

A GUIDE TO PUBLIC PARTICIPATION IN THE PLANNING BOARD PROCESS

The Portland Planning Board is pleased that you are participating in making Portland a better community. We hope that you find this brochure helpful in explaining the role the public plays in the Planning Board process.

Jurisdiction of the Planning Board

The Planning Board is vested by city charter and municipal code with the following authority:

- Site Plan Review (see Section 14-526 for standards)
- Subdivision Review (see Section 14-497 for review standards)
- Delegated Review of Site Location of Development Proposals for Maine Department of Environmental Protection
- Traffic Movement Permits for Maine Department of Transportation
- Conditional Use Approvals
- Recommendations to the City Council regarding:
 - Elements of the Comprehensive Plan
 - Zoning Text/Map Change
 - Conditional/Contract Zoning
 - Capital Improvement Program

The Board does not:

- Make zoning determinations or grant variances
- Review minor site plans as defined in Section 14-522
- Have the final decision-making authority on text/map changes, contract zoning or elements of the comprehensive plan

(For a complete listing of the authority of the Planning Board, see Section 14-30 of the municipal code)

Workshop Meetings

The purpose of the workshop is to determine the completeness of the application, to identify questions for the applicant to address, and to allow the Planning Board to provide feedback to the applicant concerning the status of the application. Once an application is deemed sufficiently complete, a public hearing will be scheduled.

As a member of the public, you are invited to comment on the application. If you do choose to speak, please keep the following in mind:

- The Board is not allowed to arrive at a final determination at the workshop. With this in mind, the public is asked to refrain from advocating for or against an application. The public will have an opportunity to advocate for or against an application at the public hearing to be held at a later date.
- Each member of the public will have three (3) minutes to present questions or issues for the Board and the applicant's consideration. These questions and issues will be used to prepare the application for public hearing. Questions asked during the workshop will not be answered until the public hearing.

Public Hearings

The public hearing is the point in the process where the Board takes final action on the application before it. The format for the hearing is more formal than the workshop and generally follows the following sequence:

- Staff introduces the project and identifies the scope of the review
- Applicant presents their proposal
- Staff identifies questions or issues and potential conditions of approval for the Board
- The Board asks clarifying questions of the applicant and the staff
- Comments are received from the public
- Answer session for questions from the public
- Board deliberations and final action

Each member of the public will have three (3) minutes to comment on the application. If you choose to ask a question during your comments, keep in mind that your question will not be answered until after all members of the public have spoken.

Once the public comment period has been closed, the public is not allowed to speak unless requested to by the Board.

Written comments are encouraged. Please submit them to Planning Division staff by the Wednesday of the week before the Board meeting.

By mail: Planning and Urban Development Department
Planning Division
389 Congress Street, 4th Floor
Portland, ME 04101

By e-mail: Barbara Barhydt, Development Review Services Manager
bab@portlandmaine.gov

Common Rules of the Board

For the Record: Our meetings are recorded in order to capture an accurate of our proceedings. If you decide to speak at one of our meetings, please identify yourself and your place of residence for the record prior to making your comments. Comments should be restricted to the issue before the Board.

Public Comment: Board rules allow each member of the public to speak for three (3) minutes (unless an extension is requested by the speaker and granted by the Board). In order to ensure that each member of the public has an opportunity to be heard, you will only have one opportunity to present your comments per agenda item.

Cell Phones and Pagers: The presence of cell phones and pagers in workshop and public hearing meetings are strongly discouraged. If you carry a cell phone or pager, please turn it off. If a cell phone or pager goes off and disrupts the Board meeting, its owner may be asked to leave.

No “jeers or cheers”: The purpose of the Board meeting is to permit the Board members to conduct official business of the Board. There is a great deal of work that is completed prior to presenting the application to the Board, but important facts are often presented during the hearing process. The public is invited to participate and to avoid actions that distract from the important decision-making process that must occur.

For More Information

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Portland, ME 04101
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