



Helping Communities face the challenges and impacts of growth while maintaining their character and sense of place.

Planning Board Assistant Handbook

iTRaC is the Nashua Regional Planning Commission's approach to community planning that focuses on integrating transportation, land use and environmental planning. The program was developed to assist communities in dealing with the challenges of growth in a coordinated way that sustains community character and a sense of place.

The Secretary Attends Planning Board Meetings and Hearings

- ◆ The Planning Board Secretary typically attends all Planning Board Meetings, public hearings, and site visits in order to take minutes and handle all paperwork during the meetings.

The Secretary is Responsible for Taking and Keeping Minutes of Board Proceedings.

- ◆ The Planning Board Secretary must keep and place on file all minutes of Board proceedings and decisions.
- ◆ Notes should be taken at every meeting, public hearing, and site visit.



Photo taken by the Nashua Regional Planning Commission

Process of Submitting and Approving Minutes

- ◆ The Secretary must post a draft of the minutes for public review within 5 business days. A draft will be circulated to all of the members of the Board within 5 business days as well. Hard copies will later be provided at the Planning Board Meetings.
- ◆ The Board members will review the draft for accuracy and completeness. Members shall agree on any changes or additions that need to be made at a subsequent meeting of the Board, of which the secretary will make note of.
- ◆ The secretary will then incorporate the Board's changes into the draft and label the revised minutes as "Approved" with the approval date. This must be completed no later than 5 days after the meeting.
- ◆ A PDF of the approved minutes is submitted by the secretary to all of the Board members by email as well as posted on the Town Website and filed at Town Hall.
- ◆ Once the minutes are approved, the Secretary may discard any notes that were used in compiling the minutes.

This guide is based upon the practices of the Town of Wilton, NH and meets the requirements of the NH RSAs as of July 2015.



Contents of Written Minutes

- ◆ The date and time of the meeting.
- ◆ Note if the minutes are in draft or approved form. Approved minutes must have the approval date.
- ◆ List of Board members present as well as any alternate members present. If an alternate member is participating as a voting member, this must be indicated in the minutes specific to each agenda item.
- ◆ At public hearings, the Chairperson will ask members of the public to identify themselves when speaking and their names will be included in the minutes.
- ◆ An identification of each topic discussed by the Planning Board. A public hearing or site visit may be devoted to a single topic, which should be identified at the beginning of the minutes.
- ◆ The case number of any application that is being considered (the Planning Board assigns a case number to each application it processes. The record of these case numbers is maintained by the Secretary). The relevant map and lot numbers as well as a description of the case should also be included.
- ◆ A summary of the discussion for each topic. This summary does not typically need to include all comments and statements by those participating, but should give the general nature of the discussion.
- ◆ All discussions (votes) of the Board, including the names of the Board members and alternates who made and seconded each motion, as well as the names of the Board members voting for and against each motion and any abstentions.
- ◆ The time of adjournment of the meeting.

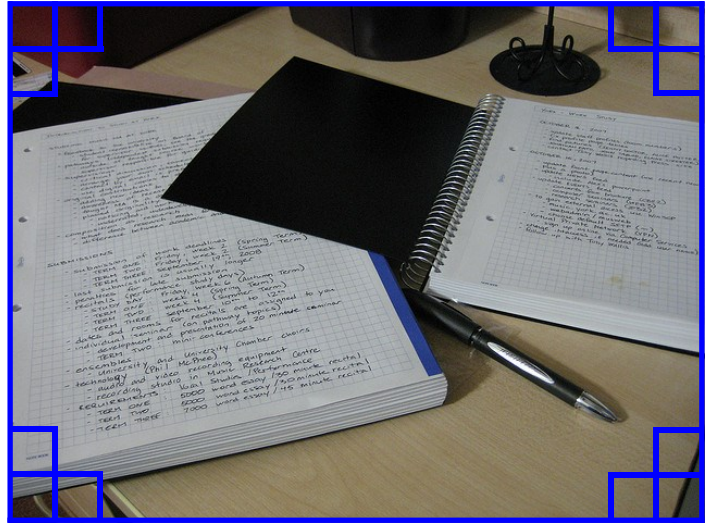


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Staying in Compliance with State Laws

- ◆ All minutes must be available to the public within 5 business days of the conclusion of a meeting and may be in draft form (RSA 91-A: 2-II).
- ◆ Minutes and other public records must be made available to the public upon request. In addition to having a right to inspect the minutes, the public also has a right to inspect "all notes, materials, tapes or other sources used for compiling the minutes" (RSA 91-A: 4). Tapes and notes used to compile minutes can be destroyed after the minutes are approved.

Agendas

- ◆ The agenda is prepared by the Planning Board Secretary at the request of the Chairperson or his/her designee and is circulated to the Board and the public before the start of the meeting.
- ◆ Agendas must be posted a minimum of 24 hours before a meeting at two public locations in the town, one of which can be the Town Website.

In the absence of the Secretary, the Chairman appoints a temporary Secretary to keep records of the meeting.

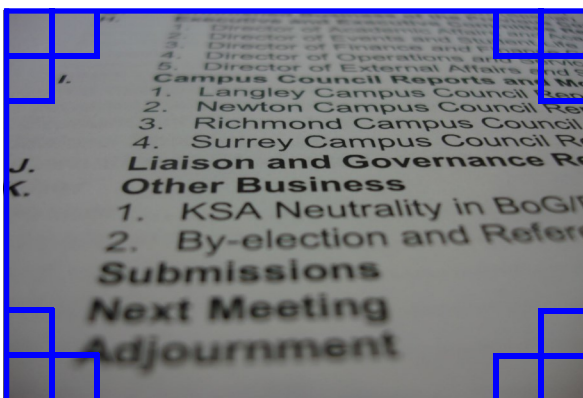


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Legal Requirements for Notification

Requirements of Noticing a Public Hearing

The secretary shall notify applicants, abutters, and the public of public hearings under the authority of RSA 91-A:2 and RSA 673:17.

- ◆ The Secretary is responsible for crafting the notice, with consultation from the Chair or Vice Chair, and supplying it (by telephone, paper copy, or electronically) to the advertising department of the newspaper.
- ◆ Posting of the hearing notice in 2 public places, one of which can be the Town Website.
- ◆ Publication and posting of the notice must take place 10 days prior to the scheduled date of the hearing. The 10 days cannot include the date of the publication/posting or the date of the hearing.
- ◆ Hearing notices must be mailed at least 10 days (ideally 14 days) ahead of the scheduled hearing date.



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Public Hearings for Applications

- ◆ A hearing notice is required to be published and posted and also be sent to the applicant, and every engineer, architect, land surveyor, or soil scientist whose professional seal appears on the applicant's plat, as well as all abutters, including abutters across rivers and railway right of ways (RSA 676:4(d)).
- ◆ The Board will provide advice if an application has regional impact and would require notification of adjacent towns or the Nashua Regional Planning Commission (RSA 674).
- ◆ The applicant is responsible for providing the Board with three sets of mailing labels: for all abutters, and every engineer, architect, land surveyor or soil scientist, whose professional seal appears on the applicant's plat.
- ◆ The applicant must obtain a mailing list of abutters which must be compiled from official records at the Town Office not more than 5 days before the date of submission of an application. The 5 day requirement is stipulated in order to ensure that up to date information on owners and their addresses is being supplied.
- ◆ Public hearing notices for excavation permit applications must be posted in 3 public locations (RSA 155:E).
- ◆ Planning Boards must notify the NH Department of Environmental Services (DES) by first class mail on all proposals with structures or proposed building sites within 500 feet on the top of the bank of any lake, pond, river, or stream.
- ◆ Notices must be mailed out by the secretary via certified mail and use the Town Hall postage meter.

Notification of Decisions

- ◆ The Board must have a decision, in writing, within 65 days of the date of acceptance of a completed application.
- ◆ Notice of the decision must be made available to the public within five business days after the decision is made. If the application is disapproved, the board must provide the applicant with a reason for the disapproval in writing.



Maintaining the Board's Records

The Secretary is responsible for maintaining all the records of the Planning Board in an orderly fashion. These records should at least include the following:

- ◆ Minutes of every meeting, public hearing, and site visit.
- ◆ Applications and supporting materials received from applicants shall be stored in the Planning Board Office.
- ◆ Documents or other materials submitted by applicants or others at public hearings.
- ◆ Correspondence to and from the Planning Board.
- ◆ Materials related to the preparation of the Planning Board documents and ordinances.
- ◆ Any official documents and materials related to Planning Board business.
- ◆ General organization.

Additional Requirements:

- ◆ The Secretary is responsible for assigning a map and lot number to every land use application that the Board considers. All documents and materials related to a particular case shall be organized in a file that is labeled with the assigned map and lot number. Planning Board records shall be kept in the Planning Board Office.
- ◆ The submitted plan sets should be distributed to the appropriate departments.

Fulfilling Such Duties as the Chairperson May Specify

The Chairperson may ask the Secretary to perform other duties which may include the following:

- ◆ Purchase and maintain supplies needed for conducting Board business (filing folders, envelopes, etc.).
- ◆ Make copies of materials for distribution to the Board and the public.
- ◆ Make telephone calls and respond to telephone calls.
- ◆ Provide forms and materials to applicants or the public.
- ◆ Assist with the preparation of Planning Board documents, fee schedules, and ordinances.



Photo taken by the Nashua Regional Planning Commission

SOURCES:

New Hampshire Planning and Land Use Regulation, 2014-2015 Edition Issued by the New Hampshire Office of Energy and Planning

The Planning Board in New Hampshire:
A handbook for Local Officials (2014)



Value yesterday. Enhance tomorrow. Plan today. www.nashuarpc.org