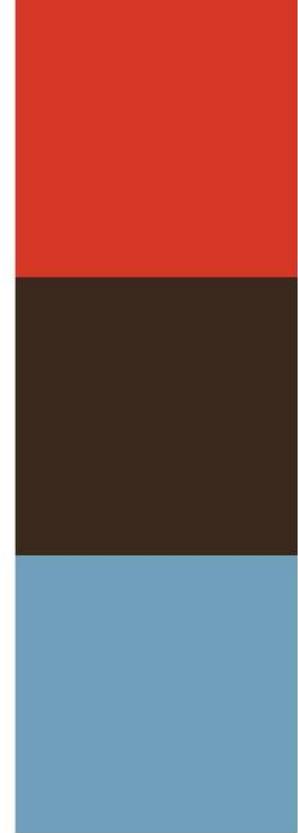


# Municipal Appropriations 101:

When Private Property  
is Needed for a Public  
Purpose



Wednesday, September 2, 2020

# Your “Professors”



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Irv Sugerman is a partner in Brouse McDowell’s Real Estate and Litigation Practice Groups. His practice includes all facets of land use planning, zoning, economic development, real estate, and business litigation. Through his years of litigation and trial practice, Irv has become a leader in governmental law and litigation, as well as mediation and alternative dispute resolution. Irv serves as the law director/solicitor for three political subdivisions; Coventry Township, New Franklin, and the Village of Lodi. He also regularly represents many other Northeast Ohio political subdivisions as special counsel. Prior to joining Brouse McDowell, Irv served as Managing Partner for a local law firm. He has also served as the Adjunct Professor of Negotiations at The University of Akron.

# Course Syllabus

- I. Constitutional Authority
- II. Notable Case Law
- III. Review of Applicable Revised Code Sections
- IV. Steps in the Appropriation Process
- V. Public Purpose & Necessity
- VI. Appraisals and Determination of Fair Market Value
- VII. Resolving Disputes
- VIII. Contested Takings & Litigation

# Chapter 1 – “The Law”

Constitutional rights, and a review of the applicable statutes governing municipal takings.



# Ohio Constitution

## Article I – Section 1 “Inalienable Rights.”

“All men are, by nature, free and independent, and have certain inalienable rights, among which are those of enjoying and defending life and liberty, **acquiring, possessing, and protecting property**, and seeking and obtaining happiness and safety.”

## Article I – Section 19 “Inviolability of Private Property.”

“Private property shall ever be held inviolate, **but subservient to the public welfare**. When taken **in time of war or other public exigency**, imperatively requiring its immediate seizure or for the purpose of making or repairing roads, which shall be open to the public, without charge, a compensation shall be made to the owner, in money, **and in all other cases, where private property shall be taken for public use, a compensation therefor shall first be made in money, or first secured by a deposit of money; and such compensation shall be assessed by a jury, without deduction for benefits to any property of the owner.**”

# Ohio Constitution

## Article XVIII – Section 3 “Municipal Powers.”

“Municipalities shall have authority to exercise all powers of local self-government and to adopt and enforce within their limits such local police, sanitary and other similar regulations, as are not in conflict with general laws.”

## Article XVIII – Section 7 “Home Rule.”

“Any municipality may frame and adopt or amend a charter for its government and may, subject to the provisions of Section 3 of this Article, exercise thereunder all powers of local self-government.”

## Article XVIII – Section 10 “Appropriation in Excess of Public Use.”

“A municipality appropriating or otherwise acquiring property for public use may in furtherance of such public use appropriate or acquire an excess over that actually to be occupied by the improvement, and may sell such excess with such restrictions as shall be appropriate to preserve the improvement made...”

# Case Law

*Kelo v. City of New London*, 545 U.S. 469 (2005).

City of New London (Connecticut) approved an economic revitalization plan. The City's development agent purchased the bulk of the property required for the project, and the City initiated condemnation proceedings against those owners who were unwilling to sell. The owners brought a state court action claiming that the taking of their property violated the "public use" restriction of the Fifth Amendment.

On appeal, the Supreme Court determined that the City's taking qualified as a "public use," under the 5<sup>th</sup> Amendment "Takings Clause" nothing that although the City cannot take land simply to confer a private benefit to a private party, there is no requirement that the entirety of the condemned property must be put to public use...only that such taking falls within the broader scope of "public purpose," which is how the "public use restriction" should be interpreted, with deference given to the legislative body as to what public needs justify the use of the takings power. In looking at the City's plan at issue, the Court found it to be comprehensive in character, and therefore the owner's challenges should not be reviewed on a piecemeal basis, but rather in light of the entire plan, which the Court unquestionably serves a public purpose.

# Case Law

*Kelo, cont.*

Court's holding provides that appropriation of private properties for the purpose of economic development and rejuvenation pursuant to a comprehensive development plan is permissible without evidence that the parcels to be appropriated are deteriorated, blighted, or in an otherwise poor condition.

This resulted in concerns from the Ohio Legislature as to whether eminent domain law would be too far-reaching under the Ohio Constitution.

# Ohio General Assembly

126 H.B. 167 (2006):

In response to *Kelo*, the Ohio General Assembly adopted 126 H.B. 167 and imposed a moratorium on the use of eminent domain to take private property in **unblighted areas where the primary purpose of the appropriation is for economic development that will result in ownership of the property being vested in another private person.**

General Assembly formed a task force to study how the *Kelo* decision affects state law governing eminent domain proceedings in Ohio.

# Case Law

*City of Norwood v. Horney*, 110 Ohio St.3d 353 (2006). \*During 126 H.B. 167's moratorium.

A private development company (Rookwood) sought to redevelop areas of Norwood (Cincinnati) with modernized apartments, condos, and office and retail space. Norwood anticipated that the project would result in an additional \$2,000,000 in annual revenue.

Rookwood entered into a development agreement with Norwood. Rookwood would purchase property needed for the project, and Norwood would pursue appropriation against owners that refused to sell. Norwood's Code required that an urban-renewal study be conducted before eminent domain was exercised. Although acknowledging that many of the homes were in fair to good condition, the consultants concluded that the neighborhood was a "deteriorating area" to satisfy the term defined in Norwood's Code.

Although the trial court found that the consultants' study was flawed, and included erroneous factors in an attempt to sufficiently characterize the area as "deteriorating" to meet the standard, the court declined to find that Norwood abused its discretion, concluding that the area was, at the very least, "in danger of deteriorating into a blighted area."

# Case Law

*Norwood, cont.*

On appeal, the Ohio Supreme Court determined that the public-use requirement of Section 19, Article I of the Ohio Constitution **does limit** appropriation of private property for economic benefit purposes.

Court determined that, although economic factors may be considered in determining whether private property may be appropriated, **economic or financial benefit alone is insufficient to satisfy this public-use requirement.**

Court further determined that the City's standard of "deteriorating area" as permitting such a taking was unconstitutional **because the term inherently requires speculation as to future conditions of the area, rather than its condition at the time of the taking;** and therefore held that a municipality does not have the authority to appropriate private property based on mere belief or speculation as to what will happen if the property is left to deteriorate.

# Case Law

*Norwood, cont.*

Court expressly distinguished appropriations made for the valid purpose of eliminating blight, but struck down Norwood's renewal ordinance as being void for vagueness in the same manner as they were inherently subjective and required speculation.

*Okay, so what now?*

Following Norwood, the General Assembly amended several sections of Ohio's eminent domain law with the intent of protecting private property owners against overzealous appropriations intended to promote economic development.

Included amendments narrowing the definition of "blighted areas" and excluding the taking of property for conveyance to a private enterprise and takings solely for the purpose of increasing public revenue from the definition of "public use."

# Ohio Revised Code

Ohio Revised Code sections addressing appropriations:

## R.C. 719.01 – 719.05:

Addresses and acknowledges, generally, a municipality's right exercise its power to appropriate property, and certain categories and limitations applicable to certain types of property and the municipality's purpose for appropriation.

## R.C. 163.01 – 163.22:

Provides procedural requirements for all appropriations of real property.

# R.C. 719.01

## R.C. 719.01:

Identifies specific permitted purposes for municipal appropriations:

- (a) opening, widening, and extending streets; (b) parks, market places, and playgrounds; (c) public halls and offices, and buildings for municipal departments; (d) prisons; (e) hospitals and cemeteries; (f) levees and wharves; (g) bridges, aqueducts; (h) libraries and university sites; (i) canals or watercourses; (j) sewers, drains, sewage and disposal plants; (k) electric lighting, heating, and power plants; (l) parkways and park grounds around public buildings to preserve and protect the same; (m) for providing water supply to inhabitants; (n) streets and transportation ways; and (o) airports and air navigation facilities.

“The powers conferred upon municipal corporations by this section shall be exercised for the purposes and in the manner provided in sections 163.01 to 163.22, inclusive, of the Revised Code.”

# R.C. 719.011

## R.C. 719.011:

Addresses rights of an impacted city to appropriate for purposes or creating or preserving jobs, employment opportunities, and to improve the economic welfare of the people.

Note: The powers under this section can only be exercised after a public hearing and approval by the legislative authority of the impacted city of a plan for the relocation of persons, families, businesses, and others, and only in conformity with the general plan for the impacted city, the zoning legislation of the impacted city, and a plan prepared pursuant to R.C. 1724.10 by a community improvement corporation, upon the legislative authority's confirmation of such plan.

# R.C. 719.012

## R.C. 719.012:

Addresses appropriation of **(blighted) property for rehabilitation purposes.**

Allows a municipality to appropriate property for this purpose if it meets the definition of “blighted” under R.C. 1.08. Requires that the municipality rehabilitate the building within 2 years after the appropriation to rectify the nuisance and bring it up to code. If this rehabilitation is not completed within the 2 year period, it must be demolished.

If the municipality retains title to the blighted property during rehabilitation, the municipality must then sell the property at a public auction within 180 days after its completion.

Requires newspaper publication of the public auction, and the property must be sold to the highest and best bidder.

# R.C. 719.02

R.C. 719.02:

Addresses appropriation of property located outside the limits of the municipal corporation, and the manner in which taxes must be paid by the municipality for removal from the tax duplicate.

# R.C. 719.03 and 719.031

R.C. 719.03:

Addresses appropriations for cemeteries, and related setback requirements.

R.C. 719.031:

Addresses appropriation of cemetery property for water lines, and costs for relocation or removal of bodies and monuments.

# R.C. 719.04

R.C. 719.04:

Resolution declaring intent to appropriate.

“The legislative authority of a municipal corporation shall, whenever it is deemed necessary to appropriate property, pass a resolution declaring such intent, defining the purpose of the appropriation, and setting forth a pertinent description of the land and the estate or interest therein desired to be appropriated.”

\*See form resolution included in handout materials.

# R.C. 719.05

R.C. 719.05:

Proceedings on passage of appropriation resolution.

“The mayor of a municipal corporation shall, immediately upon the passage of a resolution under section 719.04 of the Revised Code, declaring an intent to appropriate property, for which by one reading is necessary, cause written notice to be given to the owner of, person in possession of, or person having an interest of record in, every piece of property sought to be appropriated, or to the authorized agent of the owner or other such person...

Notice must be made in the same manner provided for service and summons in civil actions.

If cannot be found, notice by publication, with an ordinance passed by 2/3 of the legislative members approving and directing the appropriation to proceed.

# R.C. 163.01

R.C. 163.01:

Provides definitions for the applicable Chapter.

**(H)(1) "Public use" does not include any taking that is for conveyance to a private commercial enterprise, economic development, or solely for the purpose of increasing public revenue, unless the property is conveyed or leased to one of the following: (a) a public utility, municipal power agency, or common carrier; (b) a private entity that occupies a port authority transportation facility; (c) a private entity when the agency that takes the property establishes by a preponderance of the evidence that the property is a blighted parcel or is included in a blighted area.**

**(2) All of the following are presumed to be public uses:** utility facilities, roads, sewers, water lines, public schools, public institutions of higher education, private institutions of higher education that are authorized to appropriate property under section 3333.08 of the Revised Code, public parks, government buildings, port authority transportation facilities, projects by an agency that is a public utility, and similar facilities and uses of land.

# R.C. 163.02

## R.C. 163.02:

(D) Any instrument by which an agency acquires real property pursuant to this section shall include all of the following:

- (1) The name of the agency that has the use and benefit of the real property in the manner required by section 5301.012 of the Revised Code;
- (2) A statement of the purpose of the appropriation as provided with the appropriation petition;
- (3) A statement that the **prior owner possesses a right of repurchase** pursuant to section 163.211 of the Revised Code if the agency decides not to use the property for the purpose stated in the appropriation petition and the owner provides timely notice of a desire to repurchase...

(E) Nothing in this chapter precludes any person **from voluntarily conveying a property to an agency that is considering appropriating the property** or that offers to purchase the property under threat of appropriation...

# R.C. 163.021

R.C. 163.021:

Addresses specifics for taking of blighted areas. Before doing so, a municipality must:

(B)(1) **Adopt a comprehensive development plan** that describes the public need for the property. The plan **shall include at least one study documenting the public need**. All of the costs of developing the plan shall be publicly financed.

(2) If the agency is governed by a legislative body, **obtain a resolution from that legislative body affirming the public need for the property**.

(D) No agency shall appropriate property based on a finding that the parcel is blighted in conjunction with an emergency ordinance or resolution.

# R.C. 163.03

## R.C. 163.03:

Provides a right of entry onto private property for surveys, appraisals, and examinations.

Appropriating agency, prior to the filing of a petition for appropriation, may (with proper notice) enter onto property, which shall not constitute trespass.

Notice must be given to the owner "by such means as a reasonably available" not less than 48 hours in advance, nor more than 30 days prior to the entry.

The appropriating agency is responsible for reimbursement for any actual damages to the property resulting from the entry and examination activities.

# R.C. 163.04

## R.C. 163.04:

Establishes written notice, appraisal, and good faith offer requirements.

The agency must give the owner **written notice of its intent to acquire the property at least 30 days before the filing of a petition**. The notice must be in the form provided by R.C. 163.041, and **must be delivered personally, or by certified mail**, to the owner of the property (or the owner's designated representative).

Together with the notice, or at least 30 days before the filing of a petition, **the agency must provide the owner with a written good faith offer to purchase the property** (subject to revisions based on newly discovered information prior to the commencement of appropriation proceedings).

Prior to appropriation, the agency **must obtain an appraisal of the property, and provide a copy of the appraisal to the owner**.

# R.C. 163.04, cont.

R.C. 163.04, cont.

(D) An agency may appropriate real property only after the agency is unable to agree on a conveyance of the terms of a conveyance, for any reason, with any owner...

\*Irv Sugerman will discuss this in further detail in part 2 of this presentation.

# R.C. 163.041

R.C. 163.041:

Provides statutory form for agency's notice of intent to acquire.

\*See handout materials.

# R.C. 163.05

## R.C. 163.05:

Specifies the required contents for the petition for appropriation, which should be filed as a verified civil action.

- (A) Description of each parcel to be appropriated;
- (B)(1) Statement that appropriation is necessary, for a public use; or
- (B)(2) If property is being appropriated due to blight, a statement that shows the basis for the finding of blight pursuant to the definition in R.C. 1.08.
- (C) Statement of the purpose of the appropriation;
- (D) Statement of the estate or interest sought to be appropriated;
- (E) Names and addresses of the owners;
- (F) Statement showing the requirements of R.C. 163.04 have been met.; and
- (G) A prayer for the appropriation.

# R.C. 163.051

R.C. 163.051:

Addresses mediation regarding the valuation of fair compensation.

“Either an owner of property or an agency may request that the issue of the value of the property be submitted to non-binding mediation. Any request for mediation shall be made in writing within ten business days after the owner files an answer pursuant to section 163.08 of the Revised Code. The court shall appoint a mediator, and the mediation shall be conducted and concluded within fifty days after the owner filed an answer. Only a judge may extend the time for concluding the mediation, and the judge may do so only for the reason of an inability to obtain an appraisal.”

The agency shall pay the cost of mediation.

# R.C. 163.06

## R.C. 163.06:

Provides for a “quick take” procedure requiring court deposit.

A public agency, other than an agency appropriating property for the purposes described in division (B) of this section, that qualifies pursuant to Section 19 of Article I, Ohio Constitution, **may deposit with the court at the time of filing the petition the value of such property appropriated together with the damages, if any, to the residue, as determined by the public agency, and thereupon take possession of and enter upon the property appropriated.** The right of possession upon deposit as provided in this division shall not extend to structures.

\*Division (B) involves appropriations for the purposes of **making or repairing public roads**, or for “implementing a rail service.”

\*Section 19 of Article I provides for appropriations “in time of war **or other public exigency.**”

## R.C. 163.06, cont.

This alternative “quick take” procedure applies only in instances of appropriation “when taken in time of war, or other public exigency imperatively requiring its immediate seizure” (or for making or repairing roads open to the public). It cannot be used under any other purpose.

See *City of Worthington v. Carskadon*, 18 Ohio St.2d 222, 27 Ohio Op. 2d 449, 249 N.E.2d 38 (1969).

Public exigency is defined as “a case of unavoidable urgency and imperatively compelling or insistently calling for immediate action or remedy.”

See *Biery v. Lima*, 21 Ohio App.2d 154, 50 Ohio Op.2d 250, 255 N.E.2d 855 (3rd Dist. 1969).

# R.C. 163.06, cont.

R.C. 163.06(C):

Any time after the deposit is made by the public agency under division (A) or (B) of this section, the owner may apply to the court to withdraw the deposit, and such withdrawal shall in no way interfere with the action except that the sum so withdrawn shall be deducted from the sum of the final verdict or award.

Withdrawing the deposit does not constitute acceptance or validation of the quick take purpose or the municipality's valuation...you can still reserve your day in court.

# R.C. 163.06(B)

R.C. 163.06(B):

Addresses quick take procedure for public road purposes.

Requires payment of a deposit to the court for the value of the property appropriated, together with damages to the residue, as determined by the public agency, and stated in an attached declaration of intention to obtain possession and enter upon the property appropriated.

If structures are included in the roadway appropriation, the owner/occupant shall be required to vacate the structure within 60 days after service of summons under section 163.07 of the Revised Code, after which time the agency may remove the structure.

If removal occurs prior to a jury fixing a disputed value, the court will order: (1) appraisals to be made by 3 persons (one for agency, one for owner, and one by the county auditor), which will be used as evidence at trial; (2) pictures to be taken of the structure; and (3) a description of the structures to be used as evidence.

# R.C. 163.07

R.C. 163.07

Addresses appropriation petition notice requirements.

Notice of the filing of a petition under R.C. 163.05 shall be given to all such owners by “service a summons and a copy of such petition in the manner of service of summons in civil actions.”

Allows for service to those who cannot be served due to unknown residential addresses, or to those who cannot be served within the state, by publication of the substance of the petition, a statement of the date of the filing, and the date on which the matter will be heard, at least once a week for two consecutive weeks in a newspaper in compliance with R.C. 2703.16.

Also addresses succession of ownership of property subject to an appropriation petition. The intermediate owner is entitled to receive such compensation as was awarded to his predecessor in interest to the extent that he has succeeded thereto.

# R.C. 163.08

R.C. 163.08:

Addresses owner's filing of an answer to an appropriation petition.

Owners may file answers (in accordance with Civ. R. 12), which shall be verified as in a civil action and shall contain a general denial or specific denial of each material allegation not admitted.

The agency's right to make the appropriation, the inability of the parties to agree, and the necessity for the appropriation shall be resolved by the court in favor of the agency unless such matters are specifically denied in the answer and the facts relied upon in support of such denial are set forth therein...

If time of war, public exigency, or public roads are the subject of the appropriation (handled via quick take), an answer may not deny the right to make the appropriation, the inability of the parties to agree, or the necessity for the appropriation. For such purposes there is a presumption on behalf of the agency.

# R.C. 163.09

R.C. 163.09:

Addresses timing for hearings, declaration of value, and damages for jury assessment.

If no answer was filed by an owner under R.C. 163.08 (and no settlement exists), the court, upon motion, shall declare the value of the property **taken based on the amount as set forth in any document properly filed with the clerk by the public agency** (the “default judgment” scenario).

If an answer is filed, but the right to make the appropriation or the necessity for the **appropriation are not denied**, the court will set a time within twenty days from the date of the answer for the assessment of compensation by a jury.

If an answer is filed and the right to make the appropriation, the inability of the parties to agree, or the necessity for the appropriation were specifically denied, the court will set a hearing date, not less than five or more than fifteen days from the date the answer was filed, **to hear such matters**. As to such matters, the burden of proof (by a preponderance of evidence) is placed on the agency....**except as follows...**

# R.C. 163.09, cont.

Burden of proof is on the agency at the hearing except where:

- (a) A resolution or ordinance of the agency declaring the necessity for the appropriation **creates a rebuttable presumption** *of the necessity for the appropriation* (if the agency is not appropriating the property due to blight).
- (b) The presentation by a public utility or common carrier of evidence of the necessity for the appropriation **creates a rebuttable presumption** of the necessity for the appropriation.
- (c) Approval by a state or federal regulatory authority of an appropriation by a public utility or common carrier **creates an irrebuttable presumption** of the necessity for the appropriation.

Subject to the irrebuttable presumption of (c) above, **only the judge may determine the necessity of the appropriation.** If the court determines the matters in favor of the agency, **the court shall set a time for the assessment of compensation by the jury not least than sixty days from the date of the journalization of that determination** (subject to the right of the parties to request a mediation as to the valuation issue, and the right of the owner to file an appeal).

# R.C. 163.10

R.C. 163.10:

Addresses the manner in which a jury will be selected for the assessment of compensation question.

# R.C. 163.11

R.C. 163.11:

Addresses guardian ad litem considerations.

# R.C. 163.12

R.C. 163.12:

Provides that a “view of the premises” to be appropriated shall be ordered by the court when requested by any party to the proceedings.

Unrelated, but...

The court may also amend any defect or informality in proceedings under sections 163.01 to 163.22 of the Revised Code. The court may cause new parties to be added and direct further notice to be given to a party in interest as the court considers proper.

# R.C. 163.14

R.C. 163.14:

Addresses the jury and the jury's verdict.

Jury shall assess the compensation for the property taken and damages, if any, to the residue to be paid to the owners.

The verdict shall assess compensation to the owner of a business conducted on the property take for loss of goodwill if the owner can establish the following: (1) the loss is caused by the taking of the property; and (2) the loss cannot reasonably be prevented by relocation of the business or by taking steps and adopting procedures that a reasonably prudent person would take and adopt in preserving the goodwill.

The verdict must be signed by at least  $\frac{3}{4}$  of the members of the jury.

# Part 2 – Valuation and Compensation Considerations

AKA...practical tips for negotiating an eminent domain case before Doug Godshall is your mediator....



# Initial Review of an Eminent Domain Case – Property Owner’s Perspective

The initial shock of receiving a notice letter from the government

“They can’t do THAT”!

“I’ll go Tim Misney on them and make them pay!”



# First Steps

## Property Owner's Perspective

- ❑ Fact gathering from the client – all records relating to the property – deed(s), title work, surveys, mortgages, zoning information, financial information
- ❑ Fact gathering from the Government – appraisals(s), project information, correspondence
- ❑ Fact gathering from outside sources – Court records, news articles

# Second Steps

## Property Owner's Perspective

- Early on, determine if the cost of litigation is worth the potential recovery
- Understand what you can and cannot challenge
- Understand the timing of the taking and how that impacts your client
- Establish and communicate expectations with the client

# First Steps

## The Government's Perspective

- What is the necessity of the take
- What is the timing of the project and how will litigation affect the project dates
- What are the financial constraints
- Understand the political landscape
- Precedent, precedent, precedent

# Second Steps

## The Government's Perspective

- Open the lines of communication
- Provide the relevant, requested documents – be transparent
- Face to face meetings (or Zoom) can humanize the process
- Disclose all available sources of compensation
- Listen for opportunities to utilize non-monetary compensation

# Negotiations Between the Parties

## Property Owner's Perspective

- ❑ Make sure that the decision makers are at the table
- ❑ Understand that 99% of these case will get settled (with or without Doug Godshall)
- ❑ If the Government is not being transparent, consider using a public records request
- ❑ Determine if there are any similarly situated property owners who might be allies (or not)

# Preparing Your Case

- Who do you need on your team?
- Consider alternatives to an appraiser – does the cost justify the expense?
- Can you utilize a limited scope or summary appraisal?
- Consider using a real estate broker/agent opinion of value
- Research verdict and settlement of other cases
- Carefully analyze the government's appraisal – is it fair and do they have room to move?

# Negotiations Between the Parties

## The Government's Perspective

- How will litigation affect the timing of the project?
- What are the economic costs of litigation?
- Understand the political landscape
- Precedent, precedent, precedent

# Irv's Guiding Principles of Negotiations

- ❑ Never make a threat that you do not fully intend to carry out
- ❑ Use objective criteria
- ❑ Invent options for mutual gain – it's not always about the money
- ❑ Expectation management

# Selection of an Appraiser

- ❑ Analyze and define the scope of the project.
  
- ❑ Review qualifications
  - Particularized experience
  - Personality
  - Certifications
  - Conflicts of interest
  - Balanced client roster
  - Recommendations
  - Experience in testifying
  - Engagement letter

# Current Issues in Eminent Domain Litigation

- ❑ Discussion of *Ohio History Connection v. Moundbuilders County Club Co.*, 2020-Ohio-276
  - In the context of an eminent domain proceeding, does the lack of bad faith equate to good faith?
- ❑ Appeal accepted by the Ohio Supreme Court – Case No. 2020-0191

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## About Brouse McDowell

Brouse McDowell is a business law firm based in Northeast Ohio. From offices in Akron, Cleveland, Naples, Toledo and Youngstown, our 80+ attorneys serve clients across the region and far beyond. We're a mid-size firm with the talent, diverse experience and national reach of a large firm and the unwavering service ethic and personal touch of a small firm.

With 100 years of history, we continue our long tradition of delivering sophisticated legal counsel to clients that range from sole proprietorships to the nation's largest corporations. Our practice groups bring together the focused skills and multi-disciplinary experience that businesses need to meet their most pressing goals.