

Guidelines and Protocols for Planning Board Virtual Hearings Revised and Adopted August 8, 2022

The following are guidelines and protocols for Planning Board virtual meetings and public hearings using the Zoom Webinar virtual platform.

Procedures for Public Hearings

The following sequential steps are typical of a Planning Board Public Hearing:

- a) Chair calls the hearing to order;
- b) Clerk reads the public hearing notice (if it is a continuation of a previous hearing, there is not typically a notice read; the Chair will announce that it is a continuation);
- c) Chair allows the applicant to make a presentation;
- d) Chair will ask staff or consultants working for the Town to speak or make a presentation;
- e) Board members will ask the applicant, staff, and Town consultants questions; and,
- f) At a point determined by the Chair that the Board members, staff, and Town consultants have no further questions, the Chair will entertain comments/questions from the public.

Hearing Guidelines and Protocols

- 1). Materials Submittal: All materials to be used by the applicant or the Town need to be submitted as a PDF to the Director at least three (3) full business days prior to the hearing so the documents may be uploaded to the website to enable all parties to view materials.
- 2). Time limitations - Meetings: Three-hour limitation on Planning Board meetings including hearings. The Chair may, in exceptional circumstances, at the Chair's discretion, extend this time limit.
- 3). Time limitations – Hearings: Two hour limitation on any hearing with the hearing to be continued to another predetermined date (unless extended at the discretion of the Chair).
- 4). Recording and Posting: Hearings will be recorded and posted (online and possibly on Channel 15). Meetings are also anticipated to be similarly recorded and posted.
- 5). Live Streaming: Hearings will be live streamed on Channel 15 when feasible.
- 6). Virtual Platform: The Town's virtual meeting platform is Zoom. The Planning Board will use the Zoom Webinar platform for all virtual meetings unless/until the Town acquires licenses to utilize an alternative platform.
- 7). How to Join/Speak: Joining and speaking during the hearings may be accomplished either on-line or via phone. Whether participating on-line or by phone, participants must adhere to the guidelines/protocols - particularly relative to being "muted" unless called upon by the

Chair.

- 8). To Speak: Zoom Webinar has a “raise your hand” feature which attendees are to use to let the host and co-host know they wish to speak. When the Chair indicates that they are to allow an “attendee” to speak, the host or co-host will change the attendee’s status to allow them to be unmuted either as an attendee or change their status temporarily to “panelist”. Once the attendee has made their comments or questions, the host or co-host will restore the attendee to their attendee status.
 - a. Host/Co-Host: The Director of Planning & Conservation will serve as the “Host” and other Planning & Conservation Department Staff in attendance will serve as “Co-Hosts”.
- 9). Unaddressed Comments/Questions: Any comments/questions submitted at a public hearing but not addressed due to the lack of time, will be the first public comments/questions addressed at the continuation of the hearing - immediately followed by comments/questions submitted following the hearing but no less than three (3) full business days prior to the date of the hearing’s continuation.
- 10). Requirement to be Muted: All members of the public and the applicant are to remain “muted” unless the Chair authorizes them to speak. Once they have been recognized, they may unmute themselves and offer their comments/questions and then return themselves to a “muted” status
- 11). Removal for Disruption: The Chair has authority to have any person failing to adhere to the rules of conduct removed if that failure is disruptive to a meeting or hearing. The Director of Planning & Conservation will remove (“block”) any participant upon instruction to do so by the Chair.
- 12). Reference to Guidelines/Protocols: Posted agendas are to make reference to the Board’s adopted Guidelines/Protocols so prospective participants have an opportunity to review and become familiar with them prior to a meeting.
- 13). Adherence to Guidelines/Protocols: Whether participating online or by phone, participants must adhere to the guidelines/protocols – particularly relative to being “muted” unless called upon by the Chair.

Submittal of Comments from the Public

1. Comments may be submitted via a “Google Form” which will be created for each session of a public hearing on each application. Staff will share these comments with Board members, and submitted comments will be appended to hearing minutes.

2. The public may submit comments/questions via email to Planning and Conservation Department staff prior to a scheduled meeting/hearing, to be shared with the applicant, the Board, and other parties representing the Town and/or applicant. Emails submitted prior to the publication of meeting background materials will be appended to the “Correspondence”. Emails submitted after such publication will be appended to the meeting/hearing minutes.
3. Comments submitted at least three (3) full calendar days prior to the scheduled public hearing will be the first comments the applicant will be asked to respond to following Board members questions.
4. All comments/questions submitted whether verbally, through Google Form, email or hard copy submittal, must include the submitter’s name, street address, and email address, if applicable.
5. During an online/virtual hearing or meeting, attendees may use the “raise hand” function to be recognized by the Chair to speak.