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SENATE BILL NO. 1317

Offered January 14, 2009

Prefiled January 14, 2009

A BILL to amend and reenact §§ 10.1-1322.01 and 62.1-44.15:02 of the Code of Virginia, relating to electronic meetings by the Air Pollution Control Board and the State Water Control Board.

Patrons—Houck; Delegate: Griffith

Referred to Committee on General Laws and Technology

Be it enacted by the General Assembly of Virginia:

1. That §§ 10.1-1322.01 and 62.1-44.15:02 of the Code of Virginia are amended and reenacted as follows:

§ 10.1-1322.01. Permits; procedures for public hearings and permits before the Board.

A. During the public comment period on a permit action, interested persons may request a public hearing to contest such action or the terms and conditions thereof. Where public hearings are mandatory under state or federal law or regulation, interested persons may request, during the public comment period on the permit action, that the Board consider the permit action pursuant to the requirements of this section.

B. Requests for a public hearing or Board consideration shall contain the following information:

1. The name, mailing address, and telephone number of the requester;

2. The names and addresses of all persons for whom the requester is acting as a representative (for the purposes of this requirement, an unincorporated association is a person);

3. The reason why a public hearing or Board consideration is requested;

4. A brief, informal statement setting forth the factual nature and the extent of the interest of the requester or of the persons for whom the requester is acting as representative in the application or tentative determination, including an explanation of how and to what extent such interest would be directly and adversely affected by the issuance, denial, modification, or revocation of the permit in question; and

5. Where possible, specific references to the terms and conditions of the permit in question, together with suggested revisions and alterations of those terms and conditions that the requester considers are needed to conform the permit to the intent and provisions of the State Air Pollution Control Law (§ 10.1-1300 et seq.).

C. Upon completion of the public comment period on a permit action, the Director shall review all timely requests for public hearing or Board consideration filed during the public comment period on the permit action and within 30 calendar days following the expiration of the time period for the submission of requests shall grant a public hearing or Board consideration after the public hearing required by state or federal law or regulation, unless the permittee or applicant agrees to a later date, if the Director finds the following:

1. That there is a significant public interest in the issuance, denial, modification, or revocation of the permit in question as evidenced by receipt of a minimum of 25 individual requests for a public hearing or Board consideration;

2. That the requesters raise substantial, disputed issues relevant to the issuance, denial, modification, or revocation of the permit in question; and

3. That the action requested by the interested party is not on its face inconsistent with, or in violation of, the State Air Pollution Control Law (§ 10.1-1300 et seq.), federal law or any regulation promulgated thereunder.

D. Either the Director or a majority of the Board members, acting independently, may request a meeting of the Board to be convened within 20 days of the Director's decision pursuant to subsection C in order to review such decision and determine by a majority vote of the Board whether or not to grant a public hearing or Board consideration, or to delegate the permit to the Director for his decision.

For purposes of this subsection, if a Board meeting is held via electronic communication, ~~the Board shall have at least one forum open to the public and individual Board members may participate from any location regardless of whether it is open to the public~~ *the meeting shall be held in compliance with the provisions § 2.2-3708, except that a quorum of the Board is not required to be physically assembled at one primary or central meeting location. Discussions of the Board held via such electronic communication means shall be specifically limited to a (i) review of the Director's decision pursuant to subsection C, (ii) determination of the Board whether or not to grant a public hearing or Board consideration, or (iii) delegation of the permit to the Director for his decision. No other matter of public*

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59 *business shall be discussed or transacted by the Board during any such meeting held via electronic*
60 *communication.*

61 E. The Director shall, forthwith, notify by mail at his last known address (i) each requester and (ii)
62 the applicant or permittee of the decision to grant or deny a public hearing or Board consideration.

63 F. In addition to subsections C, D, and E, the Director may, in his discretion, convene a public
64 hearing on a permit action or submit a permit action to the Board for its consideration.

65 G. If a determination is made to hold a public hearing, the Director shall schedule the hearing at a
66 time between 45 and 75 days after mailing of the notice required by subsection E.

67 H. The Director shall cause, or require the applicant to publish, notice of a public hearing to be
68 published once, in a newspaper of general circulation in the city or county where the facility or
69 operation that is the subject of the permit or permit application is located, at least 30 days before the
70 hearing date.

71 I. The Director may, on his own motion or at the request of the applicant or permittee, for good
72 cause shown, reschedule the date of the public hearing. In the event the Director reschedules the date for
73 the public hearing after notice has been published, he shall, or require the applicant to, provide
74 reasonable notice of the new date of the public hearing. Such notice shall be published once in the same
75 newspaper where the original notice was published.

76 J. Public hearings held pursuant to these procedures may be conducted by the Board at a regular or
77 special meeting of the Board and shall be presided over by a member of the Board. Public hearings may
78 be held before less than a quorum of the Board (i) the Board at a regular or special meeting of the
79 Board or (ii) one or more members of the Board. A member of the Board shall preside over the public
80 hearing.

81 K. The presiding Board member shall have the authority to maintain order, preserve the impartiality
82 of the decision process, and conclude the hearing process expeditiously. The presiding Board member, in
83 order to carry out his responsibilities under this subsection, is authorized to exercise the following
84 powers, including but not limited to:

85 1. Prescribing the methods and procedures to be used in the presentation of factual data, arguments,
86 and proof orally and in writing including the imposition of reasonable limitations on the time permitted
87 for oral testimony;

88 2. Consolidating the presentation of factual data, arguments, and proof to avoid repetitive
89 presentation of them;

90 3. Ruling on procedural matters; and

91 4. Acting as custodian of the record of the public hearing causing all notices and written submittals
92 to be entered in it.

93 L. The public comment period will remain open for 15 days after the close of the public hearing if
94 required by § 10.1-1307.01.

95 M. When the public hearing is conducted by less than a quorum of the Board, the Department shall,
96 promptly after the close of the public hearing comment period, make a report to the Board.

97 N. After the close of the public hearing comment period, the Board shall, at a regular or special
98 meeting, take final action on the permit. Such decision shall be issued within 90 days of the close of the
99 public comment period or from a later date, as agreed to by the permittee or applicant and the Board or
100 the Director. The Board shall not take any action on a permit where a public hearing was convened
101 solely to satisfy the requirements of state or federal law or regulation unless the permit was provided to
102 the Board for its consideration pursuant to the provisions of this section.

103 O. When the public hearing was conducted by less than a quorum of the Board, persons who
104 commented during the public comment period shall be afforded an opportunity at the Board meeting
105 when final action is scheduled to respond to any summaries of the public comments prepared by the
106 Department for the Board's consideration subject to such reasonable limitations on the time permitted for
107 oral testimony or presentation of repetitive material as are determined by the Board.

108 P. In making its decision, the Board shall consider (i) the verbal and written comments received
109 during the public comment period made part of the record, (ii) any explanation of comments previously
110 received during the public comment period made at the Board meeting, (iii) the comments and
111 recommendation of the Department, and (iv) the agency files. When the decision of the Board is to
112 adopt the recommendation of the Department, the Board shall provide in writing a clear and concise
113 statement of the legal basis and justification for the decision reached. When the decision of the Board
114 varies from the recommendation of the Department, the Board shall, in consultation with legal counsel,
115 provide a clear and concise statement explaining the reason for the variation and how the Board's
116 decision is in compliance with applicable laws and regulations. The written statement shall be provided
117 contemporaneously with the decision of the Board. Copies of the decision, certified by the Director,
118 shall be mailed by certified mail to the permittee or applicant.

119 § 62.1-44.15:02. Permits; procedures for public hearings and permits before the Board.

120 A. During the public comment period on a permit action, interested persons may request a public

hearing to contest such action or the terms and conditions thereof. Where public hearings are mandatory under state or federal law or regulation, interested persons may request, during the public comment period on the permit action, that the Board consider the permit action pursuant to the requirements of this section.

B. Requests for a public hearing or Board consideration shall contain the following information:

1. The name, mailing address, and telephone number of the requester;
2. The names and addresses of all persons for whom the requester is acting as a representative (for the purposes of this requirement, an unincorporated association is a person);
3. The reason why a public hearing or Board consideration is requested;
4. A brief, informal statement setting forth the factual nature and the extent of the interest of the requester or of the persons for whom the requester is acting as representative in the application or tentative determination, including an explanation of how and to what extent such interest would be directly and adversely affected by the issuance, denial, modification, or revocation of the permit in question; and

5. Where possible, specific references to the terms and conditions of the permit in question, together with suggested revisions and alterations of those terms and conditions that the requester considers are needed to conform the permit to the intent and provisions of the State Water Control Law (§ 62.1-44.2 et seq.).

C. Upon completion of the public comment period on a permit action, the Director shall review all timely requests for public hearing or Board consideration filed during the public comment period on the permit action and within 30 calendar days following the expiration of the time period for the submission of requests shall grant a public hearing or Board consideration after the public hearing required by state or federal law or regulation, unless the permittee or applicant agrees to a later date, if the Director finds the following:

1. That there is a significant public interest in the issuance, denial, modification, or revocation of the permit in question as evidenced by receipt of a minimum of 25 individual requests for a public hearing or Board consideration;

2. That the requesters raise substantial, disputed issues relevant to the issuance, denial, modification, or revocation of the permit in question; and

3. That the action requested is not on its face inconsistent with, or in violation of, the State Water Control Law (§ 62.1-44.2 et seq.), federal law or any regulation promulgated thereunder.

D. Either the Director or a majority of the Board members, acting independently, may request a meeting of the Board to be convened within 20 days of the Director's decision pursuant to subsection C in order to review such decision and determine by a majority vote of the Board whether or not to grant a public hearing or Board consideration, or to delegate the permit to the Director for his decision.

For purposes of this subsection, if a Board meeting is held via electronic communication, ~~the Board shall have at least one forum open to the public and individual Board members may participate from any location regardless of whether it is open to the public~~ *the meeting shall be held in compliance with the provisions § 2.2-3708, except that a quorum of the Board is not required to be physically assembled at one primary or central meeting location. Discussions of the Board held via such electronic communication means shall be specifically limited to a (i) review of the Director's decision pursuant to subsection C, (ii) determination of the Board whether or not to grant a public hearing or Board consideration, or (iii) delegation of the permit to the Director for his decision. No other matter of public business shall be discussed or transacted by the Board during any such meeting held via electronic communication.*

E. The Director shall, forthwith, notify by mail at his last known address (i) each requester and (ii) the applicant or permittee of the decision to grant or deny a public hearing or Board consideration.

F. In addition to subsections C, D, and E, the Director may, in his discretion, convene a public hearing on a permit action or submit a permit action to the Board for its consideration.

G. If a determination is made to hold a public hearing, the Director shall schedule the hearing at a time between 45 and 75 days after mailing of the notice required by subsection E.

H. The Director shall cause, or require the applicant to publish, notice of a public hearing to be published once, in a newspaper of general circulation in the city or county where the facility or operation that is the subject of the permit or permit application is located, at least 30 days before the hearing date.

I. The Director may, on his own motion or at the request of the applicant or permittee, for good cause shown, reschedule the date of the public hearing. In the event the Director reschedules the date for the public hearing after notice has been published, he shall, or require the applicant to, provide reasonable notice of the new date of the public hearing. Such notice shall be published once in the same newspaper where the original notice was published.

J. Public hearings held pursuant to these procedures may be conducted by the Board at a regular or

182 special meeting of the Board and shall be presided over by a member of the Board. Public hearings may
183 be held before less than a quorum of the Board. (i) the Board at a regular or special meeting of the
184 Board or (ii) one or more members of the Board. A member of the Board shall preside over the public
185 hearing.

186 K. The presiding Board member shall have the authority to maintain order, preserve the impartiality
187 of the decision process, and conclude the hearing process expeditiously. The presiding Board member, in
188 order to carry out his responsibilities under this subsection, is authorized to exercise the following
189 powers, including but not limited to:

190 1. Prescribing the methods and procedures to be used in the presentation of factual data, arguments,
191 and proof orally and in writing including the imposition of reasonable limitations on the time permitted
192 for oral testimony;

193 2. Consolidating the presentation of factual data, arguments, and proof to avoid repetitive
194 presentation of them;

195 3. Ruling on procedural matters; and

196 4. Acting as custodian of the record of the public hearing causing all notices and written submittals
197 to be entered in it.

198 L. The public comment period will remain open for 15 days after the close of the public hearing if
199 required by § 62.1-44.15:01.

200 M. When the public hearing is conducted by less than a quorum of the Board, the Department shall,
201 promptly after the close of the public hearing comment period, make a report to the Board.

202 N. After the close of the public hearing comment period, the Board shall, at a regular or special
203 meeting, take final action on the permit. Such decision shall be issued within 90 days of the close of the
204 public comment period or from a later date, as agreed to by the permittee or applicant and the Board or
205 the Director. The Board shall not take any action on a permit where a public hearing was convened
206 solely to satisfy the requirements of state or federal law or regulation unless the permit was provided to
207 the Board for its consideration pursuant to the provisions of this section.

208 O. When the public hearing was conducted by less than a quorum of the Board, persons who
209 commented during the public comment period shall be afforded an opportunity at the Board meeting
210 when final action is scheduled to respond to any summaries of the public comments prepared by the
211 Department for the Board's consideration subject to such reasonable limitations on the time permitted for
212 oral testimony or presentation of repetitive material as are determined by the Board.

213 P. In making its decision, the Board shall consider (i) the verbal and written comments received
214 during the public comment period made part of the record, (ii) any explanation of comments previously
215 received during the public comment period made at the Board meeting, (iii) the comments and
216 recommendation of the Department, and (iv) the agency files. When the decision of the Board is to
217 adopt the recommendation of the Department, the Board shall provide in writing a clear and concise
218 statement of the legal basis and justification for the decision reached. When the decision of the Board
219 varies from the recommendation of the Department, the Board shall, in consultation with legal counsel,
220 provide a clear and concise statement explaining the reason for the variation and how the Board's
221 decision is in compliance with applicable laws and regulations. The written statement shall be provided
222 contemporaneously with the decision of the Board. Copies of the decision, certified by the Director,
223 shall be mailed by certified mail to the permittee or applicant.