

# Forward Township Newsletter Supplement

## Re: Real Estate Assessment Appeals

Issued February 26, 2019

In 2018, and in all prior years, if a resident of Allegheny County wanted to Appeal the Assessed Value of his or her Real Estate it was necessary to file all of the necessary forms, AND then go to downtown Pittsburgh for an Appeals hearing. The travel downtown, the cost of parking, and the long walk from the parking garage to the County Office Building made that project an intimidating endeavor. That has Now changed!

**The Change:** In 2019 residents of the following five municipalities will no longer need to travel downtown to Appeal their Real Estate's Assessed Valuation:

1. Forward Township.
2. Elizabeth Township.
3. Borough of Elizabeth.
4. Borough of West Elizabeth.
5. The City of Clairton.

**Beginning in 2019 the Assessment Appeal hearings for the homes of residents in these five municipalities can be scheduled to occur in the Forward Township Municipal Building.**

**Some background:** In August of 2018, at the Forward County Community Days Weekend, as I usually do at that event, I spent an hour or so with Allegheny County **Executive Rich Fitzgerald**. We talked about Township Issues, County Issues, etc. During that conversation I asked Rich if he would support an effort to have County Property Real Estate Assessment Appeal Hearings for local municipalities conducted in Forward Township. He said he would, and as he always has, he kept his word.

During the next several months I communicated with one or more of the elected officials from the six municipalities listed above about this project. Every person I talked with supported the idea.

**Recent Developments:** On January 18, 2019, at the Forward Township Municipal Building, Supervisor "Skrinny" Skrinjorich and I met with four Staff representing the Allegheny County Administrative Services and the Office of Property Assessments. Also in attendance were the following: Tim Joyce, Chief of Staff for **Senator James Brewster** and Thomas Treadwell, the Forward Township computer person. The purpose of the meeting was to assess the suitability of the site and to discuss any unresolved aspects of the project.

The purpose of this meeting was to discuss having Real Estate Assessment Appeal Hearings conducted inside the Forward Township Municipal Building. The actual discussion covered that subject and much more. Not only are there going to be Appeal Hearings conducted in the Forward Township Municipal Building, the residents of the five municipalities listed above are also going to have the following Appeal Hearing options to choose from:

1. **By Telephone:** If a resident of one of the six communities **makes a written request** that resident may have his or her Appeal Hearing conducted by telephone! In this case the resident would submit their appeal application and discuss it with the hearing officer **over the telephone from their Home.**

I would like to be able to say that Supervisor Skrinjorich (aka Skrinny) or I developed this "do the Appeal by Telephone" idea, but alas, we did not. It was developed by the staff of Allegheny

County Administrative Services and the Office of Property Assessments well prior to our meeting last month.

It looks like they thought that when they implemented the Project we proposed (to do Appeal Hearings remotely in Forward Township) to them, it would be a good time to roll out the telephone idea they had previously developed. The thought behind that approach was sound: they could test their telephone idea, along with our proposed idea, on a limited basis - in case unforeseen problems developed.

2. **In Forward Township Municipal Building:** If a resident of one of the five listed municipalities **makes a written request**, their Real Estate Assessment Appeal Hearings can be conducted in the Forward Township Municipal Building. Dates and Times to be Announced.
3. **Using Skype:** If a resident of one of the six communities **makes a written request that resident may have his or her Appeal Hearing conducted using SKYPE!** For anyone not familiar, SKYPE allows you to see the Hearing Officer (on a TV screen) while you talk to him / her during the Hearing, and for him to see you. There will be a SKYPE set-up in the Forward Township Municipal Building for anyone who is not set-up to use this method in their home.

Although anyone can use the Skype option, it was developed especially to accommodate residents who have hearing impairments that make talking on the telephone difficult, and for those who just like to see who they are talking to.

4. **No Change:** If a resident wishes he or she can still go downtown for their Hearing. If you make no request regarding your preference of your Hearing's time & place your hearing will automatically be scheduled to happen in the City Office Building.

**NOTE:** I have highlighted the words "**makes a written request**" to emphasize the following: you **must** write, immediately above the word **APPELLANT** on the "2019 Application Appeal Form"**\*\***, **how** and / or **where** you would like to have your Hearing scheduled, **AND** your telephone number. If you do not make a specific written request on your Application Appeal Form, your Hearing will be scheduled to occur in downtown Pittsburgh.

**\*\*** the word **APPELLANT** is located on left hand side of the form, about half way down the page. See attachment with appropriate location highlighted in Yellow.

**NOTE:** In regard to the first 3 items listed above: This is the **first** time these options were ever made available to every resident in any Municipality (or group of Municipalities).

**Important Limitation:** The Hearings scheduled to occur in Forward Township would be limited to Appeal Applications submitted by residential real estate owned by residents. All commercial property hearings will continue be held in the County Office Building.