

## Washington County Planning Agency - Planning and Zoning Referral Process

On Friday, April 21, 2017, the Washington County Board of Supervisors created the Washington County Planning Agency. This new body is now responsible for the review of certain local planning and zoning actions pursuant to General Municipal Law Section 239.

The result of these changes is that local Planning and Zoning referrals, as required under GML §239, previously handled by the Washington County Planning Board will now be handled by the newly-created Washington County Planning Agency. This letter is to notify you of the change, and address some potential areas of concern for local Planning, Zoning, and Legislative Boards.

The Referral process for Planning and Zoning referrals will remain largely the same for the immediate future. The current GML §239 Exemption Agreements that are in place between participating municipalities and the County Planning Board will remain in full force and effect until their normal expiration date. The form currently used to submit GML §239 Referrals to the County will also remain the same.

There are, however, a few small changes:

- Local Planning and Zoning boards will no longer be required to provide 12 copies of the referred project. One copy of letter-sized referral materials will be acceptable. The County will make copies of such materials. For maps, or other documents exceeded letter or legal size, please provide three (3) copies.
- There will no longer be monthly referral deadlines. The County Planning Agency will meet periodically when there are projects to review. These reviews will take place as quickly as schedules permit, and the recommendations will be returned to the referring municipality as quickly as possible.
- Applicants are no longer requested to attend referral review meetings. If the Planning Agency has questions on a referral, they will first reach out to the referring municipality. The Planning Agency will only contact the applicant if absolutely necessary.

The proposal at this time is to move forward with these changes, which are designed to minimize the inconvenience and expense to both applicants and the referring municipality. As the Planning Agency begins its review of referrals, the Board of Supervisors will evaluate the effectiveness of the new system and may make additional adjustments to further streamline the process for applicants and local boards.

If you have any questions regarding the change in procedure for GML §239 referrals and the Washington County Planning Agency, please reach out to my office directly at (518)746-2590. I look forward to continuing to work with our local boards to make the referral process as effective and efficient as possible, and I welcome your feedback as we implement these changes.

Sincerely,

Chris DeBolt  
Washington County Administrator