

701—7.44 (17A) Informal procedures and dismissals of protests.

7.44(1) Informal procedures. Persons are encouraged to utilize the informal procedures provided herein so that a settlement may be reached between the parties without the necessity of initiating contested case proceedings. Therefore, unless the protester indicates a desire to waive the informal procedures in the protest or the department waives informal procedures upon notification to the protester, such informal procedures will be initiated as herein provided upon the filing of a proper protest.

a. Review unit. A review unit is created within the department and, subject to the control of the director, the unit will:

- (1) Review and evaluate the validity of all protests made by taxpayers from the department action.
- (2) Determine the correct amount of tax owing or refund due.
- (3) Determine the best method of resolving the dispute between the protester and the department.
- (4) Take further action regarding the protest, including any additions and deletions to the audit, as may be warranted by the circumstances to resolve the protest, including a request for an informal conference.

(5) Determine whether the protest complies with rule 701—7.41(17A) and request any amendments to the protest or additional information.

The review unit may concede any items contained in the protest which it determines should not be controverted by the department. If the protester has not waived informal procedures, the review unit may request the protester and the protester's representative, if any, to attend an informal conference with the review unit to explore the possibility of reaching a settlement without the necessity of initiating contested case proceedings or of narrowing the issues presented in the protest if no settlement can be made. The review unit may request clarification of the issues from the protester or further information from the protester or third persons.

Findings dealing with the issues raised in the protest may be issued unless the issues may be more expeditiously determined in another manner or it is determined that findings are unnecessary. The protester will be notified of the decision on the issues in controversy.

Nothing herein will prevent the review unit and the protester from mutually agreeing on the manner in which the protest will be informally reviewed.

b. Settlements. If a settlement is reached during informal procedures, the clerk of the hearings section must be notified. A closing order shall be issued by the director and served upon all parties, stating that a settlement was reached by the parties and that the case is terminated.

7.44(2) Dismissal of protests.

a. Whether informal procedures have been waived or not, the failure of the protester to timely file a protest or to pursue the protest may be grounds for dismissal of the protest by the director or the director's designee. If the protest is so dismissed, the protester may file an application for reinstatement of the protest for good cause as provided in paragraph "c" of this subrule. Such application must be filed within 30 days of the date of the dismissal notice. Thereafter, the procedure in paragraph "c" of the subrule should be followed. If informal procedures have not been waived, the failure of the protester to present evidence or information requested by the review unit shall constitute grounds for the director or the director's designee to dismiss the protest. For purposes of this subrule, an evasive or incomplete response will be treated as a failure to present evidence or information. The failure of protester to file a protest in the format required by rule 701—7.41(17A) may be grounds for dismissal of the protest by the director or the director's designee.

b. If the department seeks to have the protest dismissed, the review unit shall file a motion to dismiss with the clerk of the hearings section for the department and serve a copy of the motion on the protester. Protester may file a resistance to the motion within 20 days of the date of service of the motion. If no resistance is so filed, the director or the director's designee shall immediately enter an order dismissing the protest. If a resistance is filed, the review unit has ten days from the date of the filing of the resistance to decide whether to withdraw its motion and so notify the clerk of the hearings

section for the department and protester. If no such notice is issued by the review unit within the ten-day period, the protest file will be transferred to the division of administrative hearings, which shall issue a notice for a contested case proceeding on the motion as prescribed by rule 701—7.47(17A), except that the issue of the contested case proceeding shall be limited to the question of whether the protest shall be dismissed. Thereafter, the rules of the department pertaining to contested case proceedings shall apply in such dismissal proceedings.

c. If a motion to dismiss is filed and is unresisted, a protest so dismissed may be reinstated by the director or the director's designee for good cause as interpreted by the Iowa Supreme Court in the case of *Purethane, Inc. v. Iowa State Board of Tax Review*, 498 N.W.2d 706 (Iowa 1993) if an application for reinstatement is filed with the clerk of the hearings section for the department within 30 days of the date the protest was dismissed. The application shall set forth all reasons and facts upon which the protester relies in seeking reinstatement of the protest. The review unit shall review the application and notify the protester whether the application is granted or denied. If the review unit denies the application to reinstate the protest, the protester has 30 days from the date the application for reinstatement was denied in which to request, in writing, a formal hearing on the reinstatement. When a written request is received, the protest file will be transferred to the division of administrative hearings which shall issue a notice as prescribed in rule 701—7.47(17A), except that the issue of the contested case proceeding shall be limited to the question of whether the protest shall be reinstated. Thereafter, the rules of the department pertaining to contested case proceedings shall apply in such reinstatement proceedings.

d. Once contested case proceedings have been commenced, whether informal proceedings have been waived or not, it shall be grounds for a motion to dismiss that a protester has either failed to diligently pursue the protest or refuses to comply with requests for discovery set forth in rule 701—7.47(17A). Such a motion must be filed with the presiding officer.

e. Notwithstanding other provisions of this subrule, if the director finds that a protest is not timely filed, including a failure within a reasonable time to file a protest in proper form after notice to protester by the hearings section, the director, without the filing of a motion to dismiss, may dismiss the protest and shall notify the protester that the protest has been dismissed. With respect to a protest so dismissed, thereafter the provisions of paragraph "c" of this subrule shall apply.