

RESOLUTION NO. 20-017

RESOLUTION OF THE TOWNSHIP OF HOPEWELL PLANNING BOARD ADOPTING EMERGENCY REMOTE MEETING PROTOCOLS, PROCEDURES AND REQUIREMENTS FOR PUBLIC PARTICIPATION AT REMOTE MEETINGS

WHEREAS, the purpose of N.J.A.C. 5:39-1 et seq., Emergency Remote Meeting Protocol for Local Public Bodies, is to ensure that local public bodies can continue to conduct official business in an open and transparent manner whenever a declared emergency exists that prohibits physical attendance by members of the public; and

WHEREAS, a “declared emergency” means a public health emergency pursuant to the Health Powers Act, N.J.S.A. 26:13-1 et seq., or a state of emergency, pursuant to P.L. 1942, c. 251 or both, or a state of local disaster emergency which has been declared by the Governor and is in effect; and

WHEREAS, N.J.A.C. 5:39-1.3 permits a local public body to hold a remote public meeting to conduct public business during a declared emergency if the emergency reasonably prevents a local public body from safely conducting public business at a physical location with members of the public present; and

WHEREAS, if during a declared emergency the Planning Board of the Township of Hopewell (the “Planning Board”) holds a physical meeting in a location where, pursuant to State/Federal guidelines meant to mitigate risk, capacity restrictions are required to reduce the number of individuals that can be present in a meeting, the Planning Board shall either:

- 1) Hold the public meeting at another location with adequate capacity for the reasonable expected attendance by the public; or
- 2) Hold the public meeting as both an in-person and remote public meeting; or
- 3) Hold the public meeting as a completely remote meeting; and

WHEREAS, a public meeting held solely in-person without a remote access alternative provided shall not prohibit members of the public from attending in person; and

WHEREAS, adequate notice of the remote public meeting shall also include, in addition to the Open Public Meeting Act requirements of N.J.S.A. 10:4-8, clear and concise instructions for accessing the remote public meeting, the means for making public comment and how to access any public documents on the Township’s website in the manner set forth at N.J.A.C. 5:39-1.5; and

WHEREAS, at the commencement of a remote public meeting the Chair or the Chair’s designee, or in his or her absence, the Secretary, shall announce publicly and shall cause to be entered into the minutes an accurate statement regarding adequate and electronic notice or an explanation of the reason or reasons such notice was not adequately provided as set forth in N.J.A.C. 5:39-1.5(g); and

WHEREAS, prior to the commencement of a remote public meeting, the Planning Board shall make a copy of the agenda available to the public for download on the Township website and shall post a copy of same at the building where the meeting would otherwise be held, including posting of same at any designated and clearly delineated handicap accessible entrance to the building; and

WHEREAS, the content of the electronic notice shall be posted on the main access door of the building where the public would routinely attend public meetings of the local public body in person and the notice must be viewable from the outside; and

WHEREAS, the electronic communications used for a remote public meeting shall have a function that allows the Planning Board and/or Township staff to mute the audio of all members of the public, as well as allow members of the public to mute themselves, and same shall be announced at the beginning of every remote public meeting; and

WHEREAS, pursuant to N.J.A.C. 5:39-1, if the Planning Board holds a remote meeting to conduct public business, it shall use electronic communication technology routinely used in business settings that can be accessed by the public at no cost and with participant capacity consistent with the reasonable expectations of the Planning Board for the type of public meeting being held, and such participant capacity shall, at minimum, not be limited to fewer than 50 public participants (not including persons required to be present to conduct business at the meeting such as the Board members, Board professionals, and all members of the Applicant's team); and

WHEREAS, remote public meetings may be held by the Township in a format as selected by the Township Committee, by means including, but not limited to, electronic communications platforms with video and audio or live streaming via the internet and shall, additionally, provide a telephonic conference line to allow members of the public to dial in by telephone to listen and to provide public comment; and

WHEREAS, when the Planning Board holds a remote public meeting, it shall allow members of the public to ask questions by audio or by audio and video if the meeting is being held over both; and

WHEREAS, any remote public meeting where sworn testimony is being taken shall be broadcast by video, as well as audio, and all individuals giving sworn testimony, including members of the public making comments, shall appear by video; and

WHEREAS, any presentation or documents that would otherwise be viewed by, or made available to, members of the public physically attending an in-person public meeting shall be made available on the internet website of the Township or made visible during the video broadcast of the remote public meeting; and

WHEREAS, except for quasi-judicial hearings on land development applications or similar public hearings, in addition to making public comments at any remote public meeting, the Planning Board, in advance of the remote meeting shall allow public comments to be submitted

to the Board Assistant Secretary by electronic mail and in written letter form no later than 4 hours before the Planning Board meeting and posted on the website in advance of the remote public meeting; and

WHEREAS, except for quasi-judicial hearings on land development applications or similar public hearings, public comments submitted prior to the remote public meeting through electronic or regular mail shall be read aloud and addressed during the remote public meeting in a manner audible to all meeting participants and the public; and

WHEREAS, a reasonable time limit shall be placed on the reading of individual written comments, all of which shall be read from the beginning until the time limit is reached; and

WHEREAS, in support of, and respect for, an open, fair and informed decision-making process, the Planning Board recognizes that civil, respectful and courteous discourse and behavior are conducive to the democratic and harmonious airing of concerns and decision making; and

WHEREAS, in an effort to preserve the intent of open government and maintain a positive environment for citizen input and Planning Board decision making, policies and rules shall be established to promote civility and maintain decorum at in-person public meetings and remote public meetings in accordance with N.J.A.C. 5:39-1.4 (f)-(h); and

WHEREAS, if a member of the public becomes disruptive during a remote public meeting, including during any period for public comment, the Chair or the Chair's designee, or in their absence the Secretary, shall mute or continue muting, or direct appropriate staff to mute or continue muting, the disruptive member of the public and warn that continued disruption may result in the member of the public being prevented from speaking during the remote public meeting or removed from the remote public meeting; and

WHEREAS, disruptive conduct at an in-person public meeting or remote public meeting includes sustained inappropriate behaviors including, but not necessarily limited to, shouting, interruption, and use of profanity; and

WHEREAS, any member of the public who continues to act in a disruptive manner at a remote public meeting after receiving an initial warning, may be muted while other members of the public are allowed to proceed with their questions or comments; and

WHEREAS, if time permits, the disruptive individual shall be allowed to speak after all other members of the public have been given the opportunity to make comment and, if the person still remains disruptive, the individual may be muted or kept on mute for the remainder of the remote public meeting, or removed from the remote public meeting; and

NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED by the Planning Board of the Township of Hopewell, that the standards and procedures for emergency remote meetings, as set forth in this resolution and as codified in N.J.A.C. 5:39-1 et seq., are hereby established and adopted; and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that procedures and requirements for public participation are hereby established and adopted in order to safeguard public participation in any in-person or remote public meetings in the Township of Hopewell and shall apply to all members of the public in attendance at any in-person public or remote public meeting in the Township of Hopewell; and

BE IT ALSO RESOLVED that these procedures and requirements duly adopted shall be posted on the Township's website and available for public viewing.

NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED by the Planning Board as follows:

Section 1. The foregoing recitals are incorporated herein as if set forth in full;


Section 2. This Resolution shall take effect immediately.

VOTE ON THE RESOLUTION – October 22, 2020


Yes - 9 No - 0 Absent - 1 Abstain - 0 Not Voting – 1

Belmont: Yes
Khare: Yes
Kiss: Yes
Kuchinski: Yes
McLaughlin: Yes
Murphy: Yes

Parker: Yes
Peterson: Yes
Swanson: Yes
Sandom: Not Voting
Paul: Absent




Linda Barbieri, Assistant Secretary



Karen Murphy, Chair

I, Linda Barbieri, Assistant Secretary of the Planning Board of the Township of Hopewell, Mercer County, New Jersey, hereby certify that the foregoing is a true and complete copy of a resolution duly adopted by the said Board at a meeting held on October 22, 2020.



Linda Barbieri, Assistant Secretary