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**Town Planner's Review**  
**Wednesday, May 6, 2020**

- V. **Policy for reading emails aloud.** Discussion about policy for reading emails and letters from interested parties aloud at Planning Board meetings.
- I recommend setting a policy that the Town Planner update the board during each agenda item of people who have sent any new correspondence about that agenda item.

Our policy (or at least my policy) has been to not read aloud or make any reference to any email or letter that we receive from an interested party about a specific agenda item. We leave it to interested parties to communicate their concerns to the board in whichever manner they deem appropriate, whether by email, letter, speaking at the meeting, or some other means. We do treat letters and emails with great care however, forwarding them to the board, providing hard copies for the board, and posting them on the website.

In a recent broadcast email that I sent to the public where I include the Planning Board agenda, I said that I would read emails and letters aloud at the Planning Board meetings in light of new restrictions on public attendance from the coronavirus. I was not thinking of large or controversial projects where we can receive numerous long letters and should have spoken with the board before sending this note out.

This is a policy that the board should establish one way or the other. We spoke briefly about this issue at the April 15 meeting. The range of options is: 1) continue to make no reference to correspondence; 2) simply announce the names of people who sent in emails or letters; 3) read only a limited portion of each email or letter, whether a paragraph or two or limiting by time such as two minutes; and 4) read each email or letter in entirety.

I think option 2) is most appropriate. There is value in publicly announcing correspondence as the writer merits some public acknowledgement, it lets the public and the board know the emails we have received, gives a sense of the extent of public concern, and can remind board members and others if they wish to follow up on an email or letter that was sent. I do not think it appropriate to read part or all of any email or letter. It would take a lot of time, I do not want to be in a position of somebody questioning how I read their email or where I cut off the reading of their email, and on reconsideration it is really not the role of staff to do this.