

FEMA BUYOUT - FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

1. ***How long before my house will be appraised?*** The City can provide a tentative time frame only, which could be up to three months. The Request for Proposals (the bidding process to hire the appraiser/s) are due on March 31, 2016. Then, the Assessor will have to review the bidder's proposals and present to the Common Council for authorization of the Mayor to sign the agreement. At that point, the Appraiser has 120 days to complete all the appraisals. Therefore, the worst case scenario would be up to three months before your appraisal is completed.
2. ***What if I don't agree with the amount of the appraisal?*** A property owner has the right to dispute the appraisal and hire (pay for) their own appraiser. The appraiser that you hire will present their appraisal to the City, who will review and advise the property owner of the next step.
3. ***When will I be told how much FEMA is offering for my house?*** Once the appraisal is completed, which could take up to 120 days, a "Statement of Determination of Fair Compensation" will be finalized. This form includes the type of residence, size, and any amount deducted to avoid duplication of benefits, along with the amount of compensation offered for the property. The amount offered will be the fair compensation offered for the property.
4. ***What does Duplication of Benefits mean?*** If a property owner received any funding from either FEMA, NYS, or flood insurance, the amount received must have been put back into the property. Receipts for any structural repairs should be submitted to the City, i.e. Sheet rock, lumber, flooring, cupboards, etc. Receipts for personal property are not included, i.e. clothing, appliances, etc. As an example: if a property owner received funding and didn't repair the home with those funds and instead bought a car, the amount of money received would be deducted from the City's offer, because it would be considered a duplication of benefits.
5. ***How long before the closing on my house will be scheduled?*** Once the appraisal is completed, and the property owner has decided to continue on with the process by accepting the offer on their property (Statement of Determination of Fair Compensation), then a title search on the property is prepared and reviewed. These searches can take 3-4 weeks to prepare. A survey will also need to be prepared, which also takes 3-4 weeks. When the appraisal, title search, and survey are obtained, FEMA must then approve the fair market value and compensation to be offered. This could take another 3-4 weeks. Therefore, it is reasonable to expect the process to take up to six or seven months. The property owner will be notified of a specific closing date approximately 45 days in advance of the scheduled closing.
6. ***What if I have liens or mortgages on the property?*** Any liens or mortgages would be satisfied at the closing. This means that any back taxes owed, any bank, government or personal liens owed, water bills that are outstanding; etc., will be deducted from the final offered amount at the closing. This is no different than if you were selling the property outright.
7. ***Can I keep my appliances?*** Yes, residents will be allowed to remove their appliances (i.e. refrigerator, stove, washer, dryer), because it is considered personal property with no expense at closing. Hot water heaters, furnaces, cupboards, etc., are considered part of the structure and cannot be removed without penalty.

Remember, you can always call City Hall at 363-4800 with any other questions or concerns