



Joseph A. Curtatone  
Mayor

George J. Proakis  
OSPCD Executive Director

# CITY OF SOMERVILLE

Office of Strategic Planning & Community Development

## Virtual Public Meeting FAQ for Attendees

Pursuant to Governor Baker's March 12, 2020 Order suspending certain provisions of the Open Meeting Law, G.L. C. 30A, s. 18, and the Governor's March 15, 2020 Order imposing strict limitations on the number of people that may gather in one place, as well as Mayor Curtatone's Declaration of Emergency, dated March 15, 2020, all public meetings held by Somerville Boards and Commissions will be conducted via remote participation.

The Planning & Zoning Division of OSPCD staffs the Planning Board, the Zoning Board of Appeals, the Historic Preservation Commission, and the Urban Design Commission. All meetings of those Boards/Commissions are hosted through GoToWebinar, and this document is directed at people interested in attending one of those meetings.

This document answers some basic questions about joining and participating in these public meetings. Just like the in-person meetings of these Boards and Commissions, all virtual public meetings will be recorded and minutes will be taken.

## Joining the Meeting

It is recommended that you use a computer or smartphone to join the meeting if you can. If you join the meeting using only a landline or flip phone, you will not be able to see anything that is presented on the screen during the meeting.

If you need further assistance using this technology, the OSPCD P&Z Division has published a directions for joining meetings using a smartphone or computer that can be found on [SomervilleZoning.com](http://SomervilleZoning.com).

*Q: How do I join the meeting from a computer or smartphone?*

93 Highland Avenue  
Somerville, MA 02143  
(617-625-6600 ext.2500  
TTY: (617) 666-0001  
[www.somervillema.gov](http://www.somervillema.gov)  
[www.somervillezoning.com](http://www.somervillezoning.com)

A: You need to register for the meeting before you can join. You have two options to register:

1. Use the link provided on the agenda.
2. Enter the meeting ID provided on the agenda at this [link](#) or in your desktop or smartphone GoToWebinar app.

In both cases, you can pre-register for the meeting or register just as the meeting starts. You will need to provide your full name, email address, and street address.

*Q: My computer doesn't have a microphone or speakers. Can I still use it to join the meeting?*

A: Yes! You can use your computer to access the visual portions of the meeting and a phone to access the audio portions. In addition to the phone number and access code provided on the agenda, you will need to enter the PIN that the software provides you with once you have started the meeting. If you register for the meeting ahead of time using the registration link on the agenda, the confirmation email will include directions on how you can use a phone for the audio portion of the meeting.

*Q: How do I join the meeting using just a landline or flip phone?*

A: If you do not have a computer or smartphone, please get in touch with Planning Staff at least 4 hours prior to the meeting you wish to join to make arrangements for testimony via phone. Again, if you can join a meeting using a computer or smartphone it is highly recommended that you do so.

*Q: I've successfully joined the meeting but no one can hear me.*

A: All meeting attendees are automatically muted when they join. If you are the applicant for a proposal or a member of the public wishing to comment during a public hearing, Planning Staff will unmute you when it is your turn to speak.

## **Using the GoToWebinar Software**

Make sure that you grant GoToWebinar permission to use your microphone and speakers. Otherwise you will not be able to hear or be heard during the meeting.

*Q: How do I know if the software will work with my computer?*

A: Go to [this link](#). It will automatically check your computer for compatibility with the software.

*Q: Do I need to download software to be able to join the meeting?*

A: No, although it is recommended that you download the software if you can. If your computer is unable to download the GoToWebinar software, you can use the browser-based version of the software. GoToWebinar recommends using Google Chrome if you are accessing the meeting through a browser.

### **Procedure during Public Hearings For Members of the Public**

*Q: I want to speak during the public comment portion of a hearing.*

A: When the Chair asks for public comment during a hearing you should “raise your hand” or send a chat message to staff notifying them that you wish to speak. Staff will give everyone who expresses an interest in speaking a chance to do so. Just like at in-person meetings, the Chair may limit on the length of public comment for a case (typically limited to 2 minutes per person). If you have additional comments after you have had your turn speaking, email them to [planning@somervillema.gov](mailto:planning@somervillema.gov).

The “raise hand” symbol:



More information on where to find it on your control bar can be found in the [Directions for Joining GoToWebinar Meetings](#) on the [SomervilleZoning.com](http://SomervilleZoning.com) website.

*Q: I want to comment on a project but don't want to attend the virtual meeting.*

A: As always, you can email comments about a project to [planning@somervillema.gov](mailto:planning@somervillema.gov). You should email all comments at least 24 hours before the meeting begins to give the Board/Commission enough time to review your comments.

### **For Applicants**

*Q: I want to show slides/make a presentation during the meeting.*

A: Reach out to your Ward Planner at least 24 hours before the meeting to provide them with a digital copy of your presentation (preferably a PDF) that they can share on screen during the meeting. This presentation cannot include any information that was not previously submitted to the Board/Commission. Some tips for a successful presentation:

- Test the GoToWebinar software on your computer prior to the meeting to make sure you're familiar with the controls.
- Identify each page of your presentation in a way that makes it easy to ask Staff to turn to a specific page. Saying “turn to the next page” is less clear than saying “turn to page X of the PDF.”
- Practice the presentation before the meeting. Keep it concise.

**Other Questions/Comments**

If you have questions about the software, please look through the [GoToWebinar support pages](#).

If you have other questions, please reach out to Planning Staff at [planning@somervillema.gov](mailto:planning@somervillema.gov) or at 617-625-6600 ext. 2500.