



**For Immediate Release**

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**\*\*\*PUBLIC SERVICE ANNOUNCEMENT\*\*\***

**SIMPLIFYING THE ASSESSMENT APPEALS PROCESS  
FOR HOMEOWNERS**

**SAN FRANCISCO** – Along with the Assessment Appeals Board, Assessor Carmen Chu announced a new effort targeted at simplifying and expediting assessment appeals for homeowners in San Francisco. This fiscal year, the Assessment Appeals Board will introduce a new “Hearing Officer” process for single family homes and condominiums. Rather than appearing before a full panel of Assessment Appeals Board members, this new process is an added option which allows homeowners to present their case first before a hearing officer who has the same authority to hear cases and provide temporary property tax reductions. The Hearing Officer process allows for quicker and more streamlined hearings as they are narrowly focused on single family home and condominiums only. In addition, the Hearing Officer program will be available after hours to allow homeowners more flexibility in having cases heard after work. Homeowners retain the right to appeals the Hearing Officer decision to a full panel of the Assessment Appeals Board.

“For many homeowners struggling to keep their homes, the process of waiting for two years to have their property tax appeals heard is an extreme hardship. At the same time, the City has been challenged to flex to meet a four-fold increase in demand for appeals,” expressed Assessor Carmen Chu. “That is why I am excited to introduce this new effort, just approved in the budget, which allows for a new Hearing Officer process to be implemented this year. It means homeowners will be able to get their cases resolved more quickly and provides flexibility for working San Franciscans.”

In 2012, a joint effort was initiated through the Controller’s City Services Auditors (CSA) to evaluate the assessment appeals process. The effort mapped the appeals process from the beginning, when appeals are first filed, to the end, including the issuance of tax refunds. The effort involved the Assessment Appeals Board, Assessor, Treasurer-Tax Collector and Controller. The Hearing Officer program was one of the recommendations identified to improve the process and reduce bottlenecks to achieve improved taxpayer service.

In July, all properties receive an annual notice of assessed value by mail and property owners may contest the value to the independently appointed Assessment Appeals Board (AAB) by September 15th. The number of assessment appeals filed skyrocketed immediately after the economic downturn in 2008. Whereas the number of filed appeals averaged 1,000 cases annually before 2008, the number

of appeals increased by 600% to over 6,000 cases in two years. The high level of appeals filed persisted through 2014 presenting significant challenges to the existing system of appeals. Many taxpayers could not receive a hearing for years.

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