

82a-646. Release of lands from district; factors to consider; compensation, when; appraisers; appeal. (a) Terms used in this section shall have the meanings provided by K.S.A. 82a-612, and amendments thereto.

(b) If certain lands included within a district cannot be economically or adequately served by the facilities of the district, the owners of such lands may petition the board of directors of the district to release those lands from the district. The petition shall describe the lands requested to be released and shall be signed by at least 75% of the total number of the owners of the lands requested to be released. The board of directors may prescribe a fee to be collected from the petitioners for the purpose of offsetting costs reasonably expected to be incurred by the district in hearing the request for release. The petition for release, together with a verified list of the names and addresses of all owners of the land requested to be released, and the prescribed fee, shall be filed with the secretary of the district.

(c) If the board of directors of the district finds the petition to be in proper form, the board shall conduct a hearing on the petition for release. Notice of the time and place of the hearing shall be mailed to all owners of land requested to be released not later than 10 days before the hearing. The hearing may be continued from time to time without further notice to landowners.

(d) In considering the petition for release, the board shall make specific written findings of fact and conclusions determining whether the lands requested to be released cannot be economically or adequately serviced by the facilities of the district and whether such release would be in the best interests of the landowner and the district. The findings and conclusions shall be based upon the preponderance of evidence presented to the board. In determining whether to grant the petition for release, the board's considerations shall be based on the following factors:

(1) Whether the petitioners for release of lands have applied for one or more benefit units to serve the lands requested to be released, which applications have been denied directly or where the cost of the benefit units or service or equipment is unreasonable, excessive or confiscatory so as to render service unavailable;

(2) the length of time before the board of directors reasonably expect to make water service available to the lands requested to be released;

(3) whether water service is available from another source if the lands are released from the district and the relative cost of obtaining service from each source;

(4) if water service is available from the district to the lands requested to be released, the relative cost of obtaining such water service, as determined by the district, compared to the additional value of the lands after water service is made available;

(5) if water service is available from the district, the cost of obtaining such water service, as determined by the district, compared to the cost of obtaining water from another source;

(6) whether any applicable law will prevent any other water suppliers from serving the lands requested to be released;

(7) whether the district's interest in maintaining the integrity of its territory is outweighed by the landowners' need to obtain a source of supply of water to the lands requested to be released;

(8) whether the decision of such board to deny release of lands would allow the district to yield more than adequate compensation;

(9) whether the district establishes a rate for services or equipment that is disproportionate to the services rendered;

(10) whether the district has provided water service to residents or landowners within the disputed territory and would be losing existing customers or whether the disputed territory would supply new customers;

(11) whether the district can provide a safe and adequate supply of water to customers of such district and whether a greater level of water service can be provided by another provider and the relative cost of each option;

(12) whether such board's refusal to detach the territory would result in any economic waste or hinder any economic development; and

(13) where a district provides water service to residences and where a city is required to provide fire protection services, if duplicate water service lines would cause any economic or physical waste.

(e) The board may approve the release of all or part of the lands requested to be released or may deny the request. The burden of proof shall be on the petitioners for release. The board of directors shall make a determination on the petition for release within 120 days after its receipt, shall record its written findings and conclusions in the minutes of the district and shall mail a copy of such written findings and conclusions to each petitioner within seven days.

(f) Except as provided in subsection (g), any owner of land requested to be released from the district who is dissatisfied with the determination of the board of directors on the petition for release may bring an action in the district court of the county in which the district is located to determine if the board of directors of the district abused its discretion in making such determination. Such appeal shall be filed within 30 days after the final decision of the board.

(g) If the district denies the landowner's petition for release because such release would not yield adequate compensation to the district, once such release is denied, the district and the landowner shall determine the amount of compensation sufficient to enable the district to be adequately compensated from the release in the following manner:

(1) The district and the landowner shall each select one qualified appraiser and the two appraisers so selected shall then select a third appraiser for the purpose of conducting an appraisal to determine the amount of compensation sufficient to enable the district to be adequately compensated from the release. The appraisers shall consider all elements of value, employing any method of valuation the appraisers deem appropriate and shall specifically consider the following factors in determining reasonable value:

(A) Whether any property of the district is rendered useless or valueless to the district;

(B) the impact on the existing indebtedness of the district and such district's ability to repay that debt;

(C) the value of the service facilities of the district located within the area in question;

(D) the amount of the district's contractual obligations allocable to the area in question;

(E) any demonstrated impairment of service or increase of cost to consumers of the district remaining after the release and the impact on future revenues lost from existing customers;

(F) any necessary and reasonable legal expenses and professional fees;

(G) any factors relevant to maintaining the current financial integrity of the district; and

(H) If the area released consists of land for which no water service is being provided by the system at the time of the release, the value of such land based on the planning, design and construction of improvements located outside the released area reasonably made to provide future water service to the released area;

(I) any other relevant factors.

(2) The appraisers shall hear such evidence as the appraisers deem appropriate and shall make a written summary of findings and conclusions. At least two of the three appraisers shall agree as to the amount of compensation owed by the landowner to the district and shall require such payment from the landowner to the district for acceptance.

(3) If either the district or the landowner is dissatisfied with the decision of the appraisers, then the district or the landowner may appeal within 30 days such award to the district court. Such appeal shall be heard de novo by the court without a jury.

(h) If the board of directors of the district approves the petition, or if the district court on appeal determines that the board abused its discretion in denying release, a copy of the board's action approving the release or of the district court's order on appeal, as the case may be, shall be transmitted to the chief engineer and to the county clerk, who shall note the change of such district's boundaries.

History: L. 2001, ch. 80, § 1; L. 2010, ch. 15, § 5; July 1.