

From: Planning & Zoning and Public Relations Departments
To: Christiansburg Town Council; Christiansburg Planning Commission
Re: Planning Commission's request to hold separate public hearings

In light of the Christiansburg Planning Commission's request to hold separate public hearings, the Planning & Zoning and Public Relations Departments request that Town Council consider the following in making a decision regarding this matter:

- While some Planning Commission members are requesting this separation of public hearings so they are no longer obligated to attend Council meetings, it creates an additional burden on applicants and members of the general public to attend two separate meetings in order to address both public bodies
- Applicants and/or the general public may be confused in understanding there are two separate public hearings to attend if they wish to address everyone with authority to make a recommendation or decision
- There is a possibility that the public will attend one meeting and not the other, so the same information is not being considered by both Town Council and Planning Commission
- Town Council's vote is binding; Planning Commission public hearings may not be attended because their recommendation is not binding.
- Town Council and Planning Commission will need the opportunity to review meeting minutes and any recordings of the public hearings, if held separately.
- Will the Town Attorney need to be present at both public hearings?
- Will Planning Commission public hearings need to be recorded by the videographer? If so, who will pay for this extra cost?

The Town has made notable strides in the past two years toward increasing and encouraging public input and engagement. We believe that separating the meetings is a step backwards because it places additional burden on our citizens to attend two separate meetings if they wish to communicate directly with both Town Council and the Planning Commission. It also creates a significant opportunity for both public bodies to make decisions without all available information if input is only received at one hearing or the other.

We believe the better solution may be to preserve the use of joint public hearings by Town Council and the Planning Commission. If joint public hearings do continue, the Planning & Zoning Department would like to hold additional trainings with the Planning Commission regarding the use of work sessions to ask detailed questions and limiting commentary/questions at public hearings in order to simply receive input from the general public. The Planning & Zoning Department also plans to encourage Planning Commission members to communicate and ensure the Commission is adequately represented at joint public hearings, while allowing members to occasionally miss hearings if the need arises.

Thank you for your time and consideration regarding this matter.