



Creating Great Communities For All

Connecticut Chapter of the American Planning Association

Testimony regarding

Proposed Bill No. 698– AN ACT CONCERNING THE ONLINE PUBLICATION OF LEGAL NOTICES BY MUNICIPALITIES

CCAPA is in strong support of this proposal. CGS §1-2 refers to all legal notifications required as part of the general statutes. Presently, these notifications are required to be provided within a weekly newspaper meeting certain circulation requirements of the local jurisdiction, depending on the statute section. The Proposed Bill will allow for online notification on the municipality's website as an alternative to newspaper notification, but leaves the option of legal print notifications for those locations that would like to continue that format.

CCAPA has long advocated for this option to provide municipalities with more options to provide legal notice. As our internal surveys among municipal planners have demonstrated, municipalities frequently pay many thousands of dollars for newspaper notifications annually, with little demonstrated value. In a 2018 survey of seven communities across nine public hearings, only five (5) of over 140 public hearing participants received notification of the public hearing via newspaper. The vast majority were directly notified as abutters, and larger numbers learned of the meeting on the municipal websites.

The COVID-19 pandemic and Governor Lamont's recent executive orders has provided a unique testing ground for the online publication of notices. The broad consensus among the CCAPA membership is that the online posting of legal notifications is effective, particularly when paired with websites that allow for direct email notification when such notices are posted.

We would respectfully make three suggestions for consideration of this bill: 1) That a provision be included for some digital "time-stamping" of legal notice posting on municipal websites so the public is assured that they have been given sufficient notice in advance of a hearing; 2) That the link to all public hearing notices be in an intuitive and obvious place on the municipal website, so the public does not have to navigate into a deep online maze; and 3) That some consideration be given to making a regional (perhaps via COG) or state-wide (via OPM or DAS) web portal where all municipalities - regardless of the quality of their own websites - may advertise public hearings and the public may easily be informed.

WHO WE ARE

The Connecticut Chapter of the American Planning Association (CCAPA) has over 420 members who are governmental and consulting planners, land use attorneys, citizen planners, and other professionals engaged in planning and managing land use, economic development, housing, transportation, and

conservation for local, regional, and State governments, private businesses and other entities. CCAPA has long been committed to assisting the legislature and State agencies with developing and furthering responsible growth management principles. The APA is an independent, not-for-profit, national educational organization that provides leadership in the development of vital communities.

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