

875—69.9 (17A,89A) Presiding officer.

69.9(1) The presiding officer in all contested cases shall be the board, a panel of board members, or an administrative law judge assigned by the department of inspections and appeals. When board members act as presiding officer, they shall conduct the hearing and issue either a final decision or, if a quorum of the board is not present, a proposed decision. As provided in subrule 69.9(4), the board may be assisted by an administrative law judge when the board acts as presiding officer.

69.9(2) Any party to a contested case that wishes to request that the presiding officer assigned to render a proposed decision be an administrative law judge employed by the department of inspections and appeals must file a written request within 20 days after service of a notice of hearing which identifies the presiding officer as the board. The board may deny the request only upon a finding that one or more of the following apply:

a. Neither the board nor any officer of the board under whose authority the contested case is to take place is a named party to the proceeding or a real party in interest to that proceeding.

b. There is a compelling need to expedite issuance of a final decision in order to protect the public health, safety, or welfare.

c. The case involves significant policy issues of first impression that are inextricably intertwined with the factual issues presented.

d. The demeanor of the witnesses is likely to be dispositive in resolving the disputed factual issues.

e. Funds are unavailable to pay the costs of an administrative law judge and an intra-agency appeal.

f. The request was not timely filed.

g. The request is not consistent with a specified statute.

69.9(3) The board shall issue a written ruling specifying the grounds for its decision within 20 days after a request for an administrative law judge is filed. If the ruling is granted, the administrative law judge assigned to act as presiding officer and to issue a proposed decision in a contested case shall have a J.D. degree unless this requirement is waived by the board.

69.9(4) The board or a panel of board members when acting as presiding officer may request that an administrative law judge perform certain functions as an aid to the board or board panel, such as ruling on prehearing motions, conducting the prehearing conference, ruling on evidentiary objections at hearing, assisting in deliberations, or drafting the written decision for review by the board or board panel.

69.9(5) All rulings by an administrative law judge who acts either as presiding officer or assistant to the board are subject to appeal to the board pursuant to rules 875—69.26(17A,89A) and 875—69.27(17A,89A). A party must timely seek intra-agency appeal of prehearing rulings or proposed decisions in order to exhaust adequate administrative remedies. While a party may seek immediate board or board panel review of rulings made by an administrative law judge when sitting with and acting as an aid to the board or board panel during a hearing, such immediate review is not required to preserve error for judicial review.

69.9(6) Unless otherwise provided by law, when reviewing a proposed decision of a panel of the board or an administrative law judge, board members shall have the powers of and shall comply with the provisions of this chapter that apply to presiding officers.