



## **MEMORANDUM**

**To:** Planning Board Members

**From:** Natalie Thomsen, Planning Coordinator

**Date:** June 10, 2025

**Subject:** Reminder Regarding Board Responsibilities, Jurisdiction, and Decorum

As a reminder, Planning Board members serve a critical role in ensuring that development review and land use decisions are made fairly, impartially, and in accordance with the City's adopted ordinances.

Board members should recuse themselves from deliberation and voting on any application where they believe they are unable to remain unbiased or where a conflict of interest—real or perceived—may exist. If at any point a member feels their ability to make an impartial decision is compromised, they are encouraged to step back from the discussion to preserve the integrity of the process.

It is also important to recognize that many applications may elicit strong opinions or concerns from members of the public. While the Board should listen respectfully and attentively to all public input, it must remain grounded in the scope of its authority. The Board's jurisdiction is limited to the provisions of the ordinance and the specific approval criteria relevant to the application at hand.

The role of the Board is not to evaluate the popularity of a proposal or react to public sentiment, but rather to determine whether the facts presented demonstrate compliance with the ordinance. The information submitted by the applicant—especially when prepared and certified by qualified professionals—should be treated as factual unless the Board has a clear basis to question its accuracy. In such cases, the Board may request an independent third-party review to evaluate the materials.

Finally, a reminder that all discussions, both among Board members and with the public, should be conducted with decorum and respect. The public hearing process must be transparent, orderly, and fair to all participants. While decisions may be difficult or controversial, the Board's responsibility is to apply the ordinance consistently and objectively. Please also remember that all communications related to an application must occur in a public meeting setting. Board members should refrain from discussing the application outside of the public meeting for the duration of the review and for at least 30 days following a final decision, as the matter could return to the Board through an appeal to the Superior Court.

Thank you for your continued service and diligence.