

PRE-APPLICATION MEETING

A **pre-application meeting** is the forum for an initial conversation between a planning board and an applicant at the **conceptual phase of a project**. It is an opportunity for the planning board to learn about the proposed project, inform and advise the applicant on the regulatory review process, and **help the applicant prepare a successful subdivision plat, site plan, or other documents** in accord with local land-use policies and regulations.

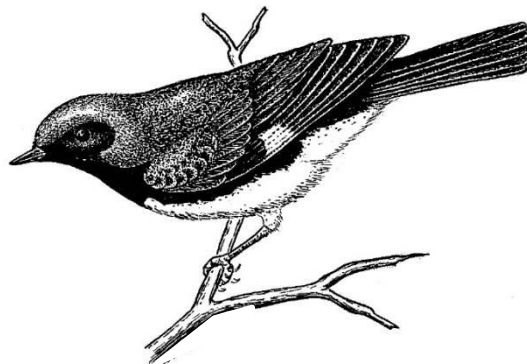
WHY HOLD A PRE-APPLICATION MEETING?

This is an **informal** session to exchange information. With these meetings the planning board can:

- ascertain a project's location and scope;
- provide clear, consistent guidance regarding town plans, policies, and expectations;
- begin to identify site constraints or issues that may affect the development of the site;
- offer preliminary feedback on the proposal;
- begin to build a collaborative relationship with the applicant;
- help the applicant avoid costly re-design of the project; and
- hasten the review process.



Pre-application meetings foster collaboration and cost savings.



A pre-application meeting can alert the applicant to concerns about sensitive resources, such as habitat for the black-throated blue warbler (NYS Species of Greatest Conservation Need). K. Schmidt © 2001

EXAMPLES IN THE HUDSON VALLEY

A simple and informal pre-application meeting is adequate for most purposes, but some municipalities have formalized the process. For example:

- The Town of **Philipstown** (Putnam County) requires a pre-application meeting for “major” projects requiring a special use permit or site plan review. <http://philipstown.com/bd-preapmtg.pdf>
- The Town of **Stanford** (Dutchess County) encourages a pre-application conference for major projects and complex situations. Refer to the Planning Board Applicant Guide. www.townofstanford.org/printable-forms/

PRIOR TO THE MEETING:

Good preparation by the planning board is key to the success of the pre-application meeting. Prior review of natural resource information relevant to the site will enable the planning board to conduct a speedy analysis of the proposed development, and convey valuable advice to the applicant.

Prior to the meeting, gather existing natural resource maps, biodiversity data, and planning and zoning documents pertinent to the site. For example:

- ✓ topographic map
- ✓ soils map
- ✓ wetlands maps (state & federal)
- ✓ habitat and natural areas map (if available)
- ✓ open space map (if available)
- ✓ comprehensive plan
- ✓ zoning code and zoning maps



Identify sensitive areas on or near the site, such as large undeveloped areas, wetlands, streams, floodplains, special habitats, steep slopes, farmland soils, and important links between habitat areas.

AT THE MEETING:

- Obtain the applicant’s verbal or written description of the site and the proposed project.
- Tell the applicant about regulatory requirements, review procedures, and environmental constraints based on current knowledge of the site and the project.
- Discuss project designs that comply with local codes, promote public safety, avoid or minimize harm to sensitive areas, and follow basic conservation principles for biological and water resources (e.g., minimizing impervious surfaces, minimizing habitat fragmentation, and preserving natural buffers around sensitive areas).
- Provide the applicant with a checklist of documents that comprise a complete application

ESTABLISHING THE PROCESS: QUESTIONS TO CONSIDER

- ❖ *For which kinds of projects will the planning board encourage a pre-application meeting?* These meetings may be most appropriate for projects above a certain size threshold.
- ❖ *What is the format and process for the pre-application meeting?* Adhering to a standard meeting format will help ensure that the applicant and planning board are well-informed about the project and the procedures.
- ❖ *Who will attend the meeting?* In most cases, the applicant (or their representative), the planning board, and a representative of the environmental commission. For larger projects, consider including members of the zoning board, staff of the highway and fire departments, and members of other local agencies.
- ❖ *What should applicants bring with them or submit prior to the meeting?* In most cases a concept or sketch map will be sufficient. Detailed maps or drawings can be provided later.
- ❖ *What steps should the applicant follow after the pre-application meeting?* *Who can the applicant contact for more information?* Provide a handout that conveys this information clearly.



Cornell University



Hudson River Estuary Program

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