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**HOUSE BILL NO. 1679**

Offered January 8, 2003

Prefiled January 3, 2003

*A BILL to amend and reenact §§ 15.2-2214 and 15.2-2309 of the Code of Virginia, relating to meetings of the planning commission and board of zoning appeals.*

Patrons—Rapp and Gear; Senators: Norment and Williams

Referred to Committee on Counties, Cities and Towns

**Be it enacted by the General Assembly of Virginia:**

- 1. That §§ 15.2-2214 and 15.2-2309 of the Code of Virginia are amended and reenacted as follows:**  
 § 15.2-2214. Meetings.

The local planning commission shall fix the time for holding regular meetings. *The commission by resolution may also fix the day or days to which any meeting shall be continued if the chairman, or vice chairman if the chairman is unable to act, finds and declares that weather or other conditions are such that it is hazardous for members to attend the meeting. Such finding shall be communicated to the members and the press as promptly as possible. All hearings and other matters previously advertised for such meeting shall be conducted at the continued meeting and no further advertisement is required.* Commissions shall meet at least every two months. However, in any locality with a population of not more than 7,500, the commission shall be required to meet at least once each year.

Special meetings of the commission may be called by the chairman or by two members upon written request to the secretary. The secretary shall mail to all members, at least five days in advance of a special meeting, a written notice fixing the time and place of the meeting and the purpose thereof.

Written notice of a special meeting is not required if the time of the special meeting has been fixed at a regular meeting, or if all members are present at the special meeting or file a written waiver of notice.

§ 15.2-2309. Powers and duties of boards of zoning appeals.

Boards of zoning appeals shall have the following powers and duties:

1. To hear and decide appeals from any order, requirement, decision or determination made by an administrative officer in the administration or enforcement of this article or of any ordinance adopted pursuant thereto. The decision on such appeal shall be based on the board's judgment of whether the administrative officer was correct. The board shall consider the purpose and intent of any applicable ordinances, laws and regulations in making its decision.

2. To authorize upon appeal or original application in specific cases such variance as defined in § 15.2-2201 from the terms of the ordinance as will not be contrary to the public interest, when, owing to special conditions a literal enforcement of the provisions will result in unnecessary hardship; provided that the spirit of the ordinance shall be observed and substantial justice done, as follows:

When a property owner can show that his property was acquired in good faith and where by reason of the exceptional narrowness, shallowness, size or shape of a specific piece of property at the time of the effective date of the ordinance, or where by reason of exceptional topographic conditions or other extraordinary situation or condition of the piece of property, or of the condition, situation, or development of property immediately adjacent thereto, the strict application of the terms of the ordinance would effectively prohibit or unreasonably restrict the utilization of the property or where the board is satisfied, upon the evidence heard by it, that the granting of the variance will alleviate a clearly demonstrable hardship approaching confiscation, as distinguished from a special privilege or convenience sought by the applicant, provided that all variances shall be in harmony with the intended spirit and purpose of the ordinance.

No such variance shall be authorized by the board unless it finds:

- a. That the strict application of the ordinance would produce undue hardship;
- b. That the hardship is not shared generally by other properties in the same zoning district and the same vicinity; and
- c. That the authorization of the variance will not be of substantial detriment to adjacent property and that the character of the district will not be changed by the granting of the variance.

No variance shall be authorized except after notice and hearing as required by § 15.2-2204. However, when giving any required notice to the owners, their agents or the occupants of abutting property and property immediately across the street or road from the property affected, the board may give such notice by first-class mail rather than by registered or certified mail.

No variance shall be authorized unless the board finds that the condition or situation of the property

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59 concerned is not of so general or recurring a nature as to make reasonably practicable the formulation of  
60 a general regulation to be adopted as an amendment to the ordinance.

61 In authorizing a variance the board may impose such conditions regarding the location, character and  
62 other features of the proposed structure or use as it may deem necessary in the public interest, and may  
63 require a guarantee or bond to ensure that the conditions imposed are being and will continue to be  
64 complied with.

65 3. To hear and decide appeals from the decision of the zoning administrator after notice and hearing  
66 as provided by § 15.2-2204. However, when giving any required notice to the owners, their agents or  
67 the occupants of abutting property and property immediately across the street or road from the property  
68 affected, the board may give such notice by first-class mail rather than by registered or certified mail.

69 4. To hear and decide applications for interpretation of the district map where there is any  
70 uncertainty as to the location of a district boundary. After notice to the owners of the property affected  
71 by the question, and after public hearing with notice as required by § 15.2-2204, the board may interpret  
72 the map in such way as to carry out the intent and purpose of the ordinance for the particular section or  
73 district in question. However, when giving any required notice to the owners, their agents or the  
74 occupants of abutting property and property immediately across the street or road from the property  
75 affected, the board may give such notice by first-class mail rather than by registered or certified mail.  
76 The board shall not have the power to change substantially the locations of district boundaries as  
77 established by ordinance.

78 5. No provision of this section shall be construed as granting any board the power to rezone property  
79 or to base board decisions on the merits of the purpose and intent of local ordinances duly adopted by  
80 the governing body.

81 6. To hear and decide applications for special exceptions as may be authorized in the ordinance. The  
82 board may impose such conditions relating to the use for which a permit is granted as it may deem  
83 necessary in the public interest, including limiting the duration of a permit, and may require a guarantee  
84 or bond to ensure that the conditions imposed are being and will continue to be complied with.

85 No special exception may be granted except after notice and hearing as provided by § 15.2-2204.  
86 However, when giving any required notice to the owners, their agents or the occupants of abutting  
87 property and property immediately across the street or road from the property affected, the board may  
88 give such notice by first-class mail rather than by registered or certified mail.

89 7. To revoke a special exception previously granted by the board of zoning appeals if the board  
90 determines that there has not been compliance with the terms or conditions of the permit. No special  
91 exception may be revoked except after notice and hearing as provided by § 15.2-2204. However, when  
92 giving any required notice to the owners, their agents or the occupants of abutting property and property  
93 immediately across the street or road from the property affected, the board may give such notice by  
94 first-class mail rather than by registered or certified mail. If a governing body reserves unto itself the  
95 right to issue special exceptions pursuant to § 15.2-2286, and, if the governing body determines that  
96 there has not been compliance with the terms and conditions of the permit, then it may also revoke  
97 special exceptions in the manner provided by this subdivision.

98 8. *The board by resolution may fix a schedule of regular meetings, and may also fix the day or days*  
99 *to which any meeting shall be continued if the chairman, or vice chairman if the chairman is unable to*  
100 *act, finds and declares that weather or other conditions are such that it is hazardous for members to*  
101 *attend the meeting. Such finding shall be communicated to the members and the press as promptly as*  
102 *possible. All hearings and other matters previously advertised for such meeting in accordance with*  
103 *§ 15.2-2312 shall be conducted at the continued meeting and no further advertisement is required.*