



HOWARD COUNTY DEPARTMENT OF PLANNING AND ZONING

3430 Court House Drive ■ Ellicott City, Maryland 21043 ■ 410-313-2350

Voice/Relay

Amy Gowan, Director

FAX 410-313-3467

December 3, 2020

Mr. Michael Ritter  
565 River Road  
Sykesville, MD 21784

RE: WP-21-060, Ritter Residence  
Virtual Meeting

Dear Mr. Ritter:

This letter is to inform you that your request for alternative compliance to the Howard County Subdivision and Land Development Regulations for the subject property was reviewed.

As of the date of this letter, and pursuant to Section 16.104, the Director of the Department of Planning and Zoning considered and **approved** your request for alternative compliance with respect to **Section 16.128(c)(1)** of the Subdivision and Land Development Regulations to allow the petitioner to host a virtual presubmission community meeting during the COVID-19 State of Emergency.

The Department of Planning and Zoning hereby determines that you have demonstrated to its satisfaction that strict enforcement of Section 16.128(c)(1) would result in unwarranted hardship. This determination is made with consideration of your alternative compliance application and the four (4) items you were required to address, pursuant to Section 16.104(a)(1):

**1. Strict conformance with the requirements will deprive the applicant of rights commonly enjoyed by others in similar areas.**

The State of Emergency prohibits large indoor public gatherings across the State. To allow the continuity of operations and essential functions related to construction, the Department of Planning and Zoning developed guidelines for conducting virtual meetings that must be met for approval of alternative compliance. This alternative process will allow current applicants to submit development plans so they can to enjoy the same rights commonly granted to others wanting to begin the development process when social distancing restrictions are not in effect.

**2. Uniqueness of the property or topographical conditions would result in practical difficulty; other than economic, or unreasonable hardship from strict adherence to the regulations.**

The presubmission community meeting requirement is an administrative procedure required for most developments to begin the development process. Physical conditions of the property are not considered when applying the presubmission community meeting requirements. Therefore, this criterion does not apply.

**3. The variance will not confer to the applicant a special privilege that would be denied to other applicants.**

Alternative compliance to the physical meeting requirement will not confer a special privilege since it is the only means of conducting these meetings during the current State of Emergency and will be needed for all applicants during this time. The pre-submission community will be held through virtual means and DPZ will require that guidelines be met to ensure that all necessary information is provided and accommodations are made to assist people that may need assistance accessing technology.

**4. The modification is not detrimental to the public health, safety or welfare, or injurious to other properties.**

Conducting a virtual presubmission community meeting will comply with the State of Emergency, allow for social distancing and the policies enacted to protect the public during the COVID-19 pandemic.

Approval of this Alternative Compliance is subject to the following conditions:

1. The alternative compliance petition will remain valid as long as the Howard County State of Emergency is in effect.
2. The petitioner must comply with the Department of Planning and Zoning's Virtual Presubmission Meeting Guidelines for applying and hosting a virtual public meeting (attached).

Indicate this alternative compliance petition file number, request, section of the regulations, action, conditions of approval, and date on all related plats, and site development plans, and building permits. This alternative compliance will remain valid as long as the Howard County State of Emergency is in effect.

If you have any questions, please contact Jennifer Wellen at (410) 313-2350 or email at [jwellen@howardcountymd.gov](mailto:jwellen@howardcountymd.gov).

Sincerely,

DocuSigned by:

*Amy Gowan*

Amy Gowan, Director

Department of Planning and Zoning

AG/jw

cc: Research  
DLD - Julia Sauer



May 20, 2020

**Virtual Presubmission Community Meeting Guidelines**  
*Instructions on Applying for and Hosting a Virtual Public Meeting*

Following Executive Order 20-003 and County Executive Calvin Ball's Emergency Declaration and given state and local mandates to practice social distancing, presubmission community meetings are unable to be held within the community or in a public or institutional building as required by Code. To allow for continuity of operations and essential functions related to construction, presubmission community meeting can be held virtually through approval of an Alternative Compliance Petition, as long as additional steps are taken to allow for extended public input opportunities.

The following steps outline the process for holding a virtual presubmission meeting during this period of emergency and until further notice:

1. The petitioner must request alternative compliance to Section 16.128(c)(1) of the Subdivision and Land Development Regulations to host the presubmission meeting virtually. The alternative compliance petition must be submitted electronically to [planning@howardcountymd.gov](mailto:planning@howardcountymd.gov) and should include the following items:
  - a. The alternative compliance application.
  - b. Web address for the virtual meeting.
  - c. Explanation of how the virtual meeting will be conducted (platform, availability, public access, etc.).
  - d. An exhibit of the proposed development or subdivision that will be presented during the virtual meeting.

There will be no fee collected for this alternative compliance request.

2. Once the alternative compliance is approved, the petitioner should apply for the presubmission community meeting electronically:  
[https://pdox.howardcountymd.gov/ProjectDox/workflowforms/Anonymous\\_Form\\_Infill\\_Presub.aspx](https://pdox.howardcountymd.gov/ProjectDox/workflowforms/Anonymous_Form_Infill_Presub.aspx)
  - a. The website address that will advertise and provide the link to the virtual meeting should be entered in the "meeting place" field on the presubmission community meeting application.
  - b. The "meeting address" is a required field and should be completed with the petitioner's address.
  - c. The meeting date and time must comply with the requirements in Section 16.128(c)(2) of the Regulations.
3. The property must be posted for at least three weeks immediately before the meeting and in compliance with Section 16.128 of the Regulations.
  - a. The Department of Planning and Zoning (DPZ) will prepare the poster and will charge the petitioner \$25 per poster. Checks can be dropped off in the metal drop box located outside the George Howard Building, 3430 Court House Drive, Ellicott City, MD 21043 or in the DPZ Drop

Box in the front lobby. Please secure them in an envelope, indicate the purpose of the check, and send them attention to the Department of Planning and Zoning, Division of Land Development.

- b. DPZ will notify the petitioner when the posters are complete. The posters can be picked up at the front desk of the George Howard Building, 3430 Court House Drive, Ellicott City, MD 21043, **by appointment only.**
4. Notice shall be sent three weeks prior to the meeting in compliance with Section 16.128(d) of the Regulations. Per Section 16.128(e), the notice shall include:
  - a. Time, date and web address of the virtual meeting. This should include instructions on how to access the virtual meeting and provide comments during the meeting.
  - b. Address and map of the location of the subject property.
  - c. Type of initial plan submittal.
  - d. Type and amount of development, including number of residential units proposed, if applicable.
  - e. Website address of the Department of Planning and Zoning plans in process webpage or central interdepartmental webpage for searching all projects assigned a three-digit alphanumeric code.
  - f. Information about how to sign-up to receive minutes and subsequent correspondence if unable to attend the meeting.
  - g. To satisfy Section 16.128(f)(1) of the Regulations, the notice shall include a copy of these instructions and a copy of the county's subdivision and land development review process.
5. The petitioner must present the project proposal during the meeting, record the meeting, and post it on their website, along with any plans or materials that were presented at the meeting for at least two weeks after the meeting to allow for further community input and response by the petitioner. The website must include the recording, plan proposal and information on how to provide comments on the proposal. Any questions or comments submitted via the website should be included in the minutes, along with the responses. The petitioner must present and record the meeting even if there are no attendees in the virtual meeting.
6. The petitioner must maintain a record of the names, addresses and electronic mail addressed for all attendees and anyone unable to attend the meeting who contact the petitioner requesting to be added to the list.
7. The petitioner must compile comprehensive minutes of the meeting. This includes a written response to all questions not verbally answered at the virtual meeting and responses to comments that were received by the applicant in the two-week period immediately following the meeting. The minutes must be sent to all meeting attendees and anyone unable to attend the meeting who contacts the petition requesting to receive information, within 30 days of the meeting either electronically or by first class mail.
8. With the initial submission of the plan, the petitioner must provide DPZ certification that the meeting notices and minutes were sent, that the meeting recording was posted on the petitioner's website for at least 2 weeks after the meeting, and the meeting attendees' contact information.

All additional items and timelines noted in Section 16.128 not mentioned above must still be followed to satisfy the presubmission community meeting requirement.



**Howard County Maryland**  
**Department of Planning and Zoning**  
 3430 Courthouse Drive, Ellicott City, MD 21043

(410) 313-2350

<b>DPZ Office Use only:</b> File No. Date Filed
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**ALTERNATIVE COMPLIANCE APPLICATION**

**Site Description:**

**Subdivision Name/Property Identification:**

**Location of property:**

**Existing Use:**

**Proposed Use:**

**Tax Map:**

**Grid:**

**Parcel No:**

**Election District:**

**Zoning District:**

**Total site area:**

Please list all previously submitted or currently active plans on file with the County (subdivision plans, Board of Appeals petitions, alternative compliance petitions, etc.). If no previous plans have been submitted, please provide a brief history of the site and related information to the request:

In the area below, the petitioner shall enumerate the specific numerical section(s) from the Subdivision and Land Development Regulations for which an alternative compliance is being requested and provide a brief summary of the request. Please use the additional page if needed.

Section Reference No.	Brief Summary of Request



Section Reference No.	Brief Summary of Request

Signature of Property Owner:  Date: 11/30/2020

Signature of Petitioner Preparer:  Date: 11/30/2020

Name of Property Owner: Michael Ritter Name of Petition Preparer: Michael Ritter

Address: 565 River Road Address: 565 River Road

City, State, Zip: Sykesville, MD 21784 City, State, Zip: Sykesville, MD 21784

E-Mail: rittermedia@gmail.com E-Mail: rittermedia@gmail.com

Phone No.: 443-538-6313 Phone No.: 443-538-6313

Contact Person: Michael Ritter Contact Person: Michael Ritter

Owner's Authorization Attached

Section Reference No.	Brief Summary of Request



Michael and Laura Ritter  
565 River Road  
Sykesville, MD 21784  
443-538-6313  
[rittermedia@gmail.com](mailto:rittermedia@gmail.com)

## JUSTIFICATION

Section 16.128 (c) (1)

The purpose of this Alternative Compliance petition is to request approval to host a Presubmission Community Meeting virtually. Currently, the petitioner is unable to host an in-person Presubmission Community Meeting at a public venue due to “Executive Order 20-003” and current State, County and Local mandates regarding the Coronavirus (COVID-19) pandemic.

It is not feasible to schedule a set date and time to host this virtual meeting until after approval of this Alternative Compliance request is granted due to unknown time requirements for County staff to review this Alternative Compliance petition. Also, take into consideration the time it may take for County staff to accept the PDOX application and to create sign(s) for posting given the current circumstances to ensure the allowed minimum time period of 21 days from the date of the meeting to post and provide notifications to the Public, adjoining property owners and Howard County Community Notification List.

Upon approval of this Alternative Compliance request, a Presubmission Community Meeting will be scheduled electronically through ProjectDox (PDOX). A meeting date, time, website address and log-in information will be provided at that time as part of the PDOX application.

Sign(s), prepared by County, will be paid for, retrieved, and posted by the petitioner, at the subject property, placed perpendicular to the road. The sign(s) will be posted at least 21 days prior to the virtual meeting date. Pictures of the posted sign(s) will be captured, and an Affidavit of Posting will be signed.

Notifications containing the date, time, and web address of the virtual meeting with any necessary log-in and/or specific instructions to join the virtual meeting will be sent out to required Public parties. This includes adjoining property owners, local school district officials such as PTA Presidents and Principals, Howard County Council, Howard County Department of Planning and Zoning and registered community members from the Howard County Community Notification List. The notifications will also contain the purpose of the project, Regulations Section(s) citations, and a location map.

The virtual meeting will be hosted on the Google Meet. During the virtual meeting, the petitioner will introduce themselves and the project, discuss various details of the property and what the project proposes while presenting a plan to the attendees. Once the presentation is complete, time will be given for the attendees to ask questions. A list will be compiled of the names, addresses and electronic mail addresses of those who attend.



Meeting Minutes containing a summary of the discussion, proceedings and a Q and A list will be sent out to those that attend and/or request within 30 days from the date of the virtual meeting. The virtual meeting will be recorded and posted on a website provided by the petitioner for Public viewing for a 2-week period after the meeting.

At the time the plan is submitted, all of the above-mentioned materials will be uploaded to PDOX along with the plan including a certification that the notifications and minutes were sent and that the meeting minutes were sent and that the meeting recording was posted online for public viewing for a minimum of 2 weeks after the meeting.

An exhibit with what will be presented during the virtual meeting is attached with this Alternative Compliance petition.