

CITY OF KEENE
ZONING BOARD OF ADJUSTMENT
RULES OF PROCEDURE

I. GENERAL RULES

- A. **Authority:** These rules of procedure are adopted under the Authority of New Hampshire Revised Statutes Annotated, 1983, Chapter 676:1, and the zoning ordinance and map of the City of Keene. The Zoning Board of Adjustment (ZBA) shall have and shall exercise all of the powers enumerated in RSA 674:33, or as otherwise provided by State statute and City Ordinances.
- B. **Purpose:** The purpose of these rules is to provide guidance to the City of Keene Zoning Board of Adjustment (“Board”) and all persons participating in proceedings held before the Board, and to allow for the orderly and efficient handling of all matters within the jurisdiction of the Board. Proceedings are not to be strictly governed by formal rules of evidence or parliamentary procedure. Instead, these rules are designed so that all parties interested in an application will be allowed a reasonable opportunity to fully participate and share their views, facts, evidence, and opinions for the Board’s consideration in reaching an appropriate decision. The Board is authorized, by a vote of two-thirds (2/3) of the five (5) member Board, to vote at any meeting to suspend, supplement, alter, or amend any specific rule or procedure, as may be appropriate in a particular matter, in order to best accomplish this purpose.
- C. **Officers:** All officers of the Board, including up to five (5) alternate members, shall be appointed by the Mayor of the City of Keene pursuant to RSA 673:6, and applicable City Ordinance.
- a. A *Chair* shall be elected annually by a majority vote of the Board in the month of January. The *Chair* shall preside over all meetings and hearings, appoint such committees as directed by the Board, and shall affix their signature in the name of the Board.
 - b. A *Vice-Chair* shall be elected annually by a majority vote of the Board in the month of January. The *Vice-Chair* shall preside in the absence of the Chair and shall have the full powers of the Chair on matters which come before the Board during the absence of the Chair.
 - c. A *Clerk* (who shall not be a Board member) shall be appointed by the City of Keene Zoning Administrator, to maintain a record of all meetings, transactions, and decisions of the Board, and perform such other duties as the Board may direct by resolution and otherwise assist the Board.

- d. The *Chair* and *Vice-Chair* shall serve for a one (1) year term and shall be eligible for re-election and shall continue to serve until annual elections are next held.
- D. **Members and Alternates:** Up to five (5) alternate members may be appointed by the Mayor of the City of Keene, pursuant to RSA 637:6, and applicable City Ordinance to serve whenever a regular member of the Board is unable to fulfill that member's responsibilities.
- a. At meetings of the ZBA, alternates who are not activated to fill the seat of an absent or recused member, or who have not been appointed by the Chair to temporarily fill the unexpired term of a vacancy, may participate with the Board in a limited capacity. During a public hearing, alternates may sit at the table with the regular members and may view documents, listen to testimony, ask questions and interact with other Board members, the applicant, abutters, and the public. Alternates shall not be allowed to make or second motions. During work sessions or portions of meetings that do not include a public hearing, alternates may fully participate, exclusive of any motions or votes that may be made. At all times, the Chair shall fully inform the public of the status of any alternate present and identify the members who shall be voting on the application.
 - b. Members must reside in the community and are expected to attend each meeting of the Board to exercise their duties and responsibilities. Any member unable to attend a meeting shall notify the Clerk as soon as possible. Members, including the Chair and all officers, shall participate in the decision-making process and vote to approve or disapprove all motions under consideration.
- E. **Meetings:** Regular meetings shall be held in the Council Chambers, at 3 Washington Street, Keene, New Hampshire, on the first Monday of each month unless otherwise duly noticed by the Clerk. Other meetings may be held on the call of the Chair provided public notice and notice to each member is given in accordance with RSA 91-A:2, II.
- a. **Quorum:** A quorum for all meetings of the Board shall be three (3) members, including alternates sitting in place of members.
 - i. The Clerk shall make every effort to ensure that all five (5) members, and one (1) or two (2) alternates, are present for the consideration of any appeal or application.
 - ii. If any regular Board member is absent from any meeting or hearing, or disqualifies them self from sitting on a particular case, the Chair shall designate one of the alternate members to sit in place of the absent or disqualified member, and such alternate shall be in all respects a full member of the Board while so sitting.

- iii. If there are less than five (5) members (including alternates) available, the Clerk, shall give the option to the applicant to proceed or not prior to the scheduled meetings. Should the applicant choose to proceed with less than five (5) members present that shall not solely constitute grounds for a re-hearing should the application be denied. All decisions of the Board shall require the concurrence of at least three (3) members. The option to request to reschedule a meeting of less than five (5) members is not absolute, and the Board may, at its discretion, proceed to consider an application with less than a five (5) member Board.
- b. **Public Hearing Limits:** The Board shall not open a new or continued public hearing after 10:00 p.m.
- c. **Disqualification:** If any member finds it necessary to disqualify (or recuse) themselves from sitting in a particular case, as provided in RSA 673:14, they shall notify the Clerk as soon as possible so that an alternate may be requested to sit in their place. When there is uncertainty as to whether a member should be disqualified to act on a particular application, that member or another member of the Board may request the Board to vote on the question of disqualification. Any such request shall be made before the public hearing gets underway. The vote shall be advisory and non-binding.
 - i. Either the Chair or the member disqualifying before the beginning of the public hearing on the case shall announce the disqualification. The disqualified member shall step down from the Board table during the public hearing and during deliberation on the case.
 - ii. Any interested person appearing in a proceeding, having any information or reason to believe that a Board member should be disqualified, shall notify the Chair as soon as possible and in any event before the commencement of such public hearing.
 - iii. Any Board member or other interested party may, in accordance with RSA 673:14, prior to the commencement of any public hearing, requests the Board to make the determination as to whether or not such Board member should be disqualified.
 - iv. In deciding issues of disqualification, the Board shall be guided by RSA 500-A:12, pertaining to jury selection and the requirement that jurors shall be “indifferent,” as well as the City of Keene Code of Ordinances §2-1111, *et seq.* (“Conflict of Interest”).
- d. **Voting:** Unless otherwise required by law (i.e. RSA 674:33, III) all actions before the Board (including appropriate findings of fact) shall require only

a majority vote of those members acting on any matter. All members hearing a matter shall vote; abstention shall not be allowed.

e. **Order of Business:** The order of business for regular meeting shall be as follows:

- i. Call to order by the Chair
- ii. Roll call by the Chair
- iii. Minutes of previous meeting
- iv. Unfinished business
- v. Public hearing
- vi. New business
- vii. Communications and miscellaneous
- viii. Other business
- ix. Non-public session (if required)
- x. Adjournment

(Note: although this is the usual order of business, the Board may change the order of business after the roll call in order to accommodate efficiency or the public.)

f. **Nonpublic Sessions:** All deliberations of the Board shall be held in public. Nonpublic sessions shall be held only as necessary and in strict compliance with the provisions of RSA 91-A. The Board may also adjourn, as needed, to meet with its attorney to receive legal advice, which will not constitute a nonpublic session pursuant to RSA 91-A.

II. PROCEDURES FOR FILING APPLICATIONS

A. Application/Decision

a. **Applications:** The original application forms may be obtained from either the Clerk or the Community Development Department. Each application for a hearing before the Board shall be made on forms provided by the Board and shall be presented to the Clerk who shall record the date of receipt over their signature. The forms provided by the City must be used; correctness of the information supplied shall be the responsibility of the petitioner at all times. Applications should be identified as one of the following: Appeal of an Administrative Decision, Change of a Non-Conforming Use, Equitable Waiver of Dimensional Requirements, Special Exception and Variance. All forms and fees prescribed herein and revisions thereof shall be adopted by the Board and shall become part of these Rules of Procedure.

- i. Applications to Appeal from an Administrative Decision taken under RSA 676:5 shall be filed within thirty (30) days of the decision or when such decision becomes known or reasonably should have been known, by the petitioner as determined by the Board.

- b. A public hearing shall be held within ninety (90) days of the receipt of an application, provided that the applicant may waive this requirement and consent to such extension as may be mutually agreeable. If a zoning board of adjustment determines that it lacks sufficient information to make a final decision on an application and the applicant does not consent to an extension, the board may, in its discretion, deny the application without prejudice, in which case the applicant may submit a new application for the same or substantially similar request for relief. Public notice of public hearings on each application shall be published in the local newspaper and shall be posted at two locations, of which one posting may be on the City internet website, not less than five (5) days before the date fixed for the hearing. Notice shall include the name of the applicant, description of property to include tax map identification, action desired by the applicant, all applicable provisions of the zoning ordinance, the type of appeal being made, and the date, time, and place of the hearing.
 - i. Personal notice shall be made by Certified Mail to the applicant and to all abutters and holders of conservation, preservation or agricultural preservation restrictions not less than five (5) days before the date of the hearing.
- c. **Plot Plans:** A scale drawing showing the location and dimensions of all structures and open spaces on the subject lot and on the adjacent lots. Plans need not be professionally drawn, but must be a sufficient and accurate representation of the property. Plans deemed to be insufficient by the Clerk shall be returned, and no public hearing shall be scheduled until the receipt of an acceptable plan. The plot plan is to be a minimum of 8 ½ x 11 inches.
- d. **Abutter Notification Materials:** For the purpose of abutter notification, the following items shall be submitted with the application:
 - i. An abutters list that includes all owners of properties that directly abut and/or that are across the street or stream from the parcel(s) that will be subject to review, and all owners of properties located within two hundred (200) feet of the parcel(s) that will be subject to review. The certified list shall include all property owner names, property street addresses, property tax map parcel numbers, and mailing addresses if different from the property address. In the case of an abutting property being under a condominium or other collective form of ownership, the term abutter means the officers of the collective or association as defined in RSA 356-B:3, XXIII.
 - ii. Two (2) sets of legible mailing labels (Avery size 5160 or equivalent) for each abutter and including the owner of the property that will be subject to review and his/her designated agent(s).

- iii. A check in an amount sufficient to cover the cost of legal notice advertising and mailing of certified letters to abutters.
- e. In accordance with RSA 676:5, IV, each application shall require the payment of an application fee to be determined by the Board, together with fees that may be required for investigative studies, document review or other administrative costs and expenses.

B. Other Requirements

- a. **Appeals of Administrative Decisions:** An appeal from an administrative decision, filed in accordance with RSA 676:5, shall be filed within thirty (30) days of such decision.
 - b. **Person Authorized to Submit Applications:** To submit a proper application, an applicant must be one of the following persons:
 - i. The title or record owner of the subject property, or such owner's duly authorized agent, and signed as such on the application form.
 - ii. The holder of a valid Purchase & Sales Agreement or the holder of a valid Option for the purchase of the subject property (with a signed written consent of the title or record owner of such property, or such owner's duly authorized agent).
 - c. **Documentation of Title or Authority to Appeal:** The Board may require the holder of record title to submit documentary evidence as to Petitioner's title and holders of Purchase and Sale Agreements or Options may be required to submit evidence that they are valid holders of such agreements before the Board will consider their application.
 - d. **Inadequate Application:** Any Petitioner who submits an application, plans and/or exhibits that are deemed inadequate by the Clerk shall not be scheduled for a hearing before the Board until such time as the Clerk receives adequate plans or exhibits and application.
 - e. **Floor Plans:** When, in the opinion of the Community Development Department, floor plans are necessary in the case of conversions or renovations to an existing structure, Petitioner shall furnish interior floor plans to scale. Floor plans need not be professionally drawn, but must be a sufficient and accurate representation of the floor plan.
- C. Deadline for filing:** All required information under these rules must be submitted to the Clerk before the scheduled deadlines to be submitted to the Board. The submittal deadline shall be no less than seventeen (17) days' prior to the next months meeting. The application will not be placed on the Agenda until all of the required information is received in a format acceptable to the Clerk.

- D. **Notification to Abutters and Public:** The Clerk will set a date, time, and place for a public hearing and shall notify the applicant and all abutters within two hundred (200) feet of the property (using the notification materials required by Paragraph A.d.i., above) by Certified Mail, and shall cause a public notice of the hearing to be published in a newspaper of general circulation in the area, at least five (5) days' prior to the date fixed for the hearing on the application (RSA 676:7, I). Pursuant to RSA 676:7, II, the public hearing shall be held within forty-five (45) days of the receipt of a properly completed application (Paragraph A.b. above).
- E. **Fees:** The petitioner shall pay to the Clerk a non-refundable filing fee of One Hundred Dollars (\$100.00), at the time of filing. Additionally, reimbursement of the cost to notify each abutter, owner, and applicant by Certified Mail based on the current USPS postal rate and to publish a legal notice advertisement in the local newspaper, a fee of Sixty-Two Dollars (\$62.00) must be paid at the time of filing.
- F. **Assistance by City Staff:** The Zoning Administrator will be available to assist the applicant with the application form, drawings and plans. If necessary, clarification of the Zoning Ordinance can be obtained from the Zoning Administrator, but the City will not provide legal advice as part of the application process.
- G. **Procedural Compliance:** Unless any objection is specifically raised or procedural defect otherwise noticed during a public hearing, the Board shall assume that any application has been properly filed and that due notice has been given as required by these Rules of Procedure, Keene's Zoning Ordinance, and State statutes.
- H. **Consent to Inspection:** Upon filing any application, the owner of the affected land implicitly consents to inspection of property and building by City staff and Board members upon reasonable prior notice and at a reasonable time. In the event that such inspection is refused when requested, the application shall be dismissed without prejudice by the Board.
- I. **Supplemental Information:** If an applicant or applicant's agent submits supplemental information pertaining to an application within (10) days prior to the public hearing at which the application is to be heard, the board shall consider during the meeting and decide by majority vote, whether to accept the supplemental information for consideration at the meeting, or to continue the application to the next scheduled meeting to allow adequate time to review the supplemental information.

III. CONDUCT OF PUBLIC HEARINGS

- A. **Conduct:** The conduct of public hearings shall be governed by the following rules unless otherwise directed by the Chair:
 - a. The Chair shall call the hearing in session, introduce the Board members, and review the previous meetings minutes for corrections.

- b. The Chair shall read the application and report on how public notice and personal notice were given and where appropriate, summarize the legal requirements that must be met by the applicant in order to obtain the relief requested.
- c. The Chair will ask the Staff Liaison to report on the first case, identified by case number.
- d. Members of the Board may ask questions at any point during testimony.
- e. Each person who appears shall be required to state his name, address, and indicate whether he is a party to the case or an agent or counsel of a party to the case.
- f. Any member of the Board, through the Chair, may request any party to the case to speak a second time. The Chair may impose reasonable time restrictions on individuals who wish to speak.
- g. Any party to the case who wants to ask a question of another party to the case must do so through the Chair.
- h. The applicant shall be called first to present his appeal.
- i. Those appearing in favor of the appeal shall be allowed to speak.
- j. Those in opposition to the appeal shall be allowed to speak.
- k. The applicant and those in favor shall be allowed to speak in rebuttal.
- l. Those in opposition to the appeal shall be allowed to speak in rebuttal.
- m. The Board will accept any evidence that pertains to the facts of the case or how the facts relate to the provisions of the zoning ordinance and State zoning law.
- n. After all parties have been afforded a reasonable opportunity to testify, the public hearing shall be declared closed by the Chair and no further testimony will be received from the applicant or any other parties (other than minor technical or procedural information as may be needed from City staff), unless the Board, on its own motion, shall reopen the public hearing to receive additional testimony or information. If the hearing is reopened, all interested parties shall be given the opportunity to speak to the issue requiring the reopening. All deliberations and decisions made by the Board shall continue to be conducted in public. The Board shall, when appropriate, render findings of fact.
- o. The Board may continue a public hearing to a place, date and time certain announced by the Chair without further public notice.

- B. **Voting:** Except as determined by the Board, the Board shall decide all cases immediately after the public hearing. Prior to voting the action, the Board shall render, as appropriate, findings of fact by majority vote. The Board will approve, approve with conditions, deny the appeal, or defer its decision.
- C. **Decisions:** Notice of the Decision will be made available for public inspection within five (5) business days as required by RSA 676:3, *I* and will be sent to the applicant by regular mail. The decision shall include specific written findings of fact that support the decision. If the appeal is denied, the notice shall include the reasons therefore. The notice shall also be given to the Planning Board, the Community Development Department, Assessor, and other City officials as determined by the Board. Decisions shall be based upon (1) all relevant facts and evidence introduced at the public hearing, (2) the application, (3) the Zoning Ordinance, and (4) applicable law.
- D. **Rehearing by the Board:** The Board may reconsider a decision to grant or deny an application, or any other decision or order of the Board, provided a Motion for Rehearing is submitted to the Board no later than thirty (30) calendar days commencing with the date following the date of the action of the Board for which the rehearing is requested. Motions for rehearing can only be received in the office of the Board during normal business hours of Monday thru Friday, 8:00 a.m. to 4:30 p.m., City Hall, 4th floor, Community Development Department.
- E. **Motions for Rehearing:** The Board shall deliberate the Motion for Rehearing within thirty (30) days of the date of the filing of the Motion. The deliberation by the Board shall not require a public hearing, and shall be conducted solely by the Board and based upon the contents of the Motion. If the Board grants a motion for rehearing, the new public hearing shall be held within thirty (30) of the decision to grant the rehearing provided all notice fees are paid and an updated abutters list is submitted by the party requesting the rehearing. Notification of the rehearing shall follow the procedures set forth in RSA 676:7.
- F. **Appeal:** Any further appeal of a final decision or order of the Board shall be in accordance with RSA 677:4, *et seq.*
- G. **Records:** The records of the Board shall be kept by the Clerk and made available for public inspection from the Clerk at City Hall, 4th floor, Community Development Department, in accordance with RSA 673:17.
- a. Final written decisions will be placed on file and available for public inspection within five (5) business days after the decision is made. RSA 676:3.
 - b. Minutes of all meetings including names of Board members, persons appearing before the Board, and a brief description of the subject matter

shall be open to public inspection within five (5) business days of the public meeting. RSA 91-A:2, II.

- c. The official record of the Zoning Board of Adjustment proceedings shall be the minutes after they have been approved (with corrections, if required) by the Board at a subsequent meeting.

IV. MISCELLANEOUS

- A. **Amendments:** Rules of Procedure shall be adopted or amended by a majority vote at a regular meeting of the Board provided that such new rules or amendments are proposed and discussed prior to the meeting at which the vote is to be taken and shall be placed on file with the City Clerk and be available for public inspection pursuant to RSA 676:1.
- B. **Waivers:** Any portion of these rules of procedure may be waived in such cases where, in the opinion of the Board, strict conformity would pose a practical difficulty to the applicant and waiver would not be contrary to the spirit and intent of the rules.
- C. **Joint Meetings and Hearings:** RSA 676:2, provides that the Board of Adjustment may hold joint meetings or hearings with other land use Boards, including the Planning Board, the Historic District Commission, the Building Code Board of Appeals, and the inspector of buildings, and that each Board shall have discretion as to whether or not to hold a joint meeting with any other land use Board.
 - a. Joint business meetings with any other land use Board may be held at any time when called jointly by the Chair of the two (2) Boards.
 - b. A public hearing on any appeal to the Board of adjustment will be held jointly with another Board **only** under the following conditions:
 - c. The joint public hearing must be a formal public hearing on appeals to both Boards regarding the same subject matter; and
 - i. If the other Board is the Planning Board, RSA 676:2, requires that the Planning Board Chair shall chair the joint hearing. If the other Board is not the Planning Board, then the Board of Adjustment Chair shall chair the joint hearing; and
 - ii. The provisions covering the conduct of public hearings, set forth in these rules, together with such additional provisions as may be required by the other Board, shall be followed; and
 - iii. The other Board shall concur in these conditions.

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