

NEWTON CENTRAL APPRAISAL DISTRICT
CITIZEN COMPLAINT POLICY

INFORMAL PROCESS	The Board encourages citizens to discuss their concerns and resolve their complaints through informal conferences with the Chief Appraiser.
	Concerns should be expressed as soon as possible to allow early resolution at the lowest possible administrative level.
FORMAL PROCESS	If an informal conference regarding a complaint fails to reach the outcome requested by the complainant, he or she may initiate the formal process described below by timely filing a written complaint form.
	Even after initiating the formal complaint process, complainants are encouraged to seek informal resolution of their concerns. A complainant whose concerns are resolved may withdraw a formal complaint at any time.
	The process described in this policy shall not be construed to create new or additional rights beyond those granted by law or Board policy, nor to require a full evidentiary hearing or "mini-trial" at any level.
FREEDOM FROM RETALIATION	Neither the Board nor any District employee shall unlawfully retaliate against a citizen for bringing a concern or complaint.
NOTICE TO CITIZENS	The Chief Appraiser shall inform citizens of this policy. This policy shall apply to all citizen complaints.
DEFINITIONS	For purposes of this policy, terms are defined as follows:
COMPLAINT / GRIEVANCE	The term "district" shall mean the Newton Central Appraisal District. The terms "complaint" and "grievance" shall have the same meaning. A complaint under this policy may include: Specific allegations of adverse action based on the citizen's good faith report to an appropriate law enforcement authority of a violation of a law by the District or a citizen, i.e., "whistleblower complaints." Any other matter within the jurisdiction of the Board.

FILING	Complaint forms and appeal notices may be filed by hand-delivery, fax, or U.S. Mail. Hand-delivered filings shall be timely filed if received by the Chief Administrator or designee by the close of business on the deadline. Fax filings shall be timely filed if they are received on or before the deadline, as indicated by the date/time shown on the fax copy. Mail filings shall be timely filed if they are postmarked by U.S. Mail on the deadline and received by the Chief Appraiser or designated representative no more than three (3) days after the deadline.
RESPONSE	"Response" shall mean a written communication to the complainant from the Chief Administrator. Responses may be hand-delivered or sent by U.S. Mail to the complainant's mailing address of record. Mailed responses shall be timely if they are postmarked by U.S. Mail on the deadline and received by the complainant or designated representative no more than three (3) days after the response deadline.
DAYS	"Days" shall mean District business days. In calculating time lines under this policy, the day a document is filed is "day zero," and all deadlines shall be determined by counting the following day as "day one."
REPRESENTATIVE	"Representative" means any person who is designated by the complainant to represent him or her in the complaint process.
	The complainant may designate a representative through written notice to the District at any level of this process. If the complainant designates a representative with fewer than three (3) days' notice to the District before a scheduled conference or hearing, the District may reschedule the conference or hearing to a later date, if desired, in order to include the District's counsel.
WHISTLEBLOWER COMPLAINTS	Whistleblower complaints shall be filed within the time specified by law. If applicable, time lines for the complainant and the District set out in this policy may be shortened to allow the Board to make a final decision within sixty (60) days of the initiation of the complaint.
GENERAL PROVISIONS	Complaints arising out of an event or a series of related events shall be addressed in one complaint. Complainants shall not bring separate or serial complaints arising from any event or series of events that have been or could have been addressed in a previous complaint.
	When two (2) or more complaints are sufficiently similar in nature and remedy sought to permit their resolution through one proceeding, the

	District may consolidate the complaints.
UNTIMELY FILINGS	<p>All time limits shall be strictly followed unless modified by mutual written consent.</p> <p>If a complaint form or appeal notice is not timely filed, the complaint may be dismissed, on written notice to the complainant, at any point during the complaint process. The complainant may appeal the dismissal by seeking review in writing within ten days, starting at the level at which the complaint was dismissed. Such appeal shall be limited to the issue of timeliness.</p>
COSTS INCURRED	Each party shall pay its own costs incurred in the course of the complaint.
COMPLAINT FORM	Complaints under this policy shall be submitted in writing on a form provided by the District.
	Copies of any documents that support the complaint should be attached to the complaint form. The necessary forms are available at the Newton Central Appraisal District building at 109 Court Street, Newton, Texas between the hours of 8:00 a.m. and 4:30 p.m., Monday through Friday. After the complaint conference, no new documents may be submitted unless the complainant did not know the documents existed before the conference.
	A complaint form that is incomplete in any material aspect may be dismissed, but may be refiled with all the requested information if the refiling is within the designated time for filing a complaint.
LEVEL ONE	<p>Complaint forms must be filed:</p> <p>Within fifteen (15) days of the date the complainant first knew, or with reasonable diligence should have known, of the decision or action giving rise to the complaint or grievance; and</p> <p>With the lowest level administrator who has the authority to remedy the alleged problem.</p>
	If the complaint is not filed with the appropriate administrator, the receiving administrator must note the date and time the complaint form was received and immediately forward the complaint form to the appropriate administrator.

	The Chief Administrator shall hold a conference within ten (10) days after receipt of the written complaint. The parties may agree, in writing, to extend the time in which to hold the conference after receipt of the written complaint.
	The administrator shall have ten (10) days following the conference to provide a written response. The parties may agree, in writing, to extend the time in which to provide a written response after the conference.
APPEAL	If the complainant did not receive the relief requested or if the time for a response has expired, the complainant may appeal the decision to the Board.
	The appeal notice must be filed in writing, on a form provided by the District, within ten days after receipt of a response or, if no response was received, within ten days of the response deadline.
	The Chief Appraiser or designee shall inform the complainant of the date, time, and place of the Board meeting at which the complaint will be on the agenda for presentation to the Board.
	The Chief Appraiser or designee shall provide the Board with copies of the complaint form, all responses, all appeal notices, and all written documentation previously submitted by the complainant or the administration. The Board shall consider only those issues and documents presented at original complaint conference or hearing and identified in the appeal notice.
	The District shall determine whether the complaint will be presented in open or closed meeting in accordance with the Texas Open Meetings Act and other applicable law.
	The presiding officer may set reasonable time limits and guidelines for the presentation. The Board shall hear the complaint and may request that the administration provide an explanation for the decisions at the preceding levels. In addition to any other record of the Board meeting required by law, the Board shall prepare a separate record of the appeal presentation. The appeal presentation, including the presentation by the complainant or the complainant's representative, any presentation from the Chief Appraiser or designee, and questions from the Board with responses, shall be recorded by audio recording, video/audio recording, or court reporter.

	<p>The Board shall then consider the complaint. It may give notice of its decision orally or in writing at any time up to and including the next regularly scheduled Board meeting. If for any reason the Board fails to reach a decision regarding the complaint by the end of the next regularly scheduled meeting, the lack of a response by the Board upholds the administrative decision of the Chief Appraiser.</p>
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NEWTON CENTRAL APPRAISAL DISTRICT

109 Court Street, Newton, Texas 75966
409/379-3710 Phone or 409/379-4020 Fax

COMPLAINT FORM – LEVEL ONE

To file a formal complaint, please fill out this form completely and submit it by hand delivery, fax or U. S. mail to the Chief Appraiser within the time established in Appraisal District policy. All complaints will be heard in accordance with established Appraisal District policy or any exceptions outlined therein.

1. Name _____

Address _____

Telephone Number _____

2. If you will be represented in voicing your complaint, please identify the person representing you.

Name _____

Address _____

Telephone Number _____

3. Please describe the decision or circumstances which is the basis for your complaint (give specific factual details).

4. What was the date of the decision or circumstances which is the basis for your complaint? _____

5. Please explain how you have been harmed by this decision or circumstance.

6. Please describe any efforts you have made to resolve your complaint informally and the responses to your efforts.

7. With whom did you communicate? _____ Date _____

8. Please describe the outcome or remedy you seek for this complaint.

Signature of Complainant _____

Signature of Complainant Representative _____

Date of filing _____

Complainant, please note:

A complaint form that is incomplete in any material way may be dismissed, but may be refiled with all the required information if the refiling is within the designated time for filing a complaint.

Attach to this form any documents you believe will support the complaint; if unavailable when you submit this form, they may be presented no later than the Level One conference. Please keep a copy of the completed form and any supporting documentation for your records.