

PROCEDURES FOR CONDUCT OF BOARD MEETINGS

Effective July 2019

The Rockport Planning Board is responsible for reviewing applications for subdivision approval, plans for which a subdivision approval is not required, and site plan review. The orderly and efficient conduct of the Planning Board's meetings are in the interest of the Planning Board, the applicants before the Board, and the members of the general public attending the Planning Board meeting.

Requests to be on the Agenda

A party wishing to discuss or present a matter or application shall file all documents supporting that matter or application with the Planning Board secretary no fewer than seven (7) days before the next regularly scheduled Planning Board meeting. Absent good cause shown, a matter or application submitted fewer than seven days before a meeting shall be first considered at the meeting that is at least seven days after the submission. Because of the requirements of the Open Meetings Law, the Planning Board cannot consider a matter or application unless it is on the agenda. The Planning Board shall endeavor to advise applicants about applications that are facially inadequate prior to the meeting at which they are to be considered. Facially inadequate applications may be denied by the Planning Board without consideration of the underlying merits.

Digital Format

Most application documents are now created digitally. Applicants are strongly encouraged to transmit application materials with the Planning Board Secretary in both electronic and hard copy formats. Transmitting an application electronically to the Secretary does not constitute a filing of the application for purposes of calculating time periods.

Order of Business

Except in extraordinary circumstances, the Planning Board shall discuss agenda items in the order in which they are listed on the agenda.

Public Comment

Public comment is an important part of the Planning Board meetings. Nevertheless, unrestrained public comment during a meeting is disruptive to the business of the Planning Board and unnecessarily prolongs the meetings. Each regularly scheduled meeting of the Planning Board shall open with a public comment period. Comments during this period do not have to be related to Planning Board business but shall be limited to matters which concern the Planning Board. The public shall not use the comment period to discuss an item for which a public hearing has been scheduled. Each member of the audience may have one, three-minute time period in which to make comments during this initial comment period. There will be a second, public comment period at the end of the Planning Board meeting. This second public comment period shall have the same limitations as the initial public comment period. Other than these general comment periods, members of the public are only entitled to comment during a public hearing on an application as provided below.

Comments during a Public Hearing

An applicant shall have the time the chairman deems adequate to address the particulars of an application. During a public hearing, a member of the public shall be limited to one, three-minute comment period. This time limitation shall also apply to legal counsel representing a member of the public. In his discretion, the Planning Board chairman may extend the comment time given to individuals during the public hearing. During a public hearing, a member of the audience who desires to speak shall identify him or herself and provide a residence or business address. If the speaker is legal counsel, he or she shall identify his or her clients and the address of those clients. Comments during a public hearing shall be addressed only to the Planning Board and concern the pending application. An applicant may rebut or address comments at the conclusion of the public comments. There shall be no public comment once the public hearing is closed.

Written Submissions

Written submissions are encouraged. Written submissions submitted by or on behalf of a member for the Planning Board to consider at a public hearing shall be filed with the Secretary of the Planning Board no fewer than two days before the public hearing. Written submissions to the Planning Board filed during a public hearing will not be considered by the Planning Board at that public hearing.

Deliberations

Once an applicant has concluded his or her presentation or after the close of the public hearing on an application, the Planning Board frequently engages in deliberations where Board Members discuss among themselves various aspects of an application prior to being asked to vote. During this deliberation period the applicant shall refrain from making unsolicited comments to the Board.

Audio or Video Recordings

After notifying the chairman of the Planning Board, any person may make a video or audio recording of an open session of a meeting of a public body, or may transmit the meeting through any medium, subject to the reasonable requirements of the chair as to the number, placement and operation of equipment used so as not to interfere with the conduct of the meeting. At the beginning of the meeting, the chair shall inform other attendees of any recording.

Unauthorized or Disruptive Conduct

As provided by Massachusetts General Law Chapter 30A, Section 20(g), no person shall address a meeting of the Planning Board without permission of the chairman, and all persons shall, at the request of the chairman, be silent. No person shall disrupt the proceedings of a meeting of a public body. If after clear warning from the chairman, a person continues to disrupt the proceedings, the chair may order the person to withdraw from the meeting and if the person does not withdraw, the chairman may authorize a constable or other officer to remove the person from the meeting.

Approved by the Planning Board, July 2019.