

Where is training currently available?

- Free training is readily available throughout the state.
- The Department of State hosts training courses throughout the year at various locations around the state. (www.dos.state.ny.us)
- Other state agencies also provide training courses including the Department of Agriculture and Markets (www.agmkt.state.ny.us), the Office of the State Comptroller (www.osc.state.ny.us), and The Department of Environmental Conservation (www.dec.state.ny.us), to name just a few.
- State Associations including the Association of Towns (www.nytowns.org), the Conference of Mayors (www.nycom.org) and the NY Planning Federation (www.nypf.org) offer training and hold annual conferences which include a variety of training opportunities.
- The New York Municipal Insurance Reciprocal has free training available on line. (www.nymir.org/zoning_reg.shtml)
- Pace University and Land Use Law Center provides land use training, some of which may be used from home as distance learning. (www.law.pace.edu/landuse).
- Other universities and colleges also often offer training. (See e.g. Albany Law School, Government Law Center www.albanylaw.edu).
- The Lincoln Institute of Land Use Policy has designed a series of on line courses on critical land and land related tax policies. (www.lincolneducationonline.org)
- Many counties and municipalities and regional planning councils offer their own training.
- Self study may also be used if approved by a municipality.

Will additional planning and zoning training programs be available to municipalities?

- Yes, new training opportunities are in the works and will begin to be available at the start of 2007.

Contact Information

Legislative Commission on Rural Resources
Tel. 518.455.2544; E-mail: ruralres@senate.state.ny.us

New York Planning Federation
Tel. 518.270.9855; Web site: www.nypf.org

Association of Towns of the State of New York
Tel. 518.465.7933; Web site: www.nytowns.org

New York State Conference of Mayors
Tel. 518.463.1185; Web site: www.nycom.org

New York State Department of State
Tel. 518.474.4750; www.dos.state.ny.us

Promoting the Training of Municipal Planning and Zoning Officials Fact Sheet

In 2006 the state Legislature approved a bill, sponsored by Senator George H. Winner, Jr. and Assemblywoman Sandra R. Galef, to establish minimum training requirements for municipal planning and zoning officials. It was signed into law by the Governor as Chapter 662 of the Laws of 2006 and takes effect January 1, 2007. The new law calls for a minimum training standard of four hours each year for members of county, city, town, and village planning and zoning boards. The purpose of this fact sheet is to help answer some commonly asked questions as well as point to sources of training and further information.



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**New York State Department of State
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New York Farm Bureau

What the new law does?

- Requires that a minimum of four hours of training be received by municipal planning and zoning officials including county planning board members, each year.

Why the law was passed?

- In New York state, cities, towns and villages have primary responsibility to regulate private land use through citizen planning boards and zoning boards. Their actions have a profound impact on state and local land use policies and individual land owners.
- Well considered and timely decisions by municipal boards and commissions attract quality community development, and result in fewer lawsuits and lower costs for municipal liability insurance.
- The new law promotes a minimum training standard for planning and zoning board members throughout the state at no or minimal fiscal impact, while allowing municipalities a wide latitude in the training opportunities they may authorize members to receive.

Who supported passage of the new law?

- The new law received broad-based support from many organizations and individuals.

Wasn't training already provided for by law prior to passage of Chapter 662?

- While individual municipalities could require training of planning and zoning board members, and some already do so, there was no uniform statutory training standard for municipal planning and zoning officials in New York.

When does the new law take effect?

- The law takes effect on January 1, 2007.

Are there any exceptions in the new law?

- A municipality with a population of one million or more is exempt from the requirements of Chapter 662.
- A municipality may waive the four hour requirement, or part of it, by passing a resolution.

Does the new law apply to county planning boards in charter counties?

- Yes, it applies to such members if they are appointed by the county governing body.

Does the law apply to alternate board members?

- Yes, it applies to alternate board members as well as regular members.

What sort of training is required?

- The legislative body for each city, county, town or village approves a course or courses of training for its board members.
- The type of acceptable training is left to the discretion of individual municipalities, and could even vary for individual board members. Training can provide either basic skills or can offer new and advanced planning and zoning approaches.
- Training opportunities could include courses offered by a municipality (for example, at regular board meetings covering the newest laws), a regional or county planning office, a state agency such as the Department of State, a state association like the Association of Towns, Conference of Mayors, or NY Planning Federation, or even a college or other similar entity.
- Training formats available are also flexible and can include traditional classroom training, video and distance learning, or even self study.

What happens if a municipal board member receives more than the required four hours of training in one year?

- Training received in excess of four hours in any one year, may be carried over into another year, at the discretion of the municipality.

What happens if a person serves on more than one planning or zoning board? Are they required to receive four hours of yearly training for each position?

- Not under the new law. However, municipalities have the discretion to require training in excess of the four hour yearly minimum.

What happens if a municipal board member doesn't meet the minimum training requirements established by a municipality?

- Board members failing to receive training required by their municipality are ineligible for reappointment to their board, unless exempted by their governing board.

Do municipalities need to notify anyone when they establish a training program for members of their planning and zoning boards as required in the new law?

- No, but municipalities should establish a system for keeping track of training received by board members.

What happens if a municipality doesn't enact a local law or resolution to establish a training program for members of its planning and zoning boards?

- It is incumbent upon municipal officials to act in accordance with this new state law.