



SOSNA ZONING COMMITTEE GUIDELINES

UPDATED: JAN 2019

VI. Zoning Committee Guidelines

1. The South of South Neighborhood Association Zoning Committee has nine members, seven primary and two alternates, appointed by the SOSNA Board of Directors.
2. There shall be a Chair and a Vice-Chair of the Committee. The Chair—who shall be a SOSNA Board Member chosen by the Board—oversees the Committee. The Chair shall interface with the Board and write letters to the ZBA and City Council reflecting the viewpoints of the Board, the Committee and the public. The Vice-Chair shall act as a liaison between the Zoning Workgroup and the Committee.
3. The Committee members shall serve staggered, two-year terms. Four Committee member terms shall commence in even number calendar years; the remaining five terms shall commence in odd number calendar years. There is no limit as to the number of terms one can serve. At least one Board member shall be present at and participate in every Committee meeting.
4. Committee members are required to attend each monthly zoning meeting (3rd Wed at 7pm) and are strongly encouraged to attend the Workgroup meetings (1st Wednesday at 7:30pm) The Committee Vice-Chair or a designated alternate must attend each meeting of the Workgroup.
5. The Committee presides over the zoning meeting, providing the initial questions and comments to each applicant. A member of the Zoning Committee moderates the meetings. The Committee must prepare for the meeting in advance according to guidelines adopted by the Committee.
6. The Committee, in forming its opinions and moderating discussions, shall act in the best interest of the entire community. In reaching its opinion(s), the Committee shall consider the impact of any proposed use on the goals and objectives of applicable community development plans— including the SOSNA Economic Development Plan, the Walkability Plan, and any applicable plan or study of the Philadelphia City Planning Commission. Opinion letters shall not be based on strict compliance with the variance analysis set forth in the Philadelphia Zoning Code or the Municipalities Planning Code; rather, opinion letters shall reflect the Committee's opinion on whether the application would have a negative or positive impact on both: (i) near neighbors and (ii) the community in general.

7. The Zoning Chair or designee will circulate zoning plans to relevant SOSNA committees prior to the public monthly zoning meeting for their review. Said committees will provide an electronic memo to the chairperson or testimony at the hearing with their comments. Those comments will be incorporated into the SOSNA Zoning letter to the ZBA at the chairperson's discretion.
8. The Zoning Committee's position is communicated to the ZBA in a letter from the Zoning Committee Chair taking one of four possible positions:
 - *Support* – reflects a consensus, though not necessarily unanimity, among Zoning Committee and community members in favor of the application.
 - *Non-Opposition* – reflects a generally favorable disposition toward the application among Zoning Committee and community members, but recognizes significant opposition by some near-neighbors and/or other interested parties.
 - *Deferral* – reflects division among Zoning Committee and community members to the degree that the Zoning Committee cannot assume either a favorable or unfavorable position, and therefore defers to the ZBA.
 - *Opposition* – reflects a consensus, though not necessarily unanimity, among Zoning Committee and community members against the application.

If an application is opposed by near neighbor(s) of the proposed use, the Committee shall offer the applicant the option of submitting the application to mediation and continuing the meeting on that application until the next regularly scheduled meeting of the Committee. If the applicant requests mediation, a member or members of the Zoning Committee shall seek to facilitate a mutually acceptable agreement between the applicant and the presumably aggrieved neighbor(s). A reference to a mutually acceptable agreement, if any, between the applicant and the presumably aggrieved neighbor(s) shall be noted in the Committee's opinion letter to the ZBA.

The ZBA is willing to include community recommendations as provisos as long as they are enforceable by Licenses and Inspection (L&I). If the community and developers have come to an agreement that are beyond the ability of L&I to enforce, these agreements need to be put into writing and signed by both community representatives and the owner/applicant. As long as the agreements are reasonable, the ZBA will read them into the record of the ZBA proceeding so that they become part of the case record.