

to the particular purpose for which such land is required and the statutory authority of the agency, corporation or governmental body to acquire land for that purpose by eminent domain.

(d) *Effect of objection; notice.* Any person filing an objection shall thereafter be deemed a party to the proceeding and shall be entitled to notice of hearings, of the taking of depositions and of the filing of any documents in the proceeding subsequent to the time that such objection is filed. Any owner of adjoining land may, without filing an objection, become a party to the proceeding for the purpose of receiving notices, by filing a written request for such notices.

23. Hearings.

(a) *When conducted.* The Commissioner may conduct hearings at any time and for any purpose relevant to the determinations to be made by him under Section 21 (b). Such hearing must be held prior to the refusal to issue a patent, prior to the valuation of vacant land at other than the value fixed by the Supervisor of Assessments, or prior to the issuance of a patent after an objection has been filed.

(b) *How conducted; appeal.* Any hearing conducted pursuant to this subtitle shall be held in accordance with the provisions for hearings in contested cases provided by the Administrative Procedure Act (Article 41, Sections 251-256) as amended or supplemented from time to time. Appeals from final decisions of the Commissioner and further appeal to the Court of Appeals shall be as provided therein. As part of the decision following any hearing, the Commissioner may charge any party thereto with any portion of the costs of such hearing.

(c) *Hearings on objections of public bodies.* A hearing based upon an objection filed pursuant to Section 22 (c) shall be held promptly after such objection is filed. A determination by the Commissioner that the person filing the objection would be authorized to acquire the vacant land referred to therein by eminent domain shall terminate the proceeding as to such vacant land and a final order to that effect shall be entered by the Commissioner. Such order shall contain a direction to the person filing the objection to reimburse the applicant for all reasonable expenses incurred by him in connection with the survey of such vacant land and for the taking of depositions between the time of filing the application and the date such objection was filed. In cases of dispute as to such amount, the applicant may recover such expenses in a court of law.

(d) *Time for other hearings.* Except as stated in subsection (c), all hearings conducted because of objections filed in the proceeding shall be held after the filing of the certificate of the surveyor and any depositions which may be required by this subtitle. The Commissioner may, in his discretion, postpone any such hearing until the expiration of the period during which objections may be filed; and any objections filed in the proceeding may at any time be consolidated for hearing or heard separately as the Commissioner determines. Any decision or order overruling objections to issuance of a patent following a hearing held prior to the expiration of the period during which objections may be filed shall be considered to represent preliminary findings until the expiration of such period and the issuance of a final decision or order by the Commissioner.