

A GUIDE TO PUBLIC PARTICIPATION IN THE PLANNING BOARD PROCESS

The Westbrook Planning Board is pleased that you are participating in making Westbrook 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 the Code of Ordinances with the following powers and duties:

- Prepare a comprehensive plan for the development of the community. In the preparation of a comprehensive plan, the public shall be encouraged to participate. The plan must be given a public hearing prior to its being adopted by the planning board.
- Exercise such powers and perform such duties and functions as are authorized and provided for under the city's Code and the laws of the state pertaining to zoning, subdivisions, and land development throughout the community.
- Subject to the approval of the city council, make and enter into such contracts as it may deem advisable to carry out the objectives and purposes of the board, and shall have such other powers and perform such other duties as may be necessary for the administration of its affairs on behalf of the city, and may obtain goods and services necessary for its proper function as approved by the city council within the limits of its budget or as otherwise supplemented by the city council. (Ord. of 12-3-73)

The Planning Board is vested by the Code of Ordinances with the following reviewing and recommendation authority:

- Site Plan Review (see Section 505)
- Subdivision Review (see Section 502)
- Special Exception Review (see Section 204)
- Recommendations to the City Council regarding:
 - Elements of the Comprehensive Plan
 - Zoning Text / Map Changes
 - Conditional / Contract Zoning

(For a complete listing of the authority of the Planning Board, see Article VI of the Code of Ordinances)

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 can be scheduled at the discretion of the Chair of the Planning Board.

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 time 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 a final decision. Questions asked during the workshop may not be answered until the public hearing.

Public Hearings

The public hearing is scheduled at the discretion of the Chair, this 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:

- 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 time 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.

Regular Meeting

A regular business meeting is a time for the Board to discuss and deliberate the application. Typically there is no public comment accepted at this time.

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 - Staff identifies questions or issues and potential conditions of approval for the Board
 - The Board asks clarifying questions of the applicant and the staff
 - Board deliberations and final action
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- The Board is allowed to arrive at a final determination at this time. With this in mind, the Board is not allowed to schedule a public hearing for a later date. The public will have an opportunity to advocate for or against an application at the public hearing to be held at a later date.

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

By mail:

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For More Information

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