

What's up with the Zoning Code Commission?

When will there be training on the new code?

Where can I get a copy of the new code?

ANSWERS TO QUESTIONS ABOUT THE NEW ZONING CODE

Friends – We have been hearing from many of you in the last few weeks, as the reality that Philadelphia will have a new zoning code in eight months sinks in. You have been asking a lot of good questions, and we have attempted to answer them below.

? WHAT HAPPENS TO THE ZONING CODE COMMISSION NOW

Under the provisions of the Home Rule Charter, the Zoning Code Commission went out of existence after it submitted its Final Report to City Council on November 17, 2011, although Council can call the ZCC back after five years. Members of the Commission are continuing to volunteer their time towards implementing the new zoning code (see below). The zoningmatters website <http://zoningmatters.org> and Facebook page <http://www.facebook.com/PhillyZCC> will continue to be the “go to” places for information on the implementation. The staff of the Zoning Code Commission remain City employees, helping to carry out this work.

? WHEN EXACTLY WILL THE NEW ZONING CODE GO INTO EFFECT

The new zoning code goes into effect on August 22, 2012. The eight-month transition will enable us to be prepared for this major change. There is no period during which a zoning applicant can opt to use either the current zoning code or the new zoning code.

? WHERE CAN I FIND A COPY OF THE NEW CODE

<http://www.amlegal.com/library/pa/philadelphia.shtml>

<http://legislation.phila.gov/attachments/12487.pdf>

<http://legislation.phila.gov/attachments/12529.pdf>

http://zoningmatters.org/sites/zoningmatters.org/files/zcc_final_report.11.17.2011_amended.pdf

? HOW WILL WE EVALUATE THE NEW ZONING CODE

The legislation enacting the new zoning code calls for several City officials to submit a report to City Council after the code has been in effect for one year. The report by the Commerce Director, L&I Commissioner, Executive Director of the Philadelphia City Planning Commission, and Chair of the Zoning Board of Adjustment will make recommendations for further improvements to the new zoning code.

? WHERE AND WHEN CAN I GET TRAINING ON THE NEW CODE

We are working with the Citizens Planning Institute, the outreach and training arm of the Philadelphia City Planning Commission, on a training program that will include: 1) an intensive series designed for City officials and members of the public who work regularly with the zoning code, and 2) a shorter one-session overview of the new code. We expect to begin training sessions in April 2012. We will keep you informed as we finalize these plans.

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? WHAT ABOUT SIGN CONTROLS

The zoning code that City Council and the Mayor approved does not include substantive changes to the sign controls in the current zoning code. The City established a Sign Controls Working Group at the end of 2010 to begin work to reform this part of the zoning code. The zoningmatters website has devoted space on its home page to sign controls, and you can find two Sign Control Information Sheets there that were developed by this working group. The first of two rounds of civic engagement activities will begin at the end of January, including a survey that will be posted on zoningmatters. Stay tuned for the first draft of this section of the zoning code. We anticipate that the draft sign controls will be reviewed at the Philadelphia City Planning Commission (PCPC) public meetings in February and April.

? WHEN CAN MY ORGANIZATION APPLY TO BECOME A REGISTERED COMMUNITY ORGANIZATION (RCO)

In the new zoning code, Registered Community Organizations receive formal notice from zoning permit applicants of projects in their neighborhood that need Zoning Board approval or Civic Design Review. In June, the Philadelphia City Planning Commission (PCPC) will begin to accept applications from groups that wish to become Registered Community Organizations. This will enable community organizations to become established RCOs as of the first day that the new zoning code goes into effect. Stay tuned for a review of draft PCPC regulations about RCOs and other topics at a March PCPC public meeting.

? WHAT ABOUT THAT ZONING ADMINISTRATIVE MANUAL – IS IT AVAILABLE YET

The next draft of this “how-to” guide on zoning processes will be available on the zoningmatters website in February 2012. We will accept and publish public comments on the draft prior to issuing the final draft.

? DOESN'T THE CITY NEED TO PROMULGATE NEW REGULATIONS TO ACCOMPANY THE NEW ZONING CODE

Yes. These will be presented in draft form at a special PCPC public meeting in March 2012. The PCPC will take comments into consideration before formally adopting the regulations in April. Once the regulations are adopted, they will be filed with the City Department of Records. Within 30 days of filing, individuals and organizations may request an official hearing on the regulations.