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CITY OF SOMERVILLE

Office of Strategic Planning & Community Development

Virtual Public Meeting FAQ

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 Board, Zoning Board of Appeals, and Historic Preservation Commission hearings 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 in person meetings, all virtual public meetings will be recorded.

Q: How do I join the meeting?

A: The information to join virtual meetings is posted on the agenda.

The agenda provides the following information:

- *A link to register for the meeting* - Once you register for the meeting, you will receive a confirmation email providing you with a link and directions for joining the meeting. You do not need to register ahead of time – you can register for the meeting right before joining it.
- *A meeting ID* – This ID can be used to join the meeting from a web browser (Google Chrome is recommended). Go [here](#) to join using the meeting ID.
- *A phone number and meeting access code* - You can use the phone number and access code to join the meeting by calling in from a phone. Cell phones are recommended as land lines may charge you for a long-distance call. You should dial the phone number, and then enter the access code when the recording asks for it. If your computer does not have a microphone and speakers,

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(617-625-6600 ext.2500
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www.somervillezoning.com

you can also use this option to join the audio portion of the meeting.

If you have more questions about how to join, GoToWebinar has their own guide for attendees here: <https://support.goto.com/webinar/how-to-join-attendees>

When you join the meeting, you will be automatically muted; a meeting organizer will need to unmute you before you can be heard by the Board/Commission members. If you are the applicant for a proposal or wish to make a public comment, you will be unmuted when it is your turn to speak.

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 do download the software if you can. If your computer is unable to download the GoToWebinar software, you can either 1) use the browser-based version of the software or 2) call in to the meeting using a phone. If you choose to use the browser-based version, GoToWebinar recommends using Google Chrome.

Q: I want to make a comment during the public comment portion of the hearing. How can I do that?

A: GoToWebinar has a function where attendees can virtually “raise their hand” during the meeting. When the Chair opens the public comment portion of a case you should “raise your hand” if you would like to speak; a staff member will unmute all attendees who “raise their hand” to give them an opportunity to comment on the case. You may have limited time to speak (e.g., 2 minutes) and at the end of that time you will be muted again. It is the discretion of the Chair to allow you to speak longer than the set time.

Q: I’m an applicant and I want to show slides/make a presentation. How can I do that?

A: You should reach out to your Ward Planner and let them know that you have slides you would like to present during the meeting. You will need to email the Ward Planner a digital copy of your presentation (PDF or PowerPoint is ideal) at least 24 hours before the meeting begins. During the meeting, staff can put that presentation on the screen. You will need to verbally walk the Board/Commission through the presentation, as you will not have control over the staff person’s computer. We recommend that you clearly

label/annotate your presentation as much as possible to make it easier for you to identify for staff which slide/page they should turn to. If you have concerns about this, talk to your Ward Planner.

Q: I want to provide public comments but don't want to have to attend the virtual meeting. How can I do that?

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