

HOWARD CENTRAL APPRAISAL DISTRICT

Public Relations Manual

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Revised 10/24/22

Public Relations Manual

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HOWARD CENTRAL APPRAISAL DISTRICT MISSION STATEMENT

OUR MISSION IS TO COURTEOUSLY AND RESPECTFULLY
SERVE
THE PUBLIC AND IT'S ENTITIES
BY PROVIDING AN EQUAL AND UNIFORM
APPRAISAL ROLL IN AN ACCURATE
AND TIMELY MANNER
WHILE PRESERVING AND INSURING THE
RIGHTS OF
PROPERTY OWNERS

General Public Relations Policy

Property owners have a right to know what occurs in their appraisal district and what the impact of our actions are regarding property taxes. To that end, the

District is committed to:

- Providing openness and honesty to the public and taxing units
- Providing information to the public in a timely manner
- Promoting an effective working relationship with the news media
- Providing taxpayers and taxing units superior customer service with respect, compassion and dignity
- Explaining the Texas property tax process through educational outreach venues
- Providing a qualified, knowledgeable, and productive workforce
- Provide accuracy and attention to detail in all aspects of the appraisal process
- Conduct ourselves without the appearance of favoritism, undue influence or impropriety, so as to preserve public confidence and trust;

Our pledge is to serve the public with the highest ethical standards, diligence, accuracy and professionalism.

Public Relations Guidelines

All communications with the public should be positive, courteous and educational.

Listening:

This is perhaps the most important aspect of each encounter with the public. Any individual who visits, phones, or corresponds with the Appraisal District should be given our undivided attention. Staff members should clarify the concern with the individual to ensure we fully understand the concern being raised.

Issues, Management, and Action Planning:

At times, a simple explanation of a process is sufficient. Other times, detailed research must be conducted to address a specific issue. In all cases, the public is entitled to be informed of their rights and remedies. The district staff is expected to remain in a constant state of overall improvement and strive for excellence in service. Each staff member should formulate a basic plan to approach and resolve possible difficult scenarios that might arise in our day-to-day operations and interactions with the public we serve. This preparation can make a difference by defusing a potentially adverse reaction.

Crisis Plan:

Should interactions with the public become contentious and potentially hostile, staff members are trained to remain calm and attempt to diffuse the situation. If the encounter becomes dangerous, staff members may summon law enforcement personnel via 911 or other methods available. Any and all instances of this nature will be well documented, and management informed immediately.

Another aspect of crisis planning involves our interactions with other agencies. Should a crisis arise from a disaster, the Public Relations Officer will work directly with the agency(s) involved. There is no all-inclusive list of potential crises. Flexibility and adaptability are key requirements. The public will look to the governing bodies for answers in addressing crisis situations. The District will work with the affected governing bodies to ensure they and the public are well informed.

Criticism:

Criticism may come when interacting with the public. It may be the very thing that initiates our interaction or may come at the end of a process. Criticism with basis can serve to identify a shortfall and result in enhancements to the affected process. Criticism without basis may stem from misinformation or a lack of understanding. Regardless of its form, criticism will come and must be dealt with by following the guidelines already mentioned.

Communication

Communication is a critical part of our business. Keeping our public informed is paramount to providing good service.

Key opportunities:

Opportunities to inform the public of their rights, responsibilities, available exemptions, possible special appraisals, tax rates and collection practices, public services funded by property taxes, appraisal practices and available remedies present themselves on a daily basis. Taxpayer foot traffic to the District, appraisers working in the field, and other venues create opportunities to educate or inform. Examples of effective communication would be making sure the public is informed

of calendar deadlines, the annual cycle of the events in the life of the Appraisal District and the impact those events have on the public. Other areas of assistance would be informing the public of rules for disclosure and confidentiality of information. The District maintains website which serves as a fantastic resource to the public. There is a dedicated public terminal in our lobby where the visiting public can access information as well. Lastly, articles and required notices are published in the newspaper of record for the county as well as other available media (if deemed necessary) in an effort to keep the public informed of important property tax matters.

Public Review and Evaluation

The chief appraiser shall, with the aid an input of appraisal district employees, review and evaluate the public relations plan and its effectiveness. Adjustments shall be made as necessary. Press clippings from newspapers, magazines, and trade publications provide evidence of for reviewing and evaluating the program. Comments from surveys, e-mails, etc. shall be considered.

Procedural Manuals

Each department develops procedures for their specific processes. Those procedures are available for public inspection upon request. The District's Reappraisal Plan and supporting reports are posted on the web-site and can also be inspected upon request.

Public Records

Most records, with limited exceptions, held at the District are available to the public. Requests to view, inspect or obtain these records are handled according to the Public Information Act. Requests for public information must be made in writing and submitted to the Public Information Officer.

Record Retention

The Howard Central Appraisal District follows the guidelines and practices of the Texas State Library (www.tsl.state.tx.us) for document retention policies. The District has implemented records retention practices based on those guidelines. The Texas State Library guidelines and records may be inspected after submission of a written public information request.

Written Correspondence Guidelines

- Answer letters and emails promptly and acknowledge those that cannot be responded to immediately;
- State information clearly using layman's terms
- Respond to all relevant questions;
- Convey professionalism;
- Add a personal touch when appropriate;
- Make sure your correspondence is positive in nature. Even written communications can convey a negative tone. It is a good policy to have another colleague to review your work;
- Always retain a copy of all correspondence for future reference;
- When appropriate, use proper Tax Code references to help validate what you are trying to convey. Often this is very helpful for the taxpayer to understand the laws and directives for their particular inquiry.

Guidelines for Press Releases

A news release is a communication tool used to promote activities, communicate policies, inform the public of deadlines and other tax related information, etc.

Recommendations for a press release are as follows:

- Article needs to be timely, informative or significant to the public;
- Contact information should be available;

- It should be short and concise;
- The release should always be proof read for accuracy;
- The most important facts should be provided first, followed by the details;
- All staff should be given a copy of press releases and kept informed of the nature of the communication for fielding questions and calls;
- Those identified in the article should be told before the release of information to keep good lines of communication open.

Educating the public

Public services are funded by the tax dollars collected and disbursed by the District. We can help taxpayers understand how the appraisal and assessment processes work to establish a tax base and ensure the tax burden is equitably distributed according to the assessed value of the properties in the county. Helping the taxpayers understand how the tax rates apply to the value of their property is important. It benefits the taxpayer and the District to have educated participants that understand their part in the fundamentals of property taxation.

Internet

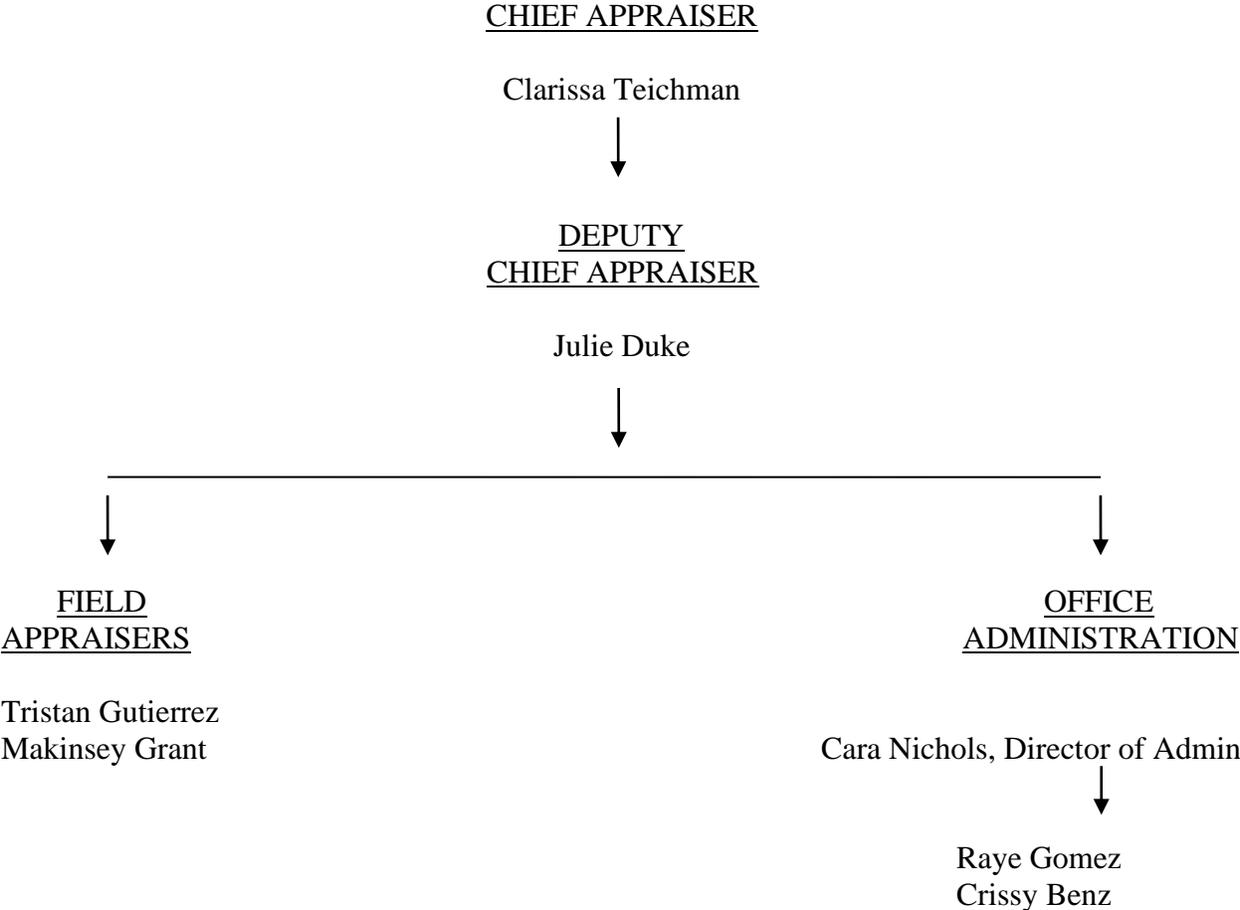
The internet is a very useful tool to use to communicate with the general public. Most everyone knows how to navigate the internet and this media allows the public to access public information anytime on any property in Howard County. The information on this website equips the public with the standard processes of the

property tax system. The District will continue to enhance the website as new processes and information evolve.

Summary

The goal of the Howard Central Appraisal District as it relates to public relations is to be very transparent in all that we do. The website provides invaluable aid in accomplishing this goal. Keeping the public informed is paramount to the success of the District. Effective communication results in enhanced credibility of the District and reduces the level of uncertainty and misinformation regarding District operations. Many resources and opportunities are available to foster good public relations and should be utilized to the maximum extent possible as allowed in the budget. The Public Relations Plan timeline outlines the various events and estimated timeframes for conducting those events. The timeline is listed on the following page.

ORGANIZATIONAL CHART



Important Telephone Numbers

Howard County Appraisal District

432-263-8301- Line 1
432-263-8302- Line 2
432-263-8303- Line 3- Fax
432-264-7878- Line 4

Southwest Data Solutions

972-937-2400 — Customer Service

Howard County Tax Office

Tiffany Sayles — Tax Assessor/Collector

432-264-2232

Thomas Y. Pickett, Mineral/ Industrial Appraisals

Toll Free: 833-788-0773

Address: 14665 Midway Rd, Ste 100
Addison, Texas 75001

Important Websites

<http://www.howardcad.org> - HCAD's Website

<http://www.license.state.tx.us/> -TDLR for Appraisers and Tax Collectors

<http://www.window.state.tx.us> -Texas Comptroller of Public Accounts

<http://www.window.state.tx.us/taxinfo/proptax/basics/> - Tax Basics

<https://www.oag.state.tx.us/> -Attorney General of Texas

<http://www.capitol.state.tx.us/> -Texas Legislature online

<http://www.sos.state.tx.us/> - Texas Secretary of State

<http://www.tnris.net> - Texas Natural Resources Information System

<http://www.mhweb.tdhca.state.tx.us/mhweb/main.jsp/> - Texas Department of
Housing &
Community Affairs

<http://www.nass.usda.gov/> - United States Department of Agriculture

<http://www.texaslandrecords.com/txlr/TxlrApp/index.jsp> - Texas Land Records
(Accessible by deed clerk and appraisers)

<http://www.pbfc.com> - Perdue Brandon Fielder Collins & Mott LLP

<http://www.typco.com-> Thomas Y. Pickett

Public Relations Timeline

January

- Review and development of public information brochures and other materials related to property exemptions, renditions and special appraisals.
- Publish notice in local newspapers about requirements and availability of applications for deferrals, homestead exemptions, renditions and agricultural appraisals.

February – March

- The district shall provide Open Meeting and Public Information training for anyone associated with CAD that needs it. Training may include training videos and other materials developed by Attorney General's Office.
- Review and development of public information materials related to appraisal procedures, notices, protests and evidence production. Care and attention will be paid to updates for internal procedural changes and/or changes prompted by legal opinion and/or new legislation.

April

- Publish notice in local newspapers about requirements and availability of applications for deferrals, homestead exemptions, renditions and agricultural appraisals.
- Prepare press release for notices of appraised values and protest process.
- Provide preliminary estimates of value to all school districts and any municipality and the county if they chose not to waive the estimate of value.

May

- Provide telephone and in office assistance to taxpayers having questions about the protest process.
- Hold informal meetings with taxpayers that are considering a protest.

June and July

- Appraisal Review Board Hearings Conducted
- July 20 - Date ARB must approve appraisal records, but may not do so if more than 5 percent of total appraised value remains under protest (Sec. 41.12).
- July 25 - Last day for chief appraiser to certify appraisal roll to each taxing unit (Sec. 26.01).

August

- 31st - Last day for property owner to give, in writing, correct address to CAD for tax bill.

September, October and November

- Continued interaction with taxpayers on supplements, address changes and late filed exemptions.

December

- Send certified letters to taxpayers on denials of exemptions and productivity value.
- Send letters to new owners with homestead exemption forms and productivity applications.

Entities

**Howard County
Katherine Wiseman, County Judge
300 S Main # 207
Big Spring, TX 79720**

**Howard College
Brenda Claxton
1001 Birdwell Lane
Big Spring, TX 79720**

**City of Forsan
Mayor Steve Park
PO Box 714
Forsan, TX 79733**

**City of Coahoma
Mayor Jay Holt
Box 420
Coahoma, TX 79511**

**City of Big Spring
Sandy Smith
310 Nolan
Big Spring, TX 79720**

**Big Spring ISD
Susan Bryan, CFO
708 11th Place
Big Spring, TX 79720**

**Coahoma ISD
Brad Cox, Superintendent
Box 110
Coahoma, TX 79511-0110**

**Forsan ISD
Dan Richardson, Superintendent
PO Drawer A
Forsan, TX 79733**

**Borden ISD
Stephanie Behrens, Superintendent
PO Box 95
Gail, TX 79738**

**Sands ISD
Wayne Henderson, Superintendent
PO Box 218
Ackerly, TX 79713**

**Stanton ISD
Merl Brandon, Superintendent
PO Box 730
Stanton, TX 79782**

**Permian Basin UWCD
Dallen Skinner
PO Box 1314
Stanton, TX 79782**

Howard County WCID

Adjoining Appraisal Districts

Glasscock County	
Scott Smetana---Chief Appraiser	432-354-2580
www.glasscockcad.com	
info@glasscockcad.org	
Martin County	
Marsha Graves---Chief Appraiser	432-756-2823
www.martincad.org	
mgraves@martincad.org	
Mitchell County	
John Stewart---Chief Appraiser	325-728-5028
www.mitchellcad.org	
mitchellcad1@outlook.com	
Borden County	
Tracey Cooley---Chief Appraiser	806-756-4484
www.bordencad.org	
bcad@bordencad.org	

EXEMPTION DATA

The district has various exemptions that taxpayers may qualify for: Homestead and Over 65 residential exemption. You may only apply for residence Homestead exemption on one property in a tax year. A homestead may include up to 20 acres of land you actually use in the residential use (occupancy) of your home. To qualify for a homestead exemption, you must own and reside in your home on January 1 of the tax year. The age 65 or older or disability exemption for school taxes includes a school tax limitation or ceiling. Some taxing units such as county and cities have exemptions and tax ceilings limits. The filing of this application is between January 1 and April 30. You may file a late homestead exemption if you file it no later than one year after the date taxes become delinquent. There is also a Transfer of Tax Limitation or Ceiling Certificate if you move out of the county; this can transfer to the new county you reside in.

ENTITY	HOMESTEAD	OVER 65 OR
DISABLED		
HOWARD COUNTY	20% of TMV (Total Market Value)	12,000
BIG SPRING ISD	40,000 + 20% of TMV	10,000
COAHOMA ISD	40,000 + 20% of TMV	10,000
FORSAN ISD	40,000 + 20% of TMV	10,000
SANDS ISD	40,000 + 20% of TMV	10,000
STANTON ISD	40,000 + 15% of TMV	10,000
BORDEN ISD	40,000 + 20% of TMV	10,000
BIG SPRING CITY	20% of TMV	5,000
COAHOMA CITY	20% of TMV	4,000
FORSAN CITY	20% of TMV	4,000
HOWARD COLLEGE	20% of TMV	12,000
PERMIAN BASIN UWCD	10% of TMV	12,000
DISABLED VETERANS	AMOUNT	PERCENTAGE
DV01	5,000	10-29%
DV02	7,500	30-49%
DV03	10,000	50-69%
DV04	12,000	70-100%
DVHS	Totally Exempt	100%

The DVHS only apply to General Residential Homestead Exemption.

Board of Directors

Craig Wyrick, Chairman

Tiffany Sayles TAC

Scott Emerson

Mike Dawson

Noel Hoff

Jordan Partee

Appraisal Review Board

Wesley Thixton

Tara Renfro

Gaylon Knowlton

Ag Advisory Board

Joe Paul Beall

Michael Brooks

Sherry Newton

Mike Moates

Tara Renfro