

From: [Michael Behrendt](#)
Subject: Rules of Procedure - comments from Robin Mower
Date: Wednesday, August 28, 2019 12:19:32 PM

To the Planning Board,
Please see the comments from Robin Mower below.

Michael Behrendt

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From: RobinM [mailto:malpeque@gmail.com]
Sent: Tuesday, August 27, 2019 11:50 PM
To: Michael Behrendt
Subject: PB | Rules of Procedure, August 28, 2019 Public Hearing | Mower comments

Greetings, Michael --

Since I will be unable to attend the August 28th public hearing on the proposed revisions to the Planning Board's Rules of Procedure, I would appreciate your forwarding this email to the Board. I have been on vacation and not focusing on Town matters, so I must also apologize for the lateness of this communication.

Thank you.

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Greetings, Planning Board Members --

Below I provide comments on the REVISED DRAFT FOR AUGUST 28, sections as noted:

5.4 PUBLIC SUBMISSION OF INFORMATION

As some Board members will recall, I provided comments on the 2017 proposed revisions to the Rules of Procedure. I believe that I emphasized the appropriateness of the Board's accepting the submission of written comments immediately subsequent to the closing of a public hearing if they were verbatim transcripts of statements made during the public hearing. However, I now realize that the word *transcript* opens a can of worms. So today I would instead suggest the following wording:

The Planning Board will not accept public input after a public hearing has closed except statements read at the public hearing that are provided verbatim within XX hours.

Reasons for allowing such submissions include:

a) Benefit to Board: Having listened to many public hearings prior to participating in Town Council deliberations, I know that it can be difficult to absorb, let alone reflect on or evaluate, all the evening's comments. When deliberation on a complex issue is continued or postponed to another meeting, copies of comments that were read aloud may serve as helpful references. Particularly when the topic is complex or controversial, providing those copies quickly, e.g., within 24 hours, may be seen as public service to the Board.

b) Historical record: The state statute governing public meetings requires only minimal minutes. The Town is fortunate, to date, in being provided with more comprehensive minutes. However, in the interest of timeliness and general streamlining, those minutes generally do not include speakers' complete statements. At times, particularly for historically or legally significant matters, those complete statements may provide valuable records.

I would encourage the Chair, when opening a public hearing, to ask that speakers provide the Town Planner with a printed copy that same evening of any statement read to the Board. If the statement is read to the Board in digital form, then the speaker should submit a printed or digital copy before XX [time, e.g., noon, the following day].

4.7 PUBLIC COMMENTS.

The public is welcome to speak on any topics except for: ...2) matters for which a public hearing is expected to be scheduled at that meeting;...

This criterion is, as Malcolm Sandberg has written, unreasonable and perhaps unfathomable. No one can predict with accuracy how the meeting will proceed and, thus, whether or not said public hearing will actually be scheduled. In fact, a public comment may shed light on issues that should be taken into consideration that may not otherwise have arisen during the Board's discussion prior to scheduling a public hearing. (Your personal experience may provide relevant examples.)

Thank you for your consideration of my comments.

Regards,

-- Robin

Robin Mower
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Unless someone like you cares a whole awful lot,
nothing is going to get better. It's not.

-- Theodor Seuss Geisel, author and illustrator

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