

Merit Systems Protection Board

§ 1201.55

good cause, may file motions requesting a different hearing location. Rulings on those motions will be based on a showing that a different location will be more advantageous to all parties and to the Board.

§ 1201.52 Public hearings.

Hearings are open to the public. The judge may order a hearing or any part of a hearing closed, however, when doing so would be in the best interests of the appellant, a witness, the public, or any other person affected by the proceeding. Any order closing the hearing will set out the reasons for the judge's decision. Any objections to the order will be made a part of the record.

§ 1201.53 Record of proceedings.

(a) *Preparation.* A word-for-word record of the hearing is made under the judge's guidance. It is kept in the Board's copy of the appeal file and it is the official record of the hearing. Only hearing tape recordings or written transcripts prepared by the official hearing reporter will be accepted by the Board as the official record of the hearing. When the judge assigned to the case tape records a hearing (for example, a telephonic hearing in a retirement appeal), the judge is the "official hearing reporter" under this section.

(b) *Copies.* When requested and when costs are paid, a copy of the official record of the hearing will be provided to a party. A party must send a request for a copy of a hearing tape recording or written transcript to the adjudicating regional or field office, or to the Clerk of the Board, as appropriate. A request for a copy of a hearing tape recording or written transcript sent by a non-party is controlled by the Board's rules at 5 CFR part 1204 (Freedom of Information Act). Requests for hearing tape recordings or written transcripts under the Freedom of Information Act must be sent to the appropriate Regional Director, the Chief Administrative Judge of the appropriate MSPB Field Office, or to the Clerk of the Board at MSPB headquarters in Washington, DC.

(c) *Exceptions to payment of costs.* A party may not have to pay for a hearing tape recording or written transcript if he has a good reason. If a

party believes he has a good reason and the request is made before the judge issues and initial decision, the party must send the request for an exception to the judge. If the request is made after the judge issues an initial decision, the request must be sent to the Clerk of the Board. The party must clearly state the reason for the request in an affidavit or sworn statement.

(d) *Corrections to written transcript.* Corrections to the official written transcript may be made on motion by a party or on the judge's own motion. Motions for corrections must be filed within 10 days after the receipt of a written transcript. Corrections of the official written transcript will be made only when substantive errors are found and only with the judge's approval.

(e) *Official record.* Exhibits, the official hearing record, if a hearing is held, all papers filed, and all orders and decisions of the judge and the Board, make up the official record of the case.

[65 FR 19293, Apr. 11, 2000]

§ 1201.55 Motions.

(a) *Form.* All motions, except those made during a prehearing conference or a hearing, must be in writing. All motions must include a statement of the reasons supporting them. Written motions must be filed with the judge or the Board, as appropriate, and must be served upon all other parties in accordance with §1201.26(b)(2) of this part. A party filing a motion for extension of time, a motion for postponement of a hearing, or any other procedural motion must first contact the other party to determine whether there is any objection to the motion, and must state in the motion whether the other party has an objection.

(b) *Objection.* Unless the judge provides otherwise, any objection to a written motion must be filed within 10 days from the date of service of the motion. Judges, in their discretion, may grant or deny motions for extensions of time to file pleadings without providing any opportunity to respond to the motions.

(c) *Motions for extension of time.* Motions for extension of time will be

§ 1201.56

5 CFR Ch. II (1–1–01 Edition)

granted only on a showing of good cause.

(d) *Motions for protective orders.* A motion for an order under 5 U.S.C. 1204(e)(1)(B) to protect a witness or other individual from harassment must be filed as early in the proceeding as practicable. The party seeking a protective order must include a concise statement of reasons justifying the motion, together with any relevant documentary evidence. An agency, other than the Office of Special Counsel, may not request such an order with respect to an investigation by the Special Counsel during the Special Counsel's investigation. An order issued under this paragraph may be enforced in the same manner as provided under subpart F for Board final decisions and orders.

[54 FR 53504, Dec. 29, 1989, as amended at 62 FR 17045, Apr. 9, 1997]

§ 1201.56 Burden and degree of proof; affirmative defenses.

(a) *Burden and degree of proof*—(1) *Agency:* Under 5 U.S.C. 7701(c)(1), and subject to the exceptions stated in paragraph (b) of this section, the agency action must be sustained if:

(i) It is brought under 5 U.S.C. 3592(a)(3), 5 U.S.C. 4303 or 5 U.S.C. 5335 and is supported by substantial evidence; or

(ii) It is brought under any other provision of law or regulation and is supported by a preponderance of the evidence.

(2) *Appellant.* The appellant has the burden of proof, by a preponderance of the evidence, with respect to:

- (i) Issues of jurisdiction;
- (ii) The timeliness of the appeal; and
- (iii) Affirmative defenses.

In appeals from reconsideration decisions of the Office of Personnel Management involving retirement benefits, if the appellant filed the application, the appellant has the burden of proving, by a preponderance of the evidence, entitlement to the benefits. An appellant who has received an overpayment from the Civil Service Retirement and Disability Fund has the burden of proving, by substantial evidence, eligibility for waiver or adjustment.

(b) *Affirmative defenses of the appellant.* Under 5 U.S.C. 7701(c)(2), the

Board is required to overturn the action of the agency, even where the agency has met the evidentiary standard stated in paragraph (a) of this section, if the appellant:

(1) Shows harmful error in the application of the agency's procedures in arriving at its decision;

(2) Shows that the decision was based on any prohibited personnel practice described in 5 U.S.C. 2302(b); or

(3) Shows that the decision was not in accordance with law.

(c) *Definitions.* The following definitions apply to this part:

(1) *Substantial evidence.* The degree of relevant evidence that a reasonable person, considering the record as a whole, might accept as adequate to support a conclusion, even though other reasonable persons might disagree. This is a lower standard of proof than preponderance of the evidence.

(2) *Preponderance of the evidence.* The degree of relevant evidence that a reasonable person, considering the record as a whole, would accept as sufficient to find that a contested fact is more likely to be true than untrue.

(3) *Harmful error.* Error by the agency in the application of its procedures that is likely to have caused the agency to reach a conclusion different from the one it would have reached in the absence or cure of the error. The burden is upon the appellant to show that the error was harmful, i.e., that it caused substantial harm or prejudice to his or her rights.

[54 FR 53504, Dec. 29, 1989, as amended at 56 FR 41748, Aug. 23, 1991]

§ 1201.57 Order of hearing.

(a) In cases in which the agency has taken an action against an employee, the agency will present its case first.

(b) The appellant will proceed first at hearings convened on the issues of:

- (1) Jurisdiction;
- (2) Timeliness; or

(3) Office of Personnel Management disallowance of retirement benefits, when the appellant applied for those benefits.

(c) The judge may vary the normal order of presenting evidence.