

§ 964.7

issue an order dismissing the Petition and refer the matter to the Judicial Officer for issuance of the order provided for under § 964.19. An order of dismissal issued under this section may be appealed to the Judicial Officer within 10 days from the date of the order.

[52 FR 36763, Oct. 1, 1987, as amended at 53 FR 4849, Feb. 18, 1988]

§ 964.7 Presiding officers.

(a) The presiding officer shall be an Administrative Law Judge qualified in accordance with law. The Judicial Officer shall assign cases upon rotation as far as practicable. The Judicial Officer may on his own initiative or for good cause shown, preside at the reception of evidence.

(b) The presiding officer has authority to:

(1) Administer oaths and affirmations;

(2) Examine witnesses;

(3) Rule upon offers of proof, admissibility of evidence and matters of procedure;

(4) Order any pleadings amended upon motion of a party at any time prior to the close of the hearing;

(5) Maintain discipline and decorum and exclude from the hearing any person acting in an indecorous manner;

(6) Require the filing of briefs or memoranda of law on any matter upon which he is required to rule;

(7) Order prehearing conferences for the purpose of the settlement or simplification of issues by the parties or for any other purpose he believes will facilitate the processing of the proceeding;

(8) Order the proceeding reopened at any time prior to his decision for the receipt of additional evidence;

(9) Render an initial decision, which becomes the final agency decision unless a timely appeal is taken: The Judicial Officer may issue a tentative or a final decision;

(10) Rule upon applications and requests filed under § 964.9 of this part.

§ 964.8 Subpoenas and witness fees not authorized.

The Postal Service is not authorized to issue subpoenas requiring the attendance or testimony of witnesses, nor to pay fees and expenses for a Petitioner's witnesses or for depositions requested by a Petitioner.

39 CFR Ch. I (7-1-06 Edition)

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§ 964.9 Discovery; interrogatories; admission of facts; production and inspection of documents.

(a) *General policy and protective orders.*

The parties are encouraged to engage in voluntary discovery procedures. In connection with any discovery procedure permitted under this part, the presiding officer may issue any order which justice requires to protect a party or person from annoyance, embarrassment, oppression, or undue burden or expense. Such orders may include limitations on the scope, method, time and place for discovery, and provisions for protecting confidential information or documents from unwarranted public disclosure. Each party shall bear its own expenses relating to discovery.

(b) *Depositions.* (1) After the issuance of a notice of hearing described in § 964.3 of this part, the parties may mutually agree to, or the presiding officer may, upon application of either party and for good cause shown, order the taking of testimony of any person by deposition upon oral examination or written interrogatories before any officer authorized to administer oaths at the place of examination, for use as evidence or for purposes of discovery. The application for order shall specify whether the purpose of the deposition is discovery or for use as evidence, or both.

(2) The time, place, and manner of taking depositions shall be as mutually agreed by the parties, or failing such agreement, governed by order of the presiding officer.

(3) No testimony taken by depositions shall be considered as part of the evidence in the hearing unless and until such testimony is offered and received in evidence at such hearing. Depositions will not ordinarily be received in evidence if the deponent is present and can testify personally at the hearing. In such instances, however, the deposition may be used to contradict or impeach the testimony of the witness given at the hearing. In