

VIRGINIA ACTS OF ASSEMBLY — CHAPTER

An Act 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.

[S 1317]

Approved

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

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

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

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

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

3. Ruling on procedural matters; and

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

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

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

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

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

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

§ 62.1-44.15:02. 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 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 special meeting of the Board and shall be presided over by a member of the Board.~~ Public hearings may

179 be held before less than a quorum of the Board. (i) the Board at a regular or special meeting of the
 180 Board or (ii) one or more members of the Board. A member of the Board shall preside over the public
 181 hearing.

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

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

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

191 3. Ruling on procedural matters; and

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

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

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

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

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 206 when final action is scheduled to respond to any summaries of the public comments prepared by the
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 212 recommendation of the Department, and (iv) the agency files. When the decision of the Board is to
 213 adopt the recommendation of the Department, the Board shall provide in writing a clear and concise
 214 statement of the legal basis and justification for the decision reached. When the decision of the Board
 215 varies from the recommendation of the Department, the Board shall, in consultation with legal counsel,
 216 provide a clear and concise statement explaining the reason for the variation and how the Board's
 217 decision is in compliance with applicable laws and regulations. The written statement shall be provided
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 219 shall be mailed by certified mail to the permittee or applicant.