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DEVELOPMENT SERVICES

www.cosatx.us/departments-services/development-services

BOARD & COMMISSION HEARINGS – WHAT TO EXPECT

The thought of attending a board or commission hearing on a request or application is intimidating to many. This handout will address some of the FAQs (frequently asked questions) to help you feel comfortable and prepared when you attend.

Why is a public hearing important?

A public hearing provides the opportunity for:

- applicants to answer questions & explain their requests;
- staff to present the proposal & their recommendation(s);
- concerned citizens to ask questions & share feedback; and,
- board & commission members to gather facts & discuss before deciding.

When will the public hearing on my request take place?

The Consolidated Schedule (found on the Planning & Development Services department webpage under “Links” on the right sidebar) outlines all meeting dates, along with the corresponding deadlines. The date of receipt of a completed application (with all required documents & payment) determines on which meeting your public hearing will be placed on the agenda.

What if I need assistance to attend?

If a translator or other reasonable accommodation to attend or participate is needed, please contact our office at least four business days prior to the meeting date. The public meeting room is wheelchair accessible.

How are members of the public made aware of my application or request?

Some types of applications (variance or zone change, for example) require notification by mail to property owners within 200’ of the subject property. Others may only require notification by way of a Legal Notice in the local newspaper. Also, agendas for all board & commission meetings are made available on the City’s website, physically posted on the west side of City Hall, and inside the lobby.

What time should I arrive?

While each meeting has a series of public hearings which follow the order of the agenda, please be aware that the board or commission may at times modify that order. It is strongly recommended that you arrive at least ten minutes prior to the advertised start of the meeting. Once arriving, notify the staff that you are present for your item.

Am I required to attend the meeting?

While you are not required to attend, we strongly encourage you do so. The board or commission members may have questions only you can answer, and when you are present, you ensure that your proposal is explained accurately. Changes may be proposed, and if you are present, you can provide feedback on these changes. Also, by listening to the testimony and comments, you will have a more accurate understanding of how your application or request is perceived. Most applications – if denied – do not allow reapplication for a period of time, and your presence can help prevent a denial for lack of information.

What happens when my application or request is announced?

The chairperson will read off the agenda item, and the City staff will come forward to the podium to present the application or request. This presentation will include analysis and a recommendation. Once the chairperson announces the item is open for public comment, you (or your representative) are welcome to come forward to the podium. State your name clearly for the record. Then, you may make a brief statement and answer any questions the board or commission members may have.

How should I prepare for speaking at a hearing?

It is important to have all the background knowledge of the application or request, including why you are seeking approval. If you have additional materials (handouts, presentation slides, etc) that you would like to share, you may do so. Please provide these materials to the staff at least two business days before the meeting – this will allow them to scan the materials for display on the meeting room monitors and make copies. A copy of all of your materials must be kept by the staff for filing with the official minute record. Remember to speak clearly, and to speak directly into the microphone. Once your comments have been shared, please be seated. You will not be permitted to come forward to speak again unless the chairperson specifically asks that you do so.

What happens after public comment?

The chairperson will close the item to public comment, and the members of the board or commission will discuss the request. Then, following discussion, a vote is taken. In all instances, the vote may be for approval, for tabling the item pending additional information, or for denial. In some instances, the vote may be for approval, subject to conditions outlined in the staff report or suggested by the board or commission.

What takes place after the meeting?

The staff will issue a formal letter of decision to you, or your designated representative, outlining the specifics of the board or commission recommendation, and explaining your next steps on the project. This letter is NOT a permit. Work may not begin until the necessary permit(s) are obtained.