



**Office of Administrative Hearings
Expedited Hearing Process
Required by the Minnesota Government
Data Practices Act**

Fiscal Year 2019

Report to the Legislature

As Required By

2010 Minnesota Laws, Chapter 297, Section 3

<p>ACTING CHIEF ADMINISTRATIVE LAW JUDGE:</p> <p>William B. Marshall</p>	<p>Report on the Office of Administrative Hearings Expedited Hearing Process Under the Minnesota Government Data Practices Act</p>
<p>FOR MORE INFORMATION CONTACT:</p> <p>Denise S. Collins Court Administrator Office of Administrative Hearings 651-361-7875 Denise.Collins@state.mn.us</p>	<p>September 1, 2019</p> <p>FY 2019 Report to the Legislature</p>
<p>Office of Administrative Hearings 600 North Robert Street PO Box 64620 St. Paul, Minnesota 55164 TDD: 651-361-7878</p> <p>Upon request, this report can be made available in alternative formats.</p>	<p>As required by 2010 Minnesota Laws, Chapter 297, Section 3</p>

Cost of Report Preparation

The total cost for the Minnesota Office of Administrative Hearings to prepare this report was approximately \$100. These costs involved staff time in compiling and analyzing data, and preparing the written report.

Estimated costs are provided in accordance with Minnesota Statutes section 3.197 (2018), which mandates that the cost of preparing a required report must be provided at the beginning of all reports to the legislature.

Program Background

In 2010, the Minnesota Legislature authorized the Office of Administrative Hearings to provide an expedited hearing to any complainant seeking an order to compel a government agency to comply with the Minnesota Government Data Practices Act (MGDPA or Data Practices Act). Minn. Stat. § 13.085 (2018) allows persons seeking an order compelling a state or local government agency to comply with the MGDPA to request an expedited hearing before an Administrative Law Judge. Strict and short statutory timeframes apply to these claims: hearings are held within 30 days of the filing of the complaint and response to the complaint, and decisions are due within 10 days following the close of the hearing record. In these cases, Administrative Law Judge determinations are final agency decisions appealable to the Minnesota Court of Appeals.

The Office of Administrative Hearings has developed a detailed set of procedures and templates for use in these hearings, all of which are available at <https://mn.gov/oah/forms-and-filing/forms/>. The agency absorbed all of the costs associated with the development of these resources in Fiscal Year 2013.

Complexity of Cases

When enacting Minn. Stat. § 13.085, legislators assumed that the disputes that would be presented to the Office of Administrative Hearings would, most often, involve clear-cut cases of intransigence by government officials refusing to provide public data. Yet, more often than not, these cases involve complex and fact-intensive questions of first impression. The law relevant to these issues is complex. As such, the resolution of these issues involved significant factual disputes and required extensive legal research and analysis.

The chart below details the Office of Administrative Hearings' cost experience for the expedited hearing process in fiscal years 2011 through 2019.

Cost of MGDPA Cases v. Revenue Generated: FYs 2011 – 2019

Matter	Docket Number	Filing Fees (Total Revenue to OAH)	OAH Hours Required to Resolve	Total Cost to OAH
In Re: Schmid	0305-21608	\$1,000.00	52.0	\$5,752.00
In Re: KSTP-TV	0305-21754	\$1,000.00	76.75	\$9,248.00
In Re: Stengrim	0305-21900	\$1,000.00	26.45	\$2,792.00
In Re: Four Crown, Inc.	0305-21960	\$1,000.00	48.80	\$5,944.00
FY11 Totals		\$4,000.00	204.00	\$23,736.00
In Re: Four Crown, Inc.	0305-21960	Paid in FY11	34.60	\$5,692.58
In Re: Sherburne	0305-22121	\$1,000.00	13.45	\$2,159.75

Matter	Docket Number	Filing Fees (Total Revenue to OAH)	OAH Hours Required to Resolve	Total Cost to OAH
In Re: Helmberger	0305-22159	\$1,000.00	72.20	\$9,798.00
In Re: Citizens Info.	0305-22638	\$1,000.00	19.00	\$2,004.50
FY12 Totals		\$3,000.00	139.25	\$19,654.83
In Re: Prall	0305-30225	\$217.50 ¹	2.4	\$217.50
In Re: Utes	0305-30394	\$1,000.00	7.3	\$1,119.50
In Re: Beedle	0305-30450	\$1,000.00	14.9	\$1,812.50
In Re: Gibson	0305-30695	\$1,000.00	1.8	\$297.00
FY13 Totals		\$3,217.50	26.4	\$3,446.50
In Re: Beedle	0305-30450	Paid in FY13	.8	\$64.00
In Re: Gibson	0305-30695	Paid in FY13	9.90	\$1,633.50
In Re: MAPE	0305-30914	\$195.50*	1.70	\$195.50
In Re: ND Pipeline	0305-31410	\$1,000.00	32.10	\$5,261.50
In Re: Hurlbert	0305-31500	\$305.00*	1.70	\$305.00
FY14 Totals		\$1,505.00	46.20	\$7,459.50
In Re: KSTP TV	0305-31782	\$1000.00	19.0	\$3,109.50
In Re: Rockville	0305-31990	\$1000.00	22.20	\$2,476.50
FY15 Totals		\$2000.00	41.20	\$5,586.00
In Re: Sigma Alpha	0305-32755	\$90.50*	1.10	\$90.50
In Re: Webster	0305-33135	\$50.00*	84.45	\$9,904.00
In Re: Harper	0305-33466	\$1,000.00	48.4	\$5,780.00
FY16 Totals		\$1,140.50	133.95	\$15,774.50
In Re: KSTP	0305-31782	Paid in FY15	8.25	\$3,244.00
In Re: Harper	0305-33466	Paid in FY16	3.1	\$527.00
In Re: Halva	0305-33827	\$50.00*	43.75	\$8,621.00
In Re: Johnson	0305-34354	\$1,000.00	56.25	\$6,697.50
FY 17 Totals		\$1,050.00	111.35	\$19,089.50
In Re: Harper	0305-33466	Paid in FY16	.50	\$45.00
In Re: Johnson	0305-34354	Paid in FY17	7.5	\$1,019.00
In Re: Hansen	0305-34693	\$1,000.00	23.8	\$2,700.00
In Re: KSTP	0305-31782	Paid in FY15	.20	\$18.00
In Re: Lastovich	0305-34908	\$179.00*	.9	\$950.00
In Re: Webster	0305-33135	Paid in FY16	.1	\$17.00
FY 18 Totals		\$1,179.00	33	\$4,749.00
OAH staff attorney ²	0310-32994			\$12,490.94
Transfer to offset Elections Campaign Fund shortfall ³				\$10,509.06
FY 19 Totals				\$23,000

¹ The complainants in the cases marked with an asterisk (*) paid the statutorily required \$1000 filing fee, but the vast majority of the fee was refunded as required by Minn. Stat. § 13.085, subd. 6(c) (2018).

² Salary for staff attorney designated to respond to data practices requests.

³ See 2017 Minnesota Laws, 1st Special Session, Chapter 4, Section 40.

Program Funding: A History

The 2010 Legislature intended that the special \$1,000 filing fee would be sufficient to cover the costs of resolving any dispute in the expedited data practices process. Unfortunately, the Office of Administrative Hearings' actual cost experience has been much different and has been characterized by chronic shortfalls resulting from the costs of each case far exceeding the \$1,000 filing fee.

In response, the 2013 Legislature appropriated \$36,000 to the Office of Administrative Hearings on a one-time basis in order to cure deficiencies in the program account. More recently, the 2015 Legislature enacted a \$12,000 biennial general fund appropriation in support of the program. This appropriation proved insufficient; the program was in deficit by the end of Fiscal Year 2016. As a result, the 2017 Legislature approved a deficiency appropriation which totaled \$20,673.50, and also increased the biennial appropriation from \$12,000 to \$44,000.

While the amount of the deficiency is not large, either in real terms or as a percentage of the state's budget, it presents a difficult problem for state agencies. Minn. Stat. § 14.53 (2018) requires the agency to "assess agencies the cost of services rendered to them." The Office of the Legislative Auditor has interpreted the statute as a strict prohibition on "cross-subsidizing" the costs created by one agency through the fees charged to a sister agency. To comply with this statutory restriction, the Office of Administrative Hearings cannot charge its client agencies higher billable rates so that it can underwrite the services that it provides to MGDPA complainants. Accordingly, as few or none of the MGDPA cases presented to the Office of Administrative Hearings can be resolved for the \$1,000 filing fee, the program may continue to experience funding shortfalls that cannot be "covered" with any other resources available to the agency.

The following chart documents the program's receipts and expenditures for Fiscal Years 2011 through 2019.

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Receipts and Expenditures for FYs 2011 – 2019

Fiscal Year	Filing Fees/ Income	Billed Hours	Total Cost	FY-End Balance Before (Deficiency) Appropriation	Standing Appropriation	Deficiency Appropriation	Cumulative Shortfall/ Balance
2011	\$4,000.00	204.00	\$23,736.00	-\$19,736.00			-\$19,736.00
2012	\$3,000.00	139.25	\$19,654.83	-\$16,654.83		\$36,000.00	-\$390.83
2013	\$3,217.50	26.40	\$3,446.50	-\$ 229.00			-\$619.83
2014	\$1,505.00	46.20	\$7,459.50	-\$5,954.50			-\$6,574.33
2015	\$2,000.00	41.20	\$5,586.00	-\$3,586.00		\$12,000.00	\$0 (\$1,839.67 cancelled)
2016	\$1,140.50	133.95	\$15,774.50	-\$14,634.00	\$6,000.00		-\$8,634.00
2017	\$1,050.00	111.35	\$19,089.50	-\$18,039.50	\$6,000.00	\$20,673.50	
2018	\$1,179.00	33.00	\$4,749.00	\$15,251.00	\$20,000.00		\$35,251.00
2019			\$23,000	\$14,251.00	\$22,000.00		

Conclusion

In our view, flexible and responsive budgeting allows the Office of Administrative Hearings to ensure transparency and accountability among government agencies and to maintain the rule of law.

The Office of Administrative Hearings appreciates the opportunity to submit this report in an effort to provide the legislature with objective data necessary to inform its continuing policy and funding discussions related to this important program. If any further information would be helpful, please do not hesitate to contact Court Administrator Denise Collins at denise.collins@state.mn.us or (651) 361-7875.