

The Chesterfield planning board (PB) and you (the applicant or agent).

A bit of housekeeping first. This letter is not a legal document or a set of requirements that are to be followed. This is just informational and only intended to give an applicant an idea of what we do and may happen in more complex applications.

Things you can do:

See the PB secretary to make an appointment for a Conceptual Consultation (chat session, usually without drawings)

See the PB secretary for forms. They can also direct you to the regulatory documents.

Submit an Application.

Hire a professional to submit an application.

Rules and Regulations: All of the regulations are available in the town offices. There are also electronic copies on the town web site but the paper copies are the controlling document. The Master plan is also a good general reference for what the town wants its future to look like. There are also several state permits that may be required such as Wetlands, Shorelands, septic approval and DOT driveway permit for access from a state highway. State law may also need to be referenced where town regulations reference it or where the state law supersedes the town regulations. Applicants and the PB have to follow these regulations.

Planning Board: The PB is an unpaid, volunteer board appointed by the Select Board with varying areas of expertise and a common interest in supporting our town. The PB does conceptual consultations. It's a public meeting, but we can just chat and it is not binding on either party and records are not kept. So if you want to just talk first, see the PB secretary and get on the calendar. We also take and review applications, hold hearings and approve or deny those applications. There are other duties of the PB, but this represents the bulk of what we do.

What can you expect to happen in the PB process? The first thing the PB has to do (and we must do it at a public meeting so get on our schedule as soon as you can) is take all of the documentation that you provide, figure out what you want to do from the application (you won't be part of this discussion as the application is not yet accepted) and see if the information provided matches the requirements of the regulations (down to required statements, Revision and signature blocks!). So make sure you have a written description included that will get us up to speed on what you propose and how it fits in the town (the impact statement is a good spot but it could be separate). Make sure that all of the required information is in the package and the drawings match the standards contained in the regulations for your project. **This is really important; much time can be used at this step!** Provide an electronic copy of everything if you can. Sometimes PB members have time to review before the meeting (we are not allowed to discuss it outside of a public meeting though).

The PB usually tries to review more complex applications in the mid-month meeting and hold the hearing on the first meeting of the month (although that varies based on workload). If there is something in the regulations that doesn't apply (or make sense) to your specific project, request a waiver or modification of that requirement and tell us why that item should be waived or modified but be sure all items are addressed one way or the other. The PB cannot wave or modify any applicable Zoning Regulations, that is up to the ZBA and the regulations that they must follow. We have to approve or deny a project based on the documentation provided. No discussion of the

actual project will happen during the review as it will not likely be a noticed public hearing on the application. We will only be reviewing for completeness.

We sometimes see a lot of time (multiple meetings) taken in this initial part of the process just getting the applications documentation complete and matching the regulations submission requirements. If you are new to the process, take a look at other applications that have been approved that are similar and study the regulations. Seek qualified assistance from someone with expertise in the type of application you are submitting. We have to do this part before the public hearing as at the hearing we will be discussing the submitted application and we need a complete application for discussion to be able to hold a public hearing (read that again slowly!). The PB may reject an application as being incomplete. This is not a rejection of the proposal, just of the documentation. The application is not considered to have been received at that point and may be resubmitted for review at another meeting of the PB, where we then start over.

Testimony at the public noticed hearing to follow the review helps us understand the project and residents' concerns, gives us greater insight into the plan and can guide our questions; but ultimately we approve or deny the application (not the testimony) as submitted or subsequently amended.

The public hearing is your opportunity to explain the application to the PB and the public. You will start by presenting the plan to the board (and public) at a noticed hearing. The board may ask questions and once those are addressed, open the hearing up to the public for comments and questions. More issues that are adequately dealt with in the submitted plan results in fewer questions that will need to be addressed in hearings. The board or the public may raise issues that may need to be addressed (the PB decides). Sometimes things go quicker if the projects abutters are not learning about the project for the first time at the hearing! Sometimes people are just opposed and they tend to be the ones who show up (often times with valid points). The public sometimes has information that the PB has not considered which can lead to additional PB questions. The PB will sort all of that out; it's the core business of what we do. The PB may need to retain the services of an expert to help us determine the suitability of parts of your plan (at your expense) where we don't feel we have the skills to evaluate it ourselves. The likelihood of this happening increases with decreasing quality or increasing complexity in the plans. The PB may indicate issues that the board has with an application and the applicant may revise the plan if they wish. Typically the hearing will be continued and a revised application is presented at a future meeting if the applicant wishes to make a modification. The PB will be voting on the final application submitted though (as amended or not) and it is up to the applicant to decide if a particular issue raised is likely to lead to a denial if modifications are not made. We won't be telling you how to address an issue, only that there is an issue if there is one.

To sum up; to make the process as smooth as possible, have your application package complete when submitted and be ready for discussion at the hearing. We are here to serve the town's interest and we want the process to be as quick and easy as the regulations allow. It is in no one's interest to take any more time than necessary. We will take as much time as is required though.

See you at the meeting!

Chesterfield Planning Board