aware of its existence in November of 2021. The Board has continued to follow up with ESD and has just now received a response and information on our rights to dispute the claim now.  
The process to dispute the claim now would involve appealing the claim to ESD, which would hold a hearing on the dispute. After discussions with ESD and DES on the process and potential amount the agency would recoup, Ross suggests to the Board that given the potential cost and concerns regarding previous dealings with this employee that the Board not pursue the dispute. The Board agreed with the recommendation.
- Future Agenda Items: Evaluations, CaTS, OneNote, Statistics, In-Office workday
- Public Comments: None
- At 10:26 a.m. the meeting adjourned.