

TOWN OF FARMINGTON
ZONING BOARD OF APPEALS
MEETING

March 26, 2025

Present for the hybrid meeting were Chair Schoenhorn, Commissioners Callahan, Cloud, Gemski, Walsh, Grady-Benson, Dess-Santoro, Subramanian, and Mastrobattista. Assistant Town Planner Daigle and Clerk Hansen were also present. The meeting was called to order at 7:00 p.m.

Commissioner Grady-Benson and Alternate Commissioners Subramanian were present online. All others were present in the Council Chambers.

ADMINISTRATIVE MEETING

Discussion of Hybrid Meeting Procedures

Chair Schoenhorn opened the discussion regarding the desire for a policy for requiring applicants to appear in-person before the board during a public hearing. It was clarified that Board members are allowed to participate electronically, but it is strongly encouraged for commissioners to attend in person. The Board is conscientious that extenuating circumstances can occur, necessitating an applicant to present remotely, but discussed unless for good cause shown, applicants should be in person. Assistant Town Planner Daigle stated that the Board can continue a public hearing by up to 35-days statutorily, until the next meeting, with an additional up to 65-day extension at the discretion of the applicant.

The Board agreed that the interpersonal interaction with applicants is more effective in person than online. The question was raised whether any other communities that do offer a hybrid option have a written policy requiring that the applicant, or applicant representative, be present, Assistant Town Planner Daigle stated staff is not aware of any such policies.

The Board members discussed wording to be included on the application form whether applicants “must” or “shall” attend in person to present their proposals. A concern was raised that if an applicant is not able to present in person, would there be a bias in the decision making process. It was also noted that online meetings has become a common practice now, and offering a hybrid option to present is an important aspect of serving the community. Offering the hybrid option also can address issues of accessibility.

Board members discussed issues of a quality connection by presenters, including a requirement for the applicant to have their camera on (video/audio) with any additional remote experts (attorneys, engineers, contractors, etc.) from the applicant’s team presenting on behalf of the applicant, having the same remote setup capability standards.

It was the consensus of the Board that the application should be revised to state that applicants and/or their representatives shall attend in-person unless for good cause shown, may present via electronic means, or have their application continued to the following meeting. Staff will review the wording with the Town Attorney and the Board.

MINUTES

Meeting Minutes

Upon a motion made and seconded (Cloud/Walsh) it was unanimously

VOTED: To approve February 18, 2025 Zoning Board of Appeals meeting minutes.

The meeting was adjourned at 7:40 p.m.

LDH

DRAFT