



HARRIS COUNTY CIVIL COURTS AT LAW
ANNOUNCE THE ANNUAL HARRIS COUNTY CIVIL COURTS AT LAW
SPECIAL COMMISSIONERS' TRAINING

Dear Special Commissioners & Potential Appointees,

We, the Judges of Harris County Civil Courts at Law, hope that you and your loved ones are safe and well.

We are excited to announce the second annual Special Commissioners CLE. Our June 2019 kickoff was a great success, with a turnout of over 100 participants. The presenters—attorneys David Wall and George Murphy of Vinson & Elkins, LLP and Don Stricklin of the Harris County Attorney's Office—covered important information including: statutory takings v. inverse condemnation matters, jurisdictional and evidentiary issues, the appointment of special commissioners, and the duties of a special commissioner.

For our 2020 event, we are monitoring the COVID-19 pandemic before setting the date. We prefer to hold an in-person meeting in the late fall, although if the pandemic does not allow for this, we will hold the training session via Zoom. We will circulate an invitation in the coming months.

In the interim, we want to remind Special Commissioners to:

- ***Sign the Special Commissioner's Oath upon notice of appointment.***
 - Due to COVID-19, we no longer require Special Commissioners to come to the Harris County Civil Courthouse to sign the oath. Instead, the paperwork will be administered and coordinated by the condemning authority before the start of the remote hearing, or if the hearing is in person, at the hearing.
- ***Be able to attend the hearings remotely via Zoom or another teleconferencing technology, as needed.***
- ***Update any changes to your contact information and real property ownership in Harris County, Texas with the Harris County Clerk's Office.***
 - Please be advised that the Courts will begin requiring an annual certification of ownership of real property in Harris County, Texas to confirm an individual's eligibility to serve as a Special Commissioner.
 - At any time before and between annual certifications, the Courts also ask that Special Commissioners promptly update the Clerk's Office and the Courts' Clerks if they no longer own any real property in Harris County and therefore are ineligible to serve.
- ***Be on time for the hearings. Record your arrival and departure times for billing and fee request purposes.***

- **Accurately report time spent on: (i) scheduling the hearing date; (ii) traveling to the hearing; and (iii) appearing at the hearing.**
 - Travel time should *not* be included if the hearing is handled remotely via Zoom or other teleconferencing technology.
 - Limited time spent on scheduling may be billed for, yet should not exceed 30 minutes.
 - If a condemnation matter settles, a brief appearance may be necessary for the parties to present the closing documents; such time may be billed, yet should not exceed 30 minutes.

For any questions regarding time and billing, please speak with the party issuing payment before fee requests are presented to the Court for approval. The Court will only approve fees (\$250 per hour) for actual time spent on the case. Any abuses may result in nonpayment and suspension of future appointments.

We greatly appreciate your service and expertise, and are committed to ensuring that you receive the resources needed to effectively determine proper condemnation awards pursuant to the law. We look forward to seeing you at the 2020 Special Commissioners CLE, and will keep you apprised of the details. Until then, stay safe and well!

Sincerely,



Judge George Barnstone
County Civil Court at Law No. 1



Judge LaShawn A. Williams
County Civil Court at Law No. 3



Judge Jim F. Kovach
County Civil Court at Law No. 2



Judge Lesley Briones
County Civil Court at Law No. 4