



Department of Planning and Zoning

Guidance for Public Participation in Virtual Planning Board Meetings

The information in this document is intended to assist the public with knowing how to participate in virtual public meetings and provides an overview of how the meetings will be run. ***If this is your first time participating virtually, please review this document and contact the Department if you have any questions.*** If you would like guidance on how to use the WebEx videoconferencing system, please refer to the document “HOW TO USE WEBEX AS A PARTICIPANT – Technical Guidance”. If you have any questions, please contact the Department at 410-313-4373 and leave a message or email planningboard@howardcountymd.gov.

ROLL CALL

Fifteen minutes before the meeting begins, the Recording Secretary will take roll call of all those who have registered to participate in the meeting. Please be sure to be in the virtual meeting room by 6:45pm. During the roll call, the Recording Secretary will unmute all the WebEx participants. Just as you would in a regular meeting room, please maintain order when all participants are unmuted. The Recording Secretary will announce when all participants are on mute or unmute in the WebEx system.

Staff and board members will do their best to start on time; however, please be patient while waiting for the meeting to begin. Staff will also try to make periodic announcements during these waiting periods so callers and viewers know when they can expect the meeting to start.

PROVIDING TESTIMONY

If you plan to testify at a Planning Board meeting, you must register through the Department’s Planning Board website. If you do not receive an email confirming registration, please contact the Department at planningboard@howardcountymd.gov or 410-313-4373 to confirm registration.

During the proceeding, the Chair will announce when it is time to hear public testimony on a specific case. When it is your turn to speak, the Recording Secretary will announce your name. A timer will appear on the screen and will start once you confirm you are ready to begin. Your phone/computer will be muted once you have reached your time limit.

Oral testimony can be no longer than 3 minutes for an individual and 5 minutes for an organization. Representatives testifying on behalf of any civic, community or citizens association, must show that he or she is authorized to speak for and represent the views of that association by presenting written authorization such as a duly adopted resolution signed by the president or attested to by the Secretary of the association. (See Planning Board Rules of Procedures - Section 1.103.D.e.)

All written authorizations must be received by the Department via email or postal mail by 7 p.m. one business day before the meeting.

If you do not have a computer and would like to provide oral testimony, please contact the Department via phone or email. Be sure to contact the Department by 7 p.m. one business day before the meeting so you can arrange to provide testimony from your telephone.

*If, during the proceeding, you decide you no longer want to testify or would like to change your position, you may state that when it is your turn to speak. **Those providing testimony will only be heard and not seen in the virtual meeting.***

Providing Written Testimony in Advance of a Meeting

If you would like to provide written testimony, it must be submitted by 7 p.m. one business day before the meeting. Email all testimony to planningboard@howardcountymd.gov.

You can also submit written testimony via postal mail to the address below. Please be certain to include the case/plan number with your testimony. To ensure that the Department receives written testimony before the hearing, it is recommended that you mail your testimony one week in advance of the meeting date to ensure that it is received by 7 p.m. one business day before the meeting and can be incorporated into the record.

Mailing Address: Planning Board c/o Department of Planning and Zoning, 3430 Court House Drive, Ellicott City, MD 21043.

PRELIMINARY MATTERS/MOTIONS

Preliminary matters, such as a motion to dismiss or postpone a case, must be submitted at least 7 days in advance of the meeting. In addition to the request, you must submit evidence that all interested parties have been notified of the preliminary matter that you are filing with the Department. The Board may not consider the motion if it is not accompanied by the evidence of notification of all parties.

Make sure you register to attend the virtual meeting through the Planning Board's website to present your preliminary matter/motion.

Email all motions, correspondence and evidence of notifications to the Board at planningboard@howardcountymd.gov.

QUASI-JUDICIAL PUBLIC HEARINGS

Certain types of cases will require the Planning Board to hold quasi-judicial public hearings. The Planning Board has the discretion to decide if a case is appropriate for a virtual setting. The public is invited to attend these hearings and can register to participate.

- **Participating in Quasi-judicial Public Hearings**

The Department of Planning and Zoning will post the agendas for all hearings in accordance with the Rules of Procedure and/or County code. If you wish to participate in a case and will need to speak, you must register online by 7 p.m. one business day before the hearing. When you register online, be sure to select the case in which you will be testifying and indicate your role in the case (see below for a description of Registration Roles).

During the proceeding, when it is your turn to speak, the Chair or Recording Secretary will announce your name. During cross-examinations, participants may need to speak out of order and object and therefore will be unmuted. If you are a party who is unmuted, please be sure to maintain order during the hearing. If you become disruptive and fail to follow the proper protocols, the Chair can ask to have you muted.

For additional information about the conduct of board hearings, see the Planning Board's Rules of Procedure, Section 1.105.E.

QUASI-JUDICIAL PUBLIC HEARINGS – cont'd

■ Submitting Documentary Evidence for Quasi-judicial Public Hearings

If you have documentary evidence that you would like to submit for the proceedings, it must be submitted before 7 p.m. one business day prior to the hearing. All documents must be submitted in a pdf or jpeg format. Please send all documentary evidence to the following email address planningboard@howardcountymd.gov. During the proceeding, the Department will virtually share the evidence that you provided so that it can be seen by anyone watching the proceeding from their computer. Please note that anyone submitting evidence must participate in the virtual hearing and present the evidence or it will not be incorporated into the record.

REGISTRATION ROLES

On the registration form, you will be asked to provide more information about your role in the case being heard. Specifying your role, will enable the Recording Secretary to facilitate the virtual meeting and ensure that all participants are heard at the appropriate time. During the roll call prior to the start of the meeting, the Recording Secretary will ask you to confirm your role.

If you are not planning to participate/speak in a meeting and only want to observe, you are encouraged to watch the hearing via livestream and can access the link on the Planning Board website at the time of the meeting.

Below is a description of the participant roles found on the registration form. Each case on the registration form will list the appropriate roles from which you can select.

- Observer – Members of the public who will only be listening to the meeting, not speaking and can only access the meeting from your telephone.
- Petitioner - The applicant seeking advice, approval or a recommendation from the Planning Board.
- Witness to Petitioner – The applicant/petitioner or the attorney representing the petitioner may ask a witness to attend a hearing to present additional information about a case. *This registration role will only appear as a registration option for quasi-judicial cases.*
- Other Party to the Case – If you plan to cross-examine the petitioner or the petitioner’s witness, you should select this registration role. *This registration role will only appear as a registration option for quasi-judicial cases.*
- Community Member/Individual wishing to testify – This registration option will appear in most Planning Board cases and is the box you should check if you are planning to provide oral testimony. Indicate support or opposition for the case if applicable.
 - Support
 - Oppose
 - N/A
- Attorney representing a party (Who are you representing: _____)

REGISTRATION ROLES – cont'd

- Spokesperson for community group, organization or partnership - If you are a spokesperson representing a group, organization or partnership, use this registration role. If more than one person is speaking on behalf of one group, each person must register separately so that the Recording Secretary will know that more than one person would like to speak. Be sure to list the name of the group you are representing and indicate support or opposition for the case if applicable.
 - Support
 - Oppose
 - N/A