



# Thurston Conservation District

## RESOLUTION

Resolution #2019-12

Subject: Rates & Charges – Establishing a Process for Landowner Appeals of Rates and Charges

**A RESOLUTION OF THE BOARD OF SUPERVISORS OF THURSTON CONSERVATION DISTRICT, RELATING TO A SYSTEM OF RATES AND CHARGES; ESTABLISHING A PROCESS TO PROVIDE FOR LAND OWNER APPEALS OF RATES AND CHARGES AS APPLICABLE TO A PARCEL OR PARCELS; AND, PROVIDING FOR OTHER MATTERS PROPERLY RELATED THERE TO ALL AS MORE PARTICULARLY SET FORTH HEREIN.**

**THE BOARD OF SUPERVISORS OF THURSTON CONSERVATION DISTRICT, WASHINGTON, does hereby resolves as follows:**

### **SECTION 1. FINDINGS AND DETERMINATIONS.**

**The Board of Supervisors (the “Board”) of Thurston Conservation District, Thurston County, Washington (the “District”) hereby makes the following findings and determinations:**

- 1.1. By Resolution No. 2019-11, the District has proposed to Thurston County (“County”) a system of rates and charges to pay for the costs of carrying out the District’s programs, services and Conversation Projects, pursuant to Chapter 60, Laws of 2012.
- 1.2 Chapter 60, Laws of 2012 provides that the District shall establish by resolution a process for landowner appeals of rates or charges (collectively, “rates”) as applicable to a parcel or parcels.
- 1.3 The process authorized by the Legislature for the District’s collection of rates is through the Thurston County-managed property tax statement. This Resolution establishes an appeal process, as required by Chapter 60, Laws of 2012, that is available to owners of property following receipt of annual property tax statements.

### **SECTION 2. APPEAL OF RATES.**

- 2.1 Any person subject to rates as proposed by Resolution No. 2019-11, may appeal a rate by applying in writing to the District. The rate appealed must first be paid. Filing an appeal does not extend the period for payment of the rate. Delinquent accounts will not be acted upon until paid in full.
- 2.2 An appeal and request for a bill adjustment may be based on one or more of the following:
  - 2.2.1 The area of the parcel is incorrect;
  - 2.2.2 The property is not assigned the proper rate category;
  - 2.2.3 The parcel is wholly or partially outside the District boundaries; or

2.2.4 The rate is otherwise erroneous in applying the terms of Resolution No. 2019-11, as adopted by Thurston County.

2.3 Any appeal and application for adjustment may be made to the District and shall be decided by the District Board of Supervisors. The burden of proof shall be on the appellant to show that the rate adjustment sought should be granted. All decisions of the District regarding an appeal shall be final and conclusive.

2.4 Any appeal and application for rate adjustment must be filed no later than twentyone (21) days after the date first payment of annual property taxes are due. An appeal shall contain the Thurston County account number (for the property tax parcel identification number); the name of the owner of the property; a written statement of the basis for the appeal; address of the owner if different from the address shown on the records of Thurston County assessor; appellant's phone number(s) for communication with the appellant; and, the signature of the owner(s) of the property. An appellant is responsible for advising the District of any change in any mailing address or phone number. Failure to respond to District communications regarding an appeal shall be grounds for dismissal of the appeal.

2.5 Hearing Process.

2.5.1 Prehearing Conference. Once an appeal has been timely filed, the Executive Director shall schedule a Prehearing Conference with the appellant within fourteen (14) days. An appellant is required to participate in the Prehearing Conference to assist in expediting the appeal, setting a hearing date and identifying potential for settlement. If the hearing date is not established at the Prehearing Conference, the District shall give separate written notice to appellant no later than fourteen (14) days prior to the hearing.

2.5.2 Expert Witnesses. An appellant shall file in writing, if at all, direct expert testimony from each of appellant's expert witnesses, along with copies of any exhibits introduced through or relied upon by the expert witnesses. Filing of expert testimony and supporting documents (including pictures, drawings or other documents) shall be no later than seven (7) days prior to the appeal hearing.

2.5.3 Appeal Hearing. The hearing shall consist of the following:

A. Opening Statements.

B. Appellant's Case. An appellant's case at the hearing shall be limited to the presentation of lay testimony, to cross-examination by District of any witness whose testimony has been offered by appellant, including expert witnesses whose testimony has been offered in writing pursuant to this rule, and to appellant's redirect examination of any witness from whom cross-examination testimony is taken.

C. District's Case. The District's case at the hearing shall be limited to the presentation of lay testimony, to cross-examination by appellant of any witness whose testimony has been offered by District, including expert witnesses whose testimony has been offered in writing, and to District's redirect of any witness from which cross-examination testimony is taken.

D. Closing Argument.

E. Decision. The Board shall enter a written decision within 14 days after the close of record of the Appeal hearing.

2.6 If the District grants an adjustment which reduces the charge for the current year, the applicant shall be refunded the amount overpaid. If the District determines that an adjustment

should be made which increases the charge due for the current year, the applicant shall receive a supplemental bill that will be due within forty-five (45) days of the date of issue. An appellant seeking a rate adjustment shall be notified in writing of the District's decision.

2.7 The final written decision of the Board of Supervisors may be appealed, if at all, to Thurston County Superior Court no later than twenty-one (21) days of the date of the Board's written decision. The party appealing to Superior Court shall bear the cost of production of the record of hearing before the Board for filing with the Court, such cost to be recoverable in the determination of the Superior Court that the party appealing to the Superior Court substantially prevailed in the appeal.

**SECTION 3. EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR AUTHORITY.**

The District's Executive Director is authorized prior to or after the hearing under Section 2.5, to settle claims and resolve disputes over rates, rate category or classification, and other matters applicable to parcels that are subject to appeal. The Executive Director shall report such settlements to the Board at a regularly scheduled meeting, within 90 days.

**SECTION 4. RATIFICATION AND CONFIRMATION.**

Any action taken consistent with the authority and prior to the effective date of this Resolution is hereby ratified, approved and confirmed.


**SECTION 5. EFFECTIVE DATE.**

This Resolution shall become effective immediately upon its adoption.


**ADOPTED BY THE BOARD OF THE THURSTON CONSERVATION DISTRICT,  
WASHINGTON ON JULY 2<sup>ND</sup>, 2019 AND EFFECTIVE IMMEDIATELY.**

**SIGNED:**

  
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Paul Pickett, Board Chair

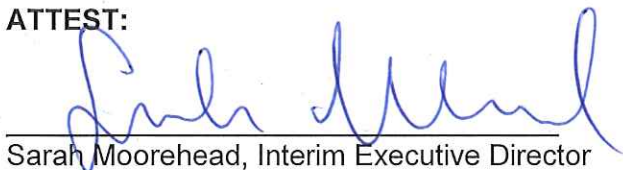
  
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TJ Johnson, Vice Chair

  
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David Iyall, Board Auditor

  
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Betsie DeWreede, Board Member

  
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Doug Rushton, Board Member

**ATTEST:**

  
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Sarah Moorehead, Interim Executive Director