

Netcong Borough Planning Board Procedures

Welcome to a public hearing conducted by the Netcong Borough Planning Board. We hope to benefit from your attendance and participation. This flyer will briefly outline the rules and procedures we follow.

The order of events will be guided by a printed agenda, which will be available to the public at the meeting. The Chair, as necessary, may revise the agenda. The Planning Board has a policy of ending the meeting at 10:00pm.

If an application is not completed in an evening, a continuation date will be announced, generally without further requirement of publishing a public notice, however the Chair will announce the next scheduled meeting date. Information about the status of an application or hearing schedule may be obtained by calling the Planning Board Office at 973-347-0252 ext. 100 or emailing pboardsecretary@netcong.org.

The Planning Board operates as a quasi-judicial body; meaning they operate similar to, but not as strict as a court of law. Thus, the hearing is similar to a court proceeding. The Chair runs the proceedings as a judge might and the Board could be likened to a jury that will vote on a final decision to approve or deny an application. The Board Members have a legal obligation to follow the New Jersey Municipal Land Use Law (MLUL). All discussions, presentations of evidence, questions, and comments regarding a pending application must be done on the record and at the public hearing. Therefore, members of the public should not send letters, email messages, or directly communicate with Board Members about an application outside of the public hearing. Any such communication could jeopardize whatever decision the Board makes.

General Procedures:

When the Chair calls an application to be heard, the applicant will come forward, often represented by an attorney, and introduce himself/herself. The application will be reviewed for correct public notice and completeness. The Board will not hear applications that are not properly noticed or are deemed incomplete. All witnesses for the applicant will state their name, occupation, and credentials. Each witness will then be qualified and sworn in by the Board Attorney. Expert witnesses may only testify in their field of expertise. The applicant/attorney will give an overview of the application, and testimony will be given as directed by the applicant's attorney. If there are reports from the Board's Professionals, they may be read during or after testimony. At the completion of each witness's testimony, the Board and its Professionals may question the witness, after which, the Chair will open the meeting to the public for questions related to the testimony of the witness. Once the applicant has completed their entire presentation and has presented all witnesses, the Chair will again open the meeting for public comments.

Testimony:

The Board is compelled to act on an application based on the findings of fact and the proofs according to law that are presented during the hearing. The Board does not decide based on public support or opposition to an application. It also cannot make decisions based solely on “ratables”, tax revenues, or other financial considerations. Anyone wishing to speak or testify at a hearing must appear in person to allow all parties their right to cross-examination. All speakers must identify themselves, provide their name, and address for the record. The Board, its staff, and the public all have the right to cross-examine witnesses. Petitions are not admissible as evidence, since not all the signing parties are present for cross-examination. They can, however, be read into the record as part of an individual’s statement. Letters, except for certain reports of public entities, are only admissible if the author is present to be cross-examined.

Public Questions:

After the Board and Professional Staff have completed asking questions of a witness, the Chair will open the meeting to the public. At this time, the public is limited to asking questions only relating to the testimony presented by the witness. This is a time for questions only and not for comments. If you have a question, raise your hand. When the Chair acknowledges you, come forward to the microphone, state your full name and address for the record and spell your last name. If an attorney represents any person or group of persons from the public, the attorney must present questions from them. When the public has had adequate opportunity for questions, the Chair will close the meeting to the public. The applicant/attorney will call the next witness, and the above procedures will be repeated. When all the witnesses have been presented and the testimony is complete, the Board and its professionals will ask final questions.

Public Comments:

Before the Board takes final action on the application, the Chair will again open the meeting to the public. This is the time to comment on the application or ask any final questions. Raise your hand and wait to be recognized by the Chair to speak. This will probably be your last opportunity to speak about this application before the Board takes a vote. When called, please come forward to the microphone, state your full name and address and spell your last name for the record. The Board Attorney will swear you in. You are now considered a witness. After you make your comments, the applicant, their professionals, the Board, and its professionals have the right to ask you questions, i.e., cross-examine you.

Note:

To ensure an orderly meeting and allow adequate time for members of the public to be heard, the Chair may limit repetitive comments or irrelevant testimony. The Chair may also limit the time and number of questions or comments from any one member of the public. Remember,

this entire proceeding is being recorded as part of the public record as required by law. Please maintain a professional decorum and be respectful of all those that are speaking and please refrain from making excessive noise as this detracts from the quality of the recording.

Deliberations:

After all the testimony has been placed on the record, all the Board and public questions have been answered and all of the public has commented on the application, the Chair will close the meeting to the public and proceed to deliberations of the hearing. There are no further public questions or comments permitted during deliberations. The Board will discuss the merits of the application. A motion will be made to either approve or deny the application and may include conditions the applicant is required to satisfy during the permitting process. The motion will be seconded with additional discussion by the Board if necessary. A vote will be taken by the Board with the results announced.

Right of Appeal:

If you are not satisfied with the Board's final decision, you have the right to file an appeal of the decision to the Superior Court, Law Division, at the Morris County Courthouse in Morristown, New Jersey. This appeal must be filed within 45 days of the first date of publication of the Notice of Decision in The Daily Record.

Miscellaneous:

Submitted applications are available for public inspection in the Planning Board Office during regular business hours or on the Borough website at www.netcong.org. You may contact the Planning Board Administrator at 973-347-0252 ext.100.

Meeting Minutes:

Meeting minutes are posted on the Borough website www.netcong.org after the Board approves and adopts them, usually at the following month's meeting.