



Planning Board Basics

WMPF Land Use Training Institute

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Thank You!

- Volunteering to be land use decision makers
- You make the most important municipal decision
- Big Responsibility



Who is A Planning Board Member?

- Members are appointed by City Mayors or Council, Town Board or Village Mayor
- Not (or mostly not) Elected Officials
- Resident of your community
- 5-7 Members and one Chair
- Supported by Staff or Consultants
- No experienced required



What does a Planning Board Do?

- Review and Approve Subdivision Plats
- Review and Approve Site Plans
- Review and Approve Special Permits
- Review and Approve Other Permits (e.g. wetland, steep slope, tree, etc.)
- Recommend, Advise and/or Report to Legislative Body on Land Use Matters

A Planning Board Does Not

- Interpret the Zoning Code (Building Inspector)
- Grant Zoning Code Variances (Zoning Board of Appeals)
- Make Law (Legislative Body)
- Do what other boards do (Respect Jurisdiction)
- Enforcement (Municipal Official)



How Does A Planning Board Operate?

- Public Meetings
 - Notice of Meeting and/or Hearings
 - Have Agenda in advance of a meeting
 - Quorum
 - Comply with Open Meetings Law
- Builds the record
- Records Decisions in Minutes and/or Resolutions (even if televised)

A Planning Board Review Process:

Application



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graph TD; A[Application] --> B[Public Meeting]; B --> C[Public Hearing]; C --> D[Decision];
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The diagram illustrates a four-step process for a Planning Board Review. It begins with 'Application' in a brown box, followed by 'Public Meeting' in a light purple box, then 'Public Hearing' in a teal box, and finally 'Decision' in a dark blue box. Each step is connected to the next by a downward-pointing arrow, indicating a sequential flow.

Public Meeting

Public Hearing

Decision

Application

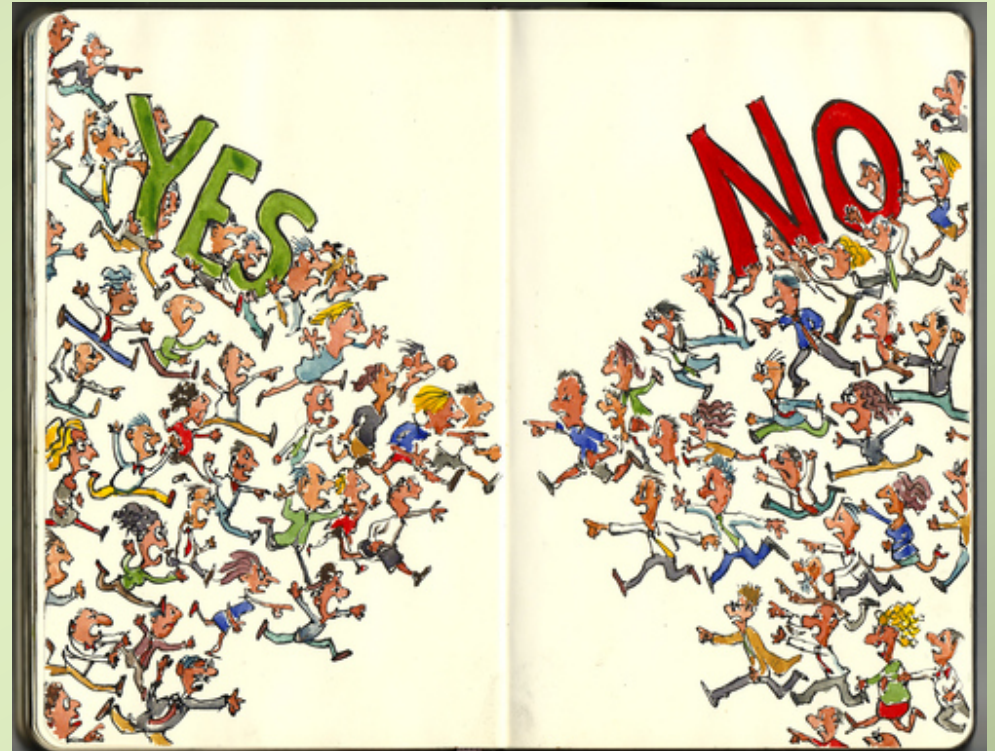
- Pre-Application meeting with staff or commission members
- Posting applications online
- Review of applications by staff

Public Meeting

- Conduct work session (with or without public comment)
- Referral/Coordination with other Boards or Agencies (Mandatory and Optional)
- SEQRA
- Televised or Web-based viewing
- Participation by other staff or consultants

Public Hearing

- Managing public comment
 - Time Limits
 - Written submissions
 - Defusing a hostile public
- When do you close the hearing?
- Managing the official record and late submissions



Decision

- Most applications are approved
- Be rational, not arbitrary and capricious
- Must be based on information included the official record
- Every case is unique, but be consistent as possible
- Public opposition alone is not enough to deny an application
- Written Resolutions should provide rationale for decision

**If it was
up to me,
it would not
be up to me.**

Good Practices:

- Conduct Site Walks
- Have Conversations (use work sessions)
- Educate the public/Explain what's going on
- Avoid Conflicts of Interest
- The role of the chair
- Email Use...UGH!



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