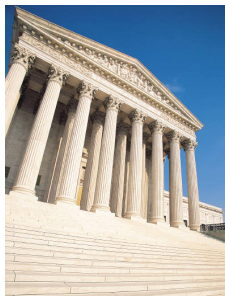


FIND OUT ABOUT MEETINGS AND REGULATIONS

THE VIRGINIA REGULATORY TOWN HALL

www.townhall.virginia.gov

The Virginia Regulatory Town Hall is a web site managed by the Commonwealth that houses detailed information on all regulations and regulatory meetings of all state agencies. The web site also has a free e-mail notification service. Below is information on the Town Hall, how to navigate the Town Hall and how to register for special services.



Questions and Answers

How is the Town Hall organized?

The Town Hall is designed to reflect the organization of regulations in state government.

What information is available on the Town Hall?

All the information you need to effectively participate in the regulatory development process for most regulations is available on the Town Hall, including: agency contact information, text of proposed changes, agency background discussions, meeting information, the economic impact analysis of proposed regulations, historical tracking information and agency guidance documents.

Most of the documentation on regulatory changes can be found on the relevant "stage information" page of the Town Hall. Meeting information can be accessed by clicking on the link for meetings on the menu bar. Links to lists of guidance documents are available on "chapter information" pages.

How can I find the regulation I am looking for?

There are many different ways to locate a regulation (also known as a chapter) on the Town Hall. If you know the Virginia Administrative Code number or title of the regulation, you can enter it under the "search" link on the menu bar. You can also select any of the "find regulations by" links on the left-hand column menu bar.

- **By title of the Virginia Administrative Code** – This link returns a list of all of the titles of the Virginia Administrative Code. Selecting a particular title returns a list of citizen regulatory boards operating under that title.
- **By secretariat** – Selecting this link returns a list of secretariats. To get information about a particular secretariat, you may select the "information" link next to the secretariat name. Clicking on the name of a secretariat returns a list of agencies operating under that secre-

ariat. From there you can select an agency and then a board to get to the chapters of the Virginia Administrative Code that are the board's responsibility.

- **By agency** – The agency link returns a list of all government agencies in Virginia that promulgate regulations under the Administrative Process Act. Selecting an agency will return a list of boards assigned to that agency. You can get information about that agency by selecting the "information" link next to the agency name.
- **By board** – This link returns a list of all regulatory boards in Virginia. As with agency and secretariat links, you may get information about the board itself by selecting the "information" link next to the board name. You may view a list of Virginia Administrative Code chapters over which a board has authority by selecting the board name. You may choose to view all of the chapters under that board or only those that are currently in development.

What is the regulatory docket?

The regulatory docket is listed on the menu bar on the left hand side of the page. Click on the link to view a list of all regulations currently in development. You can link from this page directly to the chapter, action or stage information pages.

How do I find out about public hearings and meetings?

Select the "view meetings and public hearings" link from the menu bar on the left hand side of the page. Once you are on the "meetings" page, you will be presented with all upcoming meetings. You can select a board from the drop-down list to view the meetings for a particular board. You are also provided with links to view previously held meetings or the minutes from past board meetings.

How do I register for special Town Hall services?

By registering on the Town Hall, users get free access to special features on the web site. For example, registered users can sign up to receive customized e-mail notifications and can create a personalized My Town Hall page to track regulatory actions and meetings.

To register with the Town Hall, click on "new user sign up" on the menu bar on the left hand side of the page. You will be asked to provide information, including your name, address, phone number, e-mail address and password. When you are finished entering the required information, click on "save". You will then be taken to the "notifications options" page to select options for the Town Hall notification service.

What happens if I lose my password?

Your e-mail address and password are part of the security of the web site and will not be released to any party. If you lose your password, you can request that a password reminder be sent to your e-mail address.

How do I use the Town Hall notification service?

The Town Hall notification service allows registered users to receive highly customized e-mail messages about upcoming regulatory changes and meetings. With this new notification service, you no longer need to receive paper mailings from agencies or go to the library to search through issues of the Virginia Register. To avoid cluttering up your e-mail box, all notices you are scheduled to receive on any one day will be combined in one e-mail message.

When you first sign up on the Town Hall, you will automatically be directed to the "notification options" page. This page presents you with a tree that allows you to select any combination of secretariats, agencies, boards and chapters for which you wish to receive notification. By clicking on a "+" sign on the tree, you can expand one branch of the tree. Conversely, by clicking on the "-" sign, you will collapse that branch of the tree. By clicking on a box, you place a check mark in that box as well as all other boxes that fall under that branch of the tree. A box with a shaded check mark means that some but not all of the underlying boxes have been selected. Simply select all the areas for which you wish to receive notification. For example, if you select education, you will receive notifications on any actions or regulatory meetings that occur in the education secretariat.

Once you have made your selections, indicate whether you wish to receive notifications regarding regulatory meetings or regulatory actions or both. Then indicate whether you wish to receive formatted HTML messages (recommended) or plain text messages (for those with e-mail programs that do not support HTML).

Be sure to save your preferences or they will not take effect. You may change your preferences as often as you wish by logging on to the site and selecting the "notification options" link under the registration options pull-down menu.

How do I use the My Town Hall page?

The My Town Hall page provides a way to keep track of regulatory actions and meetings you wish to monitor. You may add items to this page using the "add to My Town Hall link" provided any time you are logged on and viewing a regulatory action or stage, or a meeting. Items on your My Town Hall page will remain on the page until you remove them.

How do I make comments on regulatory changes?

In addition to submitting comments directly to the agency contact person listed on The Town Hall, the web site contains an innovative feature for facilitating public participation in the regulatory process, public comment forums.

The comment forums allow users to view comments made by others as well as submit comments of their own. Agencies are not required to host comment forums, so not every regulatory stage will have a public comment forum. Comment forums are only open for comment during the official comment period for a stage. After the comment period has closed, it is possible to view all of the comments that have been made, but not enter a new comment. Whenever a comment forum is available, there will be a link on the stage Information page to the comment forum. Another way to access all open comment forums is to use the "view public comment forums" link available on the menu bar.

Once you have made and submitted a comment, it becomes part of the official record of a regulatory action and cannot be changed. Of course, you are always free to submit a second comment to clarify or expand on your previous remarks.

Are there any special tips for making an effective comment?

Yes. First, be sure of the facts. Read carefully the regulation and the agency background statement about the regulatory action. In writing your comment, target specific issues and cite specific regulatory provisions. Include facts, data, experiences and other evidence that support your position. Respond to other views based on their merit and avoid personal attacks. Provide specific ideas or suggestions for solving the problems you have identified. It is sometimes helpful to identify your own background or expertise in the subject area. Keep your comment concise and to the point. Discuss one issue at a time.

Do I need any special software to use the Town Hall?

Documents on the Town Hall are available for viewing, saving on your own computer or printing. Downloadable documents are provided in Adobe PDF format. To view documents in the Adobe Acrobat format, you need to have the Adobe Reader software installed on your computer.

For more information, contact:

Cindy Berndt, director of Regulatory Affairs
Department of Environmental Quality
629 East Main Street
Richmond, Va. 23240
Phone: (804) 698-4378
E-mail: cumberland@deq.virginia.gov.
DEQ web site: www.deq.virginia.gov

Information courtesy of the Virginia Regulatory Town Hall.