

NOTICE

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Office of Planning & Zoning

Notice #:

OPZ-20-11-Rev

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11/1/21

Contact:

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Virtual Community Meetings for Development Projects

On June 12, 2020 County Executive Steuart Pittman issued [Executive Order 25](#) to terminate a number of previous Executive Orders and establish criteria for the opening of retail establishments, organizations, and facilities in Anne Arundel County. [Executive Order 19](#), which prohibited community meetings for the duration of the Governor's public emergency proclamation, was one of the orders terminated by Executive Order 25, thereby allowing community meetings in accordance with [§17-2-107](#) of the County Code to occur.

Section 17-2-107(c) of the County Code states, in part, "The meeting shall be held in the County, Monday through Thursday, beginning between the hours of 6:00 p.m. and 8:00 p.m., at an ADA accessible facility located within five miles of the development site. However, if, in the opinion of the Planning and Zoning Officer, the five mile restriction is impracticable, then the meeting shall be held at a location as may be authorized by the Planning and Zoning Officer in writing."

The opinion of the Planning and Zoning Officer is that the five-mile restriction is impracticable for all community meetings for the following reasons:

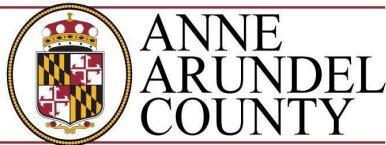
1. Executive Order 25 reduces the capacity of structures commonly used for community meetings, limiting the number of available locations for community meetings across the county; and
2. It is well known that the risk of exposure to and infection from the COVID-19 virus is increased in enclosed spaces.

Therefore, to protect stakeholders and applicants from unnecessary exposure to the COVID-19 virus and to allow community meetings to occur, such meetings shall instead be broadcast virtually from an alternate location of the applicant's choosing until such time as the risk of the COVID-19 virus has passed, and as long as the applicant follows the guidance provided within this Green Notice. By allowing community meetings to occur, the development review application process can continue through to completion. Continuation of virtual community meeting practices will be considered after the conclusion of the emergency.

Steve Kaii-Ziegler,
AICP

Planning & Zoning
Officer





M A R Y L A N D

Office of Planning and Zoning

Steve Kaii-Ziegler AICP, Planning and Zoning Officer

MEMORANDUM

TO: Review Agencies, Maryland Building Industry Association, and the General Public

FROM: Steve Kaii-Ziegler, AICP, Planning and Zoning Officer *SZ*

SUBJECT: Virtual Community Meetings for Development Projects

DATE: Originally Issued June 22, 2020, Revised and Reissued November 18, 2020

General Community Meeting Information:

1. Please refer to Green Notice #20-11-Rev. for information about conducting virtual community meetings during the coronavirus health emergency to fulfill community meeting requirements contained in [§17-2-107](#) the County Code. Information contained in this revised Green Notice will apply to all initial community meeting requests received on or after November 19, 2020.
2. Continuation of virtual community meeting practices will be considered after the conclusion of the emergency.
3. Applicants must continue to follow and comply with [§17-2-107](#) of the County Code when scheduling and hosting virtual community meetings for development and/or modification applications. For projects in the Odenton Town Center, refer to page 150, 2.0 Development Approval Process, in the [Odenton Town Center Master Plan 2016](#) for community meeting notification requirements. Odenton Town Center community meetings may be scheduled through Mark Wildonger at pzwild00@aacounty.org.
4. Access the County's Community Meeting Webpage, Calendar, and Online Submittal Forms at: <https://www.aacounty.org/departments/planning-and-zoning/development/community-meetings/community-meeting-calendar/>

Before the Community Meeting

1. Not less than 28 days prior to the virtual community meeting, applicants for project types regulated under [§17-2-107](#) of the County Code shall submit an Online Community Meeting Request Form. **Hard copy forms will no longer be accepted.** As part of the online form, the applicant will now be required to include the following information:
 - a. A link and phone numbers for joining the virtual meeting as well as any joining instructions;
 - i. The meeting link should be a public link that requires no passwords or software installation.
 - b. Files for supporting documentation in PDF format;
 - i. At a minimum, supporting documentation must include a vicinity map with the site and major roads clearly shown, a site plan that includes existing features, proposed development, and stormwater design, and any requested modifications, if any.
 - c. A list of names and addresses in PDF format for all first-class mailed notices that will be mailed to meet the requirement outlined in [§17-2-107\(d\)](#) of the County Code; and,
 - d. A copy of the draft mailed notice in PDF format.
2. Community Meetings may only be held Monday through Thursday evenings and must start between the hours of 6:00 PM and 8:00 PM.

3. Community Meetings may neither be held on County Holidays nor may they be held from December 24 through January 1. The Online Community Meeting Request Form contains a link that provides a list of County Holidays.
4. Applicants/project managers shall not schedule more than one project to be reviewed in one community meeting. The practice of including multiple projects in one virtual community meeting is not permitted and the community meeting will be voided. Applicants may hold no more than two community meetings in the same evening, but they must be scheduled at different times and have different joining information. A minimum of one hour must be scheduled for the official part of each community meeting, if a single applicant/project manager schedules two community meetings in the same evening. For two project meetings in an evening, allowing 15 minutes for participants to join the meeting is required before the mandatory one hour that is allotted for the official community meeting. As an example, if one applicant/project manager plans to hold two community meetings in one evening, the following timeline would allow for joining and meeting time for two community meetings:
 - a. 5:45-6:00 PM - first community meeting open for participants to join
 - b. 6:00-7:00 PM - first community meeting held
 - c. 7:00-7:15 PM - second community meeting open for participants to join
 - d. 7:15-8:15 PM - second community meeting held
5. Applicants/project managers shall not schedule more than one project to be reviewed on the same evening at the same time in a single Councilmanic District. Dates and times for community meetings are on a first come, first served basis. OPZ staff will alert applicants/project managers if there is a scheduling conflict. Acceptable remedies include selecting a meeting time that starts at least one hour prior to or one hour after any other community meeting that is already in the system for the same Councilmanic District. Please note: all community meetings must start between 6:00 PM and 8:00 PM Monday through Thursday.
6. The Office of Planning and Zoning (OPZ) will issue a unique project identifier to all projects requesting a community meeting. This unique project identifier will be necessary when submitting supplementary information via the following forms:
 - a. [Online Mailed Notice Evidence Form](#);
 - b. [Online Video Link Form](#); and
 - c. [Online Post-Meeting Document Form](#).
7. Staff from OPZ will review information submitted on the Online Community Meeting Request Form and will contact the applicant by email if corrections are necessary. Any corrections affecting the mailed notice shall be incorporated into the notice prior to mailing, as notices with incorrect information will not be accepted as meeting regulatory requirements.
8. Not less than 21 days prior to the community meeting, OPZ will post on the County's Community Meeting Calendar Webpage information about the virtual meeting, including a link to the meeting, other joining information, a link to supporting documentation, and contact information for the applicant or applicant's agent.
9. First-class mailed notices outlined in [§17-2-107](#) shall include the date and time of the community meeting, a link to the Anne Arundel County [Community Meeting Calendar webpage](#) where meeting joining information will be displayed, and the applicant/applicant's agent contact information (for questions and hard copy requests).
10. One first-class mailed notice outlined in [§17-2-107](#) shall be sent to each of the following:
 - a. All lot owners within 300 feet of the property to be subdivided or developed.
 - b. The President of any community or homeowners' association of any project that is located within 300 feet of the proposed subdivision, or proposed Site Design Plan ([Community Associations in AACO](#)).
 - c. The Office of Planning and Zoning, Research & GIS Section, 2664 Riva Road, 4th Floor/MS 6401, Annapolis, MD 21401.
 - d. The Office of Planning and Zoning, Development Division, 2664 Riva Road, 3rd Floor/MS 6305, Annapolis, MD 21401.
 - e. The County Councilmember of the Councilmanic District in which the subdivision or development is located.

- f. If the property abuts other Councilmanic districts, to those County Councilmembers.
 - g. The County Executive, Office of the County Executive, 44 Calvert Street, Annapolis, MD 21401.
11. Not less than 21 days prior to the community meeting, the applicant shall submit via the [Online Mailed Notice Evidence Form](#) the following information in PDF format:
- a. Satisfactory evidence that first-class mailed notices outlined in [§17-2-107](#) were mailed not less than 21 days prior to the community meeting. Satisfactory evidence will include a certificate of mailing (PS Form 3817) for each piece of first-class mail or a signed affidavit including copies of the mailing label file. In the State of Maryland an affidavit does not need to be notarized, but it needs to be signed based upon personal knowledge and under the penalty of perjury. Acceptable language that must be included within any affidavit is, "I DO SOLEMNLY AFFIRM under the penalties of perjury that the facts and matters contained within this Affidavit are true and correct based upon my personal knowledge."
 - b. A copy of the final notice document.
12. Staff from OPZ will review the information submitted in the Online Mailed Notice Evidence Form:
- a. If the notices do not comply with the requirements outlined in [§17-2-107](#) of the County Code, OPZ will notify the applicant that the community meeting will need to be rescheduled.
 - i. If the notices do comply with the requirements outlined in [§17-2-107](#) of the County Code, then OPZ staff will post the project on the [Community Meeting Calendar](#).
 - j. Information about the virtual meeting, including a link and joining information to the meeting;
 - ii. A link to supporting documentation; and,
 - iii. Contact information for the applicant or applicant's agent.

During the Community Meeting

1. Schedule the virtual meeting so it opens 10-15 minutes prior to the advertised time to allow participants to enter the meeting and settle before the meeting officially starts.
2. At the opening of the virtual community meeting, the facilitator(s) must announce to meeting attendees that the meeting will be/is being recorded and record the meeting. Do not start recording the meeting before the official start of the meeting.
3. You must use a virtual meeting platform that allows recording. The County will only accept a single video URL link that contains video and audio for the meeting recording. Applicants cannot submit a file or multiple files to meet this requirement, as the community meeting will be voided and the meeting will be required to be rescheduled.
4. Spend a couple of minutes at the beginning of the meeting laying out the ground rules and familiarizing participants with the features of the virtual meeting platform you intend to use. This includes information on how questions will be handled, i.e., via the chat function or by allowing participants to unmute and ask their question(s).
5. The facilitators must generate a list of participants including name, affiliation (if any), mailing address, and email address. Depending on the virtual meeting platform in use, we suggest you ask attendees to use the chat function to provide their name and contact information. Record or save the chat communication for later use.
6. From our own experience in hosting virtual meetings, we suggest the following best practices for hosting public virtual meetings:
 - a. Assign and use a meeting facilitator who is not making all or part of the presentation.
 - b. Consider using two meeting hosts in case one has internet or connectivity trouble, the other host can continue to host the meeting.
 - c. For participants who do not have their profile name set or join by phone only, have the meeting facilitator ask for names as people join the meeting and change the profile name for the meeting.
 - d. Consider allowing participants to 'chat' only with the meeting facilitator to work out technical issues while the presentation is happening and ask participants to use the 'raise hand' function when they want to ask a question. Alternatively, allow participants to use the 'chat' function to ask questions during the presentation.

- e. Keep everyone muted except the presenter or person asking a question to cut down on background noise.
 - f. When the screen is initially shared, ask participants if they can see what is being projected, and if they cannot, make necessary adjustments.
7. At a minimum, information identified on the revised [Community Meeting Checklist Form](#) must be clearly addressed in each virtual presentation.
 8. A vicinity map and any conceptual or survey/engineering plans must be presented to participants through the “share screen” option.
 9. If no stakeholders join the virtual community meeting, the virtual meeting still needs to proceed with a presentation of the project, and a video URL to the presentation must be submitted to OPZ within one business day following the community meeting via the [Online Video Link Form](#).
 10. Please Note: If technical difficulties result in the inability to complete the delivery of required information during the virtual presentation, another community meeting must be held. The notification process for any subsequent meetings must comply with the timeline in [§17-2-107](#) of the County Code and this Green Notice.

After the Community Meeting

1. Within one business day following the virtual community meeting, the applicant must submit one video URL link containing the video and audio recording of the meeting to OPZ via the [Online Video Link Form](#). The County will only accept a single video URL link that contains video and audio for the meeting recording. Applicants cannot submit a file or multiple files to meet this requirement as the community meeting will be voided and the meeting will be required to be rescheduled. OPZ will post the link and project contact information on the County’s Community Calendar Meeting Webpage. From the time the link is posted to the webpage, applicants must allow a minimum of 14 calendar days for incoming comments and questions by the public.
2. Not more than 28 days after the meeting recording link is published by OPZ, the applicant shall submit via the [Online Post-Meeting Document Form](#) the following information in PDF format:
 - a. List of meeting participants and post meeting commenters including name, affiliation (if any), mailing address, and email address;
 - b. Completed Community Meeting Checklist Form;
 - c. Written meeting minutes;
 - d. Written summary of comments received during and after the community meeting, as well as responses; and
 - e. Evidence that a copy of the written summary of comments and responses was sent to each participant at the virtual community meeting, people who commented after the meeting, and to all property owners within 300 feet of the property to be developed.
3. OPZ will post on the County’s Community Meeting Calendar Webpage the written meeting minutes and the summary of the comments and responses.

At the Time of Formal Project Submittal or Resubmittal:

1. For formal project submittal to the County, the applicant must furnish to OPZ the unique project identifier generated by OPZ for the pre-submittal community meeting and the date and time of the community meeting.