

# How to Prepare for an Informal Hearing After Filing a Protest

*O'Connor discusses what to do after filing a protest and preparing for an informal hearing.*

HOUSTON, TX, UNITED STATES, April 24, 2026 /EINPresswire.com/ -- Thanks to rising values and taxes across the state, Texans are using property tax appeals at a pace never seen before in the state. Even with extensive overhauls to homestead, over-65, and disabled persons' exemptions, the pressure remains on every homeowner and business to bring costs under control. For homeowners, property taxes are one of the highest recurring costs in Texas, and appeals can work alongside exemptions to further reduce the tax burden. With the influx of new protesters this year, many are wondering what happens after an appeal is filed.



Now that You've Filed Your Protest, How to Prepare for Your Informal Hearing

The first step on the protest ladder is the informal hearing. This meeting with an appraisal district representative is an important first step to tax reduction, and is often the only step a taxpayer needs. O'Connor will go over what property owners need to do to get ready for this meeting and how to maximize savings.

### What is an Informal Hearing?

An informal hearing is a meeting between a taxpayer and a representative of the appraisal district. In the meeting, the taxpayer will discuss their property and appraisal with the representative, in hopes of getting a correction or a reduction. This is dependent on the evidence that the taxpayer brings. Some appraisal districts are quite open to informal appeals and will offer settlements easily. Others are much stingier when it comes to reductions and settlements.

This makes being prepared paramount to achieving a reduction in any informal appeal. This simple hearing also acts as a gateway to more organized forms of protest, including formal hearings and litigation.

### Decide on the Grounds of the Argument

In Texas, there are three types of grounds that can be used to argue a case. First, there are informational errors, such as missing exemptions, the wrong square footage, an incorrect owner's name, overvaluation of market value, or other basic errors. Then there is unequal appraisal, where the home or business is assessed above that of neighbors with similar properties. Finally, there is excessive assessment or appraisal, which is when the property is appraised beyond its realistic sale value. By choosing a ground, property owners can tailor the evidence and the argument to best fit what owners are trying to accomplish.

### Review Evidence

The core of every appeal is evidence. Since informal appeals are handled directly with the appraisal district itself, owners will need to stack the deck in their favor as much as possible. This is where building and organizing evidence comes in. The more owners have on their side, the better chance they have of achieving a favorable outcome. By choosing the grounds, they know what to build toward. If the main issue is a factual one, then they need to be able to prove this. For instance, if the home is listed as larger than it actually is, owners may need an independent survey or inspection to prove the true size. If there is an issue with nonexistent improvements, then photography can also be a benefit.

When challenging overassessment, this will take a lot more effort. The condition of the property will need to be documented with photographs, repair estimates, and other documentation pointing to deferred maintenance should also be gathered. The most important documentation to collect is sales records in your neighborhood. These should be from properties that share as many characteristics of the owners as possible, including age of construction, size, number of rooms, and location. The more comparable sales the owners can find, the better.

If the owner wishes to prove unequal appraisal, they will need to have gathered several appraisals from around their general area. These appraisals will need to follow the same rules as the sales comparables. It is best to also photograph these properties, so that conditions and improvements can be documented and then compared to yours. It is usually best to have around five comparables.

### Be Informative and Civil

When meeting with the appraisal district representative, it is imperative to act politely. This is not a place for confrontation, and this meeting is meant to iron out any errors, issues, or irregularities. The evidence should do all of the talking for the owner, so they will simply need to

state the facts. By having a goal in the grounds they selected, and by backing it up with data, they are in the best position to get a reduction. Unlike the ARB, the informal meeting should be quick and straightforward.

## The Settlement Offer

If the evidence is satisfactory and the appraisal district is willing to deal, then they may be offered an informal settlement. This is a reduction in the taxable value, which would then lead to lower taxes. When owners receive the settlement offer, they must review it and see if it meets their expectations or needs. Most property tax appeals are settled at this level, and it is possible that all of the goals could be met after the one meeting. However, if owners take the settlement, then the appeal journey ends. If owners wish to get a better reduction, or an informal meeting ended without a settlement, then the next option is to move on to a formal hearing with the ARB.

## Going to the ARB

The second stage in the tax protest journey is a formal hearing. This is done with the county's ARB, which is an impartial trio of real estate experts that will judge the case based on the evidence versus the evidence of the appraisal district. ARB hearings are much more rigid, and the evidence brought to the table must be refined and organized in a much more comprehensive manner. Unlike informal meetings, formal hearings typically take much longer, usually around 30 minutes.

## Common Mistakes to Avoid:

Having little or no evidence.

Being confrontational or unprofessional in the hearing.

Not using the correct grounds that fit the evidence and situation.

Arguing against issues that are beyond the scope of the hearing, such as high tax rates.

## About O'Connor:

O'Connor is one of the largest property tax consulting firms, representing 185,000 clients in 49 states and Canada, handling about 295,000 protests in 2024, with residential property tax reduction services in Texas, Illinois, Georgia, and New York. O'Connor's possesses the resources and market expertise in the areas of property tax, cost segregation, commercial and residential real estate appraisals. The firm was founded in 1974 and employs a team of 1,000 worldwide. O'Connor's core focus is enriching the lives of property owners through cost effective tax reduction.

Property owners interested in assistance appealing their assessment can enroll in O'Connor's Property Tax Protection Program™. There is no upfront fee, or any fee unless we reduce your property taxes, and easy online enrollment only takes 2 to 3 minutes.

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