

§ 963.17

such rate as may be fixed by contract between the reporter and Postal Service. Any party desiring a copy of the transcript shall order it from the contract reporter in a timely manner to avoid delay in filing briefs.

§ 963.17 Proposed findings of fact and conclusions of law.

(a) Each party who participates in the hearing may, unless the presiding officer orders otherwise, submit proposed findings of fact, conclusions of law, orders, and supporting reasons, either in writing or orally at the discretion of the presiding officer. Unless given orally, the date set for filing of proposed findings of fact, conclusions of law, orders, and supporting reasons shall be within 15 days after the delivery of the official transcript to the Recorder, who shall notify both parties of the date of its receipt. The filing date for proposed findings of fact, conclusions of law, orders, and supporting reasons shall be the same for both parties. If not submitted by such date, unless extension of time for the filing thereof is granted, they will not be included in the record or given consideration.

(b) Except when presented orally before the close of the hearing, proposed findings of fact shall be set forth in serially numbered paragraphs and shall state with particularity all evidentiary facts in the record with appropriate citations to the transcript or exhibits supporting the proposed findings. Each proposed conclusion shall be stated separately.

[52 FR 18912, May 20, 1987; 52 FR 20599, June 2, 1987]

§ 963.18 Initial decision.

Unless given orally at the conclusion of the hearing, the presiding officer shall render an initial decision as expeditiously as practicable following the conclusion of the hearing and the receipt of the proposed findings and conclusions, if any. The initial decision becomes the final agency decision if a timely appeal is not taken.

§ 963.19 Appeal.

Either party may file exceptions in a brief on appeal to the Judicial Officer within 15 days after receipt of the ini-

39 CFR Ch. I (7-1-25 Edition)

tial or tentative decision unless additional time is granted. A reply brief may be filed within 15 days after the receipt of the appeal brief by the opposing party. The Judicial Officer has all powers of a presiding officer and is authorized to decide all issues de novo.

§ 963.20 Final agency decision.

The Judicial Officer, or by delegation the Associate Judicial Officer, renders the final agency decision which will be served upon the parties. If the decision is that the Postal Service's prohibitory order was violated, the Recorder shall provide a certified copy of the record to the General Counsel for use in seeking court enforcement of the order.

§ 963.21 Official record.

The transcript of testimony together with all pleadings, orders, exhibits, briefs, and other documents filed in the proceeding constitute the official record of the proceeding.

§ 963.22 Public information.

The Librarian of the Postal Service maintains for public inspection in the Library copies of all initial, tentative, and final agency decisions and orders. The Recorder maintains the complete official record of every proceeding.

[52 FR 18912, May 20, 1987, as amended at 63 FR 66053, Dec. 1, 1998]

PART 964—WITHHELD MAIL

Sec.

- 964.1 Authority for rules.
- 964.2 Scope of rules.
- 964.3 Customer petitions; notice of hearing; answer; summary judgment.
- 964.4 Hearings.
- 964.5 Election as to hearing.
- 964.6 Default.
- 964.7 Presiding officers.
- 964.8 Subpoenas and witness fees not authorized.
- 964.9 Discovery; interrogatories; admission of facts; production; and inspection of documents.
- 964.10 Evidence.
- 964.11 Transcript.
- 964.12 Computation of time.
- 964.13 Continuances and extensions.
- 964.14 Proposed findings of fact and conclusions of law.
- 964.15 Decisions.
- 964.16 Appeal.
- 964.17 Final agency decision.

United States Postal Service

§ 964.3

- 964.18 Compromise and informal disposition.
- 964.19 Orders.
- 964.20 Modification or revocation of orders.
- 964.21 Official record.
- 964.22 Public information.
- 964.23 Ex Parte communications.

AUTHORITY: 39 U.S.C. 204, 401, 3003, 3004; 5 U.S.C. 554.

SOURCE: 52 FR 36763, Oct. 1, 1987, unless otherwise noted.

§ 964.1 Authority for rules.

These rules of practice are issued by the Judicial Officer of the United States Postal Service pursuant to authority delegated by the Postmaster General (39 CFR 224.1(c)(4)).

[52 FR 36763, Oct. 1, 1987, as amended at 67 FR 62179, Oct. 4, 2002]

§ 964.2 Scope of rules.

The rules in this part provide for administrative review of cases in which the Chief Postal Inspector or his delegate, acting pursuant to 39 U.S.C. 3003(a), has withheld from delivery mail which he believes is involved in a scheme described in section 3003(a), and cases in which the Chief Postal Inspector or his delegate, acting pursuant to 39 U.S.C. 3004, determines that letters or parcels sent in the mail are addressed to places not the residence or regular business address of the person for whom they are intended to enable the person to escape identification.

[52 FR 36763, Oct. 1, 1987, as amended at 67 FR 62179, Oct. 4, 2002]

§ 964.3 Customer petitions; notice of hearing; answer; summary judgment.

(a) *Petition.* Any addressee who receives notice from the Chief Postal Inspector or his delegate that his mail has been withheld pursuant to 39 U.S.C. 3003(a) or 3004 may oppose such action by filing with the Judicial Officer a written Petition stating the reasons for his or her opposition. The Petition, signed by the Petitioner or his or her attorney, shall be filed via the Judicial Officer Electronic filing system at <https://usps-judicialoffice.journaltech.com> or via certified mail to the Recorder, Judicial Officer Department, United States Postal Service, 2101 Wilson Boulevard, Suite 600, Arlington, VA 22201-3078. The Petition must be filed within

14 days of the date upon which the Petitioner received the notice. The failure of an addressee who has received notice of withheld mail to file a Petition opposing such action with the Judicial Officer shall constitute a waiver of hearing and further procedural steps by the addressee. The Chief Postal Inspector or his or her designee of the Postal Service shall thereupon file the matter with the Judicial Officer for issuance of a final order pursuant to § 964.19. Such referral shall contain a statement of the basis for the detention, evidence that the notice of the detention and the addressee's right to petition for review under this part were served on the addressee in person or by mailing a copy to the address to which the detained mail is directed, the date of such service, and a copy of the proposed order sought by the Chief Postal Inspector or his or her designee.

(b) *Notice of hearing.* On receipt of the Petition, the Recorder shall schedule a hearing on a date not later than 28 days after the date of receipt. A Notice of Hearing shall be sent to the Petitioner. A copy of the Notice of Hearing and the Petition shall be sent to the Chief Postal Inspector or his or her designee of the U.S. Postal Service.

(c) *Answer.* The Chief Postal Inspector or his or her designee of the Postal Service shall file an Answer to the Petition within 10 days of receipt of the Petition from the Recorder.

(d) *Summary judgment.* Upon motion of either the Chief Postal Inspector or his or her designee or the Petitioner, or upon his own initiative, the presiding officer may find that the Petition and Answer present no material issues of fact requiring an evidentiary hearing and thereupon may render an initial decision granting or dismissing the Petition. The initial decision shall become the final agency decision if a timely appeal is not taken pursuant to § 964.16 of this part.

(e) *Filing and service.* All documents required under this part must be filed using the electronic filing system unless the presiding officer permits otherwise. Documents submitted using the electronic filing system are considered filed as of the date/time (Eastern Time) reflected in the system. Documents mailed to the Recorder are considered

§ 964.4

filed on the date mailed as evidenced by a United States Postal Service postmark. Filings by any other means are considered filed upon receipt by the Recorder of a complete copy of the filing during normal business hours. Normal business hours are between 8:45 a.m. and 4:45 p.m. (Eastern Time), Monday through Friday except holidays. If both parties are participating in the electronic filing system, separate service upon the opposing party is not required. Otherwise, documents shall be served personally or by mail on the opposing party, noting on the document filed, or on the transmitting letter, that a copy has been so furnished.

[52 FR 36763, Oct. 1, 1987, as amended at 53 FR 4849, Feb. 18, 1988; 63 FR 66053, Dec. 1, 1998; 71 FR 53972, Sept. 13, 2006; 81 FR 40194, June 21, 2016; 89 FR 61022, July 30, 2024]

§ 964.4 Hearings.

Hearings are held at 2101 Wilson Boulevard, Suite 600, Arlington, VA 22201-3078, or other locations designated by the presiding officer. Not later than 10 days prior to the date fixed for the hearing, a party may file a request that a hearing be held to receive evidence in his behalf at a place other than that designated for hearing in the notice. He shall support his request with a statement outlining:

(a) The evidence to be offered in such place;

(b) The names and addresses of the witnesses who will testify; and

(c) The reasons why such evidence cannot be produced at Arlington, VA.

The presiding officer shall give consideration to the convenience and necessity of the parties and the relevance of the evidence to be offered

[52 FR 36763, Oct. 1, 1987, as amended at 63 FR 66053, Dec. 1, 1998]

§ 964.5 Election as to hearing.

If both parties elect, they may waive an oral hearing and submit the matter for decision on the basis of the Petition and Answer, subject to the authority of the presiding officer to require the parties to furnish such further evidence or such briefs as necessary. The request to waive oral hearing should be filed not later than 10 days prior to the date set for hearing.

39 CFR Ch. I (7-1-25 Edition)

§ 964.6 Default.

If a Petitioner fails to appear at the hearing without notice or without adequate cause the presiding officer may issue an order dismissing the Petition and refer the matter to the Judicial Officer for issuance of the order provided for under § 964.19. An order of dismissal issued under this section may be appealed to the Judicial Officer within 10 days from the date of the order.

[52 FR 36763, Oct. 1, 1987, as amended at 53 FR 4849, Feb. 18, 1988]

§ 964.7 Presiding officers.

(a) The presiding officer shall be an Administrative Law Judge qualified in accordance with law or the Judicial Officer. The Chief Administrative Law Judge shall assign cases. The Judicial Officer may preside at the hearing if an Administrative Law Judge is unavailable.

(b) The presiding officer has authority to:

(1) Administer oaths and affirmations;

(2) Examine witnesses;

(3) Rule upon offers of proof, admissibility of evidence and matters of procedure;

(4) Order any pleadings amended upon motion of a party at any time prior to the close of the hearing;

(5) Maintain discipline and decorum and exclude from the hearing any person acting in an indecorous manner;

(6) Require the filing of briefs or memoranda of law on any matter upon which he is required to rule;

(7) Order prehearing conferences for the purpose of the settlement or simplification of issues by the parties or for any other purpose he believes will facilitate the processing of the proceeding;

(8) Order the proceeding reopened at any time prior to his decision for the receipt of additional evidence;

(9) Render an initial decision, which becomes the final agency decision unless a timely appeal is taken: The Judicial Officer may issue a tentative or a final decision;

(10) Rule upon applications and requests filed under § 964.9 of this part.

[52 FR 36763, Oct. 1, 1987, as amended at 81 FR 40195, June 21, 2016]

United States Postal Service

§ 964.10

§ 964.8 Subpoenas and witness fees not authorized.

The Postal Service is not authorized to issue subpoenas requiring the attendance or testimony of witnesses, nor to pay fees and expenses for a Petitioner's witnesses or for depositions requested by a Petitioner.

§ 964.9 Discovery; interrogatories; admission of facts; production and inspection of documents.

(a) *General policy and protective orders.* The parties are encouraged to engage in voluntary discovery procedures. In connection with any discovery procedure permitted under this part, the presiding officer may issue any order which justice requires to protect a party or person from annoyance, embarrassment, oppression, or undue burden or expense. Such orders may include limitations on the scope, method, time and place for discovery, and provisions for protecting confidential information or documents from unwarranted public disclosure. Each party shall bear its own expenses relating to discovery.

(b) *Depositions.* (1) After the issuance of a notice of hearing described in § 964.3 of this part, the parties may mutually agree to, or the presiding officer may, upon application of either party and for good cause shown, order the taking of testimony of any person by deposition upon oral examination or written interrogatories before any officer authorized to administer oaths at the place of examination, for use as evidence or for purposes of discovery. The application for order shall specify whether the purpose of the deposition is discovery or for use as evidence, or both.

(2) The time, place, and manner of taking depositions shall be as mutually agreed by the parties, or failing such agreement, governed by order of the presiding officer.

(3) No testimony taken by depositions shall be considered as part of the evidence in the hearing unless and until such testimony is offered and received in evidence at such hearing. Depositions will not ordinarily be received in evidence if the deponent is present and can testify personally at the hearing. In such instances, how-

ever, the deposition may be used to contradict or impeach the testimony of the witness given at the hearing. In cases submitted on the record, the presiding officer may, in his discretion, receive depositions as evidence in supplementation of the record.

(c) *Interrogatories to parties.* Not later than 5 days after the filing of the Answer described in § 964.3, a party may serve on the other party written interrogatories to be answered separately in writing, signed under oath and returned within 10 days. Upon timely objection by the party, the presiding officer will determine the extent to which the interrogatories will be permitted.

(d) *Admission of facts.* Not later than 5 days after the filing of the Answer described in § 964.3, a party may serve upon the other party a request for the admission of specified facts. Within 10 days after receipt of the request for admissions, the party served shall admit or answer each specified fact or file objections thereto. Any factual propositions set out in the request to which a party fails to respond shall be deemed admitted.

(e) *Production and inspection of documents.* Upon motion of any party showing good cause therefor, and upon notice, the presiding officer may order the other party to produce and permit the inspection and copying or photographing of any designated documents and or objects, provided that such documents and objects are not privileged, their relevance to the cause or causes in issue is explained, and they are reasonably calculated to lead to the discovery of admissible evidence. If the parties cannot themselves agree thereon, the presiding officer shall specify the terms and conditions for making the inspection and taking the copies and photographs.

§ 964.10 Evidence.

(a) In general, admissibility will hinge on relevancy and materiality. However, relevant evidence may be excluded if its probative value is substantially outweighed by the danger of unfair prejudice, or by considerations of undue delay, waste of time, or needless presentation of cumulative evidence.

§ 964.11

(b) Testimony shall be given under oath or affirmation and witnesses shall be subject to cross-examination.

(c) Agreed statements of fact are encouraged and may be received in evidence.

§ 964.11 Transcript.

Testimony and argument at hearings shall be reported verbatim, unless the presiding officer orders otherwise. Transcripts or copies of the proceedings are supplied to the parties at such rate as may be fixed by contract between the reporter and Postal Service. Any party desiring a copy of the transcript shall order it from the contract reporter in a timely manner to avoid delay in filing briefs.

§ 964.12 Computation of time.

A designated period of time under these rules means calendar days, excludes the day the period begins, and includes the last day of the period unless the last day is a Saturday, Sunday, or legal holiday, in which case the period runs until the close of business on the next business day.

§ 964.13 Continuances and extensions.

Continuances and extensions will be granted by the presiding officer for good cause shown.

§ 964.14 Proposed findings of fact and conclusions of law.

(a) Each party to a proceeding, except one who fails to answer the Petition or, having answered, either fails to appear at the hearing or indicates in the answer that he does not desire to appear, may, unless at the discretion of the presiding officer such is not appropriate, submit proposed findings of fact, conclusions of law, orders and supporting reasons either in oral or written form in the discretion of the presiding officer. The presiding officer may also require parties to submit proposed findings of fact, conclusions of law, orders, and supporting reasons. Unless given orally, the date set for filing of proposed findings of fact, conclusions of law, orders and supporting reasons shall be within 15 days after the delivery of the official transcript to the Recorder who shall notify both parties of the date of its receipt. The filing

39 CFR Ch. I (7-1-25 Edition)

date for proposed findings of fact, conclusions of law, orders and supporting reasons shall be the same for both parties. If not submitted by such date, unless extension of time for the filing thereof is granted, they will not be included in the record or given consideration.

(b) Except when presented orally before the close of the hearing, proposed findings of fact shall be set forth in serially numbered paragraphs and shall state with particularity all evidentiary facts in the record with appropriate citations to the transcript or exhibits supporting the proposed finding. Each proposed conclusion shall be separately stated.

§ 964.15 Decisions.

(a) *Initial decision by Administrative Law Judge.* A written initial decision shall be rendered by an Administrative Law Judge with all due speed. The initial decision shall include findings and conclusions with the reasons therefor upon all the material issues of fact or law presented in the record, and the appropriate orders or denial thereof. The initial decision shall become the final agency decision unless an appeal is taken in accordance with § 964.16.

(b) *Tentative or final decision by the Judicial Officer.* When the Judicial Officer presides at the hearing he shall issue a final or a tentative decision. Such decision shall include findings and conclusions with the reasons therefor upon all the material issues of fact or law presented in the record, and the appropriate orders or denial thereof. The tentative decision shall become the final agency decision unless exceptions are filed in accordance with § 964.16.

§ 964.16 Appeal.

(a) Either party may file exceptions in a brief on appeal to the Judicial Officer within 15 days after receipt of the initial or tentative decision unless additional time is granted. A reply brief may be filed within 15 days after receipt of the appeal brief by the opposing party. The Judicial Officer has all powers of a presiding officer and is authorized to decide all issues *de novo*.

(b) Briefs upon appeal or in support of exceptions to a tentative decision by

the Judicial Officer and replies thereto shall be filed in triplicate with the Recorder and contain the following matter in the order indicated:

(1) A subject index of the matters presented, with page references; a table of cases alphabetically arranged; a list of statutes and texts cited with page references.

(2) A concise abstract or statement of the case in briefs on appeal or in support of exceptions.

(3) Numbered exceptions to specific findings and conclusions of fact, conclusions of law, or recommended orders of the presiding officer in briefs on appeal or in support of exceptions.

(4) A concise argument clearly setting forth points of fact and of law relied upon in support of or in opposition to each exception taken, together with specific references to the parts of the record and the legal or other authorities relied upon.

§ 964.17 Final agency decision.

The Judicial Officer renders the final agency decision and order which will be served upon the parties and upon the postmaster at the office where the mail at issue is being held.

[52 FR 36763, Oct. 1, 1987, as amended at 53 FR 4849, Feb. 18, 1988]

§ 964.18 Compromise and informal disposition.

Nothing in these rules precludes the compromise, settlement, and informal disposition of proceedings initiated under these rules at any time prior to the issuance of the final agency decision.

§ 964.19 Orders.

If an order is issued by the Judicial Officer which prohibits delivery of mail to a Petitioner it shall be incorporated in the record of the proceeding. The Recorder shall cause notice of the order to be published in the *Postal Bulletin* and cause the order to be transmitted to such postmasters and other officers and employees of the Postal Service as may be required to place the order into effect.

[52 FR 36763, Oct. 1, 1987, as amended at 53 FR 4849, Feb. 18, 1988]

§ 964.20 Modification or revocation of orders.

A party against whom an order or orders have been issued may file an application for modification or revocation thereof. The Recorder shall transmit a copy of the application to the Chief Postal Inspector or his or her designee, who shall file a written reply within 10 days after receipt or such other period as the Judicial Officer may fix. A copy of the reply shall be sent to the applicant by the Recorder. Thereafter an order granting or denying such application will be issued by the Judicial Officer.

[52 FR 36763, Oct. 1, 1987, as amended at 71 FR 53972, Sept. 13, 2006]

§ 964.21 Official record.

The transcript of testimony together with all pleadings, orders, exhibits, briefs, and other documents filed in the proceeding constitute the official record of the proceeding.

§ 964.22 Public information.

The Librarian of the Postal Service maintains for public inspection in the Library copies of all initial, tentative, and final agency decisions and orders. The Recorder maintains the complete official record of every proceeding.

[52 FR 36763, Oct. 1, 1987, as amended at 63 FR 66053, Dec. 1, 1998]

§ 964.23 Ex parte communications.

The provisions of 5 U.S.C. 551(14), 556(d), and 557(d) prohibiting ex parte communications are made applicable to proceedings under these rules of practice.

PART 965—MAIL DISPUTES

Sec.	
965.1	Authority for rules.
965.2	Scope of rules.
965.3	Notice to parties.
965.4	Presiding officers.
965.5	Initial submissions by parties.
965.6	Comments by parties.
965.7	Default.
965.8	Hearings.
965.9	Evidence.
965.10	Transcript.
965.11	Initial decision.
965.12	Appeal.
965.13	Compromise and informal disposition.