



2023-2024 Municipal Education Program

04/05/2023

Program Syllabus



Department of Administration
Division of Statewide Planning
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Department of Administration - Division of Statewide Planning

Rhode Island Statewide Planning Program

The Division of Statewide Planning, Department of Administration is part of the Rhode Island Statewide Planning Program, established by RI General Law [§ 42-11-10](#). The division is the centralized planning agency for Rhode Island and staffs the State Planning Council. The Council, comprised of federal, state, and local representatives, and other advisors, guides the work of the Program. The objectives of the Program are to:

- Prepare State Guide Plan Elements & coordinate activities of the public and private sectors within the framework of the State Guide Plan.
- Assist municipal governments with land use and transportation planning, serve as the statewide Metropolitan Planning Organization for transportation planning purposes, and adopt the State Transportation Improvement Program.
- Function as the Comprehensive Economic Development Strategy Committee and maintain the Statewide Comprehensive Economic Development Strategy.
- Advise the Governor and others on physical, social, and economic topics related to land use and transportation planning.

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TITLE VI – Nondiscrimination Policy & Complaint Process

The Division of Statewide Planning gives notice that it is a policy to comply with Title VI of the Civil Rights Act of 1964, the Civil Rights Restoration Act of 1987, Executive Order 12898 on Environmental Justice, and related statutes and regulations in all programs and activities. Title VI requires that no person in the United States of America shall, on the grounds of race, color, sex, or national origin be excluded from the participation in, be denied the benefits of, or be otherwise subjected to discrimination under any program or activity for which the Division receives federal financial assistance. Any person who believes he or she has been aggrieved by an unlawful discriminatory practice under Title VI has a right to file a formal complaint with the Division. Any such complaint must be in writing and filed within 180 days following the date of the alleged discriminatory occurrence. Title VI Discrimination Complaint Forms may be obtained from the Division by calling (401) 222-7901 or at www.planning.ri.gov.



Table of Contents

| | <u>Page No.</u> |
|--|-----------------|
| Authorization | 4 |
| Topics & Advisory Committee | 4 |
| Workshops | 6 |
| Exemptions & Equivalent Trainings | 9 |
| Records & Reporting | 11 |
| Program Development & Timeline | 12 |

Appendices

- Appendix A, 2022 Appointments State Planning Council Advisory Committee for Education
- Appendix B, Sample of Potential Equivalent Training



Authorization for Program

Pursuant to [R.I. General Law 45-70-3](#), *Land Use Law and Planning*, the following is a syllabus for the Division for Statewide Planning (the Division) to conduct a required education program on behalf of the Director of the Department of Administration (the Director) for municipal planning, zoning, and historic district board, or commission members in land use law and planning. The program is subject to the approval of the Director and appropriations to the Division.

Topics & Advisory Committee

After consultation with the Advisory Committee for Education of the State Planning Council, the Division Staff (Staff) shall create the program syllabus for approval by the Director every two years. The Program delivery schedule is subject to available Staff resources and Division funding. The Program design intent is to be flexible for using a variety of instructional means including, but not limited to, traditional style classroom & seminar training, virtual workshops, virtual webinars, on-site presentations, website materials, and other means of training. The focus is to be for the singular purpose of providing education for members of the valuable volunteer historic, planning and zoning boards and commissions of the various municipalities of the State. Basic topics that **may** be covered in the educational program are listed in Chapter 45-70-3, such as, but are not limited to, the following:

- a. sea level rise
- b. stormwater management & flooding
- c. history and purposes of land use planning and zoning
- d. board functions and legal tools for land use planning
- e. state laws applicable to the work of planning, zoning, and historic district boards/commissions, and affordable housing
- f. best practices for managing public meetings
- g. roles within the land use review process
- h. using community comprehensive plans in decisions
- i. understanding due process/property rights related to land use decisions
- j. basics for reviewing land development applications
- k. basics for making land use decisions and setting conditions when approving applications
- l. annual updates of legislative changes impacting board or commission responsibilities.

The initial advisory committee was appointed on December 8, 2022. This Committee was created per R.I. General Law § 45-70-3 and the [Rules and Standards](#) of the State Planning Council. Rule 1.1.7.E, Committees. The purpose of the Committee is to assist the Staff in creating a municipal education program for approval by the Director. From time to time the Staff will add or remove additional non-statutorily required members and or ex-officio members to the Committee based upon participation, availability, and expertise needed for the topical content of the program. The following is the excerpt of the Rules specific to creating this Committee:



- E. Municipal Education – An advisory committee for education (ACE), as provided for by Rhode Island General Law [CHAPTER 45-22 Local Planning Board or Commission](#), shall advise the Division of Statewide Planning Staff (Staff) on creating an educational program (the Program) for municipal planning, historic, and zoning commission or board members.
1. Appointments - The Staff shall recommend appointments to the Council, when necessary, in accordance with Section 1.1.7.A of these Rules for committee membership. The Advisory Committee shall be composed of at least but not limited to representatives of the organizations identified in Chapter 45-22. Appointments shall be for a two-year term.
 2. Membership - The number of members of this Committee shall be recommended by the Staff to be approved by the Council and may be changed from time to time as deemed necessary as approved by the Council. Members shall be recommended by Staff based upon backgrounds in educational training combined with experience in municipal land use planning. When a vacancy occurs on the Committee, the Staff shall recommend a replacement to the Council to fill the vacancy for the remainder of that term.
 3. Meetings – In accordance with Chapter 45-22, the Staff shall organize, and conduct the meetings of the advisory committee. The Staff shall set advisory committee meetings as needed to conduct the educational program. In accordance with Chapter 45-22, staff shall call for at least one annual meeting of the advisory committee.
 4. Duties – The members shall attend meetings when called and provide advisory educational expertise on addressing the topics outlined by Chapter 45-22, information on best land use practices, and other related knowledge on municipal land use planning to the Staff for incorporating into the Program. The Staff will be the advisory committee liaison to the Council.

According to [R.I. General Law 45-70-3](#), the advisory committee shall include, but not be limited to, representatives listed below. See Appendix A for the current appointees.

- American Planning Association - R.I. Chapter
- American Council of Engineering Companies - Rhode Island
- Grow Smart Rhode Island
- Rhode Island League of Cities and Towns
- Rhode Island Builders Association
- University of Rhode Island Coastal Resource Center, and
- Office of Housing and Community Development.



Workshops

The focus of the first year of the Program in 2023 is **Workshop #1** consisting of the mandatory three hours of introductory training. It is estimated within the 39 cities and towns, there are 600+ members of historic, planning, and or zoning boards/commissions that need to receive the introductory training. A two-year schedule is proposed as follows:

2023

- Workshop #1 - Conducting Public Meetings

2024

- Workshop #1 - Conducting Public Meetings
- Workshop #2 - Annual Update
- Workshop #3 - Sea Level Rise/Stormwater Management/Flooding
- Workshop #4 - Historic District Commissions
- Planner's Institute

Workshop Descriptions

Workshop #1 – Conducting Public Meetings

Ongoing - (3.0 hours) delivered by Zoom twice each year or more frequently at the discretion of the Division.

Future - Continued Zoom Trainings and develop an optional self-directed online training for certificates.

Description: A multi-topic course for the required 3.0 hours introductory training addressing most of the 14 suggested topics from the Statute.

- Highlights
 - History & purpose of land use planning
 - State laws applicable to land use planning
 - Overview of board functions & tools for land use reviews
 - Role of others in the land use review process
 - Due process & property rights
 - Ethics guidance
 - Best practices for meetings
 - Basics of land use decisions
 - Appeals of Board decisions & RI Court System



Workshop #2 – Annual Update - (1.0 hour) required minimum update training – a virtual Zoom session & an in-person as part of the Planner’s Institute

Ongoing - (1.0 hour) virtual & in-person

Future - (1.0 hour) virtual & in-person legislative updates & develop possible future self-directed certification.

Description: topics will vary from year to year

Workshops #3 A & B – Sea Level Rise/Stormwater Management/Flooding

Year 1 - (2.0 hours) training self-directed using existing resources

Year 2 - (2.0 hours) training self-directed using existing resources but developing future online resources with tracking capabilities. Possible Zoom virtual workshop.

Future - Online training for self-directed certification split into two workshops; 1) sea level rise and 2) stormwater flooding, both will emphasize climate change within topics. Possible Zoom virtual workshop.

Description: This will be eventually become two distinct workshops for meeting the required two hours every two years in sea-level rise management/stormwater management/flooding training requirement for Planning Boards. The Division is currently working with URI NEMO/Cooperative Extension for content development.

Workshop #4 - Historic District Commissions

Year 1 - Focus is on Workshop #1 - Introductory Training for all

Year 2 - Fund HPHC to conduct training with instructors from the National Alliance of Preservation Commissions

Future - If there is consistent ongoing equivalent training offered for historic commissions on a regular basis such as every other year, then this workshop need not be developed.

Description: This training will be specific to responsibilities of historic district commissions for areas within their purview. Currently working with RIHPHC to develop cyber based training for self-directed certification for training on architecture, character-defining features, use of composite materials, areas for administrative approvals and other areas pertinent to work of historic commissions. Currently working with RIHPHC to conduct training with instructors from the National Alliance of Preservation Commissions on an annual basis.

Planner’s Institute (annual) 4.5 hours

Year 1 - None

Year 2 - In-person - Focus on annual update, introductory training, and special topics – Use one large room with breakfast, coffee, and snacks at a designated break for Workshop #2 and breakout rooms for Workshops #1, 3 & 4.



- **Workshop #2 - Annual Update** - (1.0 hour) - panel of speakers on selected topic of interested from trainings
- **Workshops #3 A & B - Sea Level Rise/Stormwater Management/Flooding** – (2.0 hours)
- **Workshop #4 - Historic District Commissions** (optional, as needed)

Future - In-person

Description: a half-day in-person conference for mandated land use training held in a central location in the State. Free to municipal volunteers. Priority for municipal planning, zoning, and historic district board members in registrations. Purpose is to fulfill both required introductory training, annual update, and in the future sea level rise/stormwater management/flooding and other training.

Schedule Summary

2023:

- (TBD) meetings of ACE with subsequent submission of final program by Division to Director for approval. Meetings will be preceded by email distribution of working draft materials for review.
 - Meeting #1 - February 16, 2023
- (TBD) **Workshop #1 – Conducting Public Meetings** (3.0 hours) - Virtual
 - Topics – This is a multitopic course for the required 3.0 hours of introductory training
 - As of March 31, 2023 – conducted three 3-hour workshops training 88 people.



2024:

- (TBD) meetings of ACE - Meetings will be preceded by email distribution of working draft of materials and updated program materials for comments. Subsequent submission of program adjustments, if necessary, will be by the Staff to Director for approval.
- (TBD) **Workshop #1 - Conducting Public Meetings (3.0 hours) - Virtual**
 - Topics – This will be a multi-topic course for the required 3.0 hours introductory training
- (TBD) **Workshop #2 - Annual Update - (1.0 hour) required minimum update training - Virtual & in-person as part of Planner's Institute**
- (TBD) **Workshop #3 - Sea Level Rise/Stormwater Management/Flooding – (2.0 hours) - Virtual & in-person as part of Planner's Institute**
- (1) **Planner's Institute** – Half-day in-person conference held in a central location in the State.
- **Workshop #4 - Historic District Commissions** (if needed)

Exemptions & Equivalent Trainings

The following exemptions can be granted pursuant to [R.I. General Law 45-70-3](#):

(1) Ex-Officio Board members - All training is waived for the chief municipal officer of the city or town, or any person designated to serve on a planning board in an ex officio and non-voting capacity.

(2) Exemptions to three-hour introductory training only - Any person who has completed any of the following may apply to the Division for an exemption to the initial three-hour training requirement:

(a) at least a three-hour or more equivalent workshop or course of study in land use and planning taken from an accredited college or university, and or a workshop taken from the Division no more than two years prior to January 1, 2023. (The Division trained 75 persons in voluntary workshops between 2020 and 2022 who qualify for this exemption.) The Course shall, in the determination of the DSP Staff acting for the Director, be equivalent to the required three-hour introductory training, or



Department of Administration - Division of Statewide Planning

(b) maintains an updated certification by the American Institute of Certified Planners, or

(c) has obtained a master's or doctorate degree in planning from an accredited college or university, or

(d) has completed three hour or more course or seminar on historic district commissions sponsored by the Rhode Island Historical Preservation and Heritage Commission or a similar DSP approved sponsoring agency.

(e) has completed a DSP approved three-hour workshop presented by a former trainer from the Division's Land Use Training Collaborative using the same training materials as the Division.

Applications - applications for an exemption shall be by email to the Division's designated training staff with a request for an exemption and at least the following documentation attached:

- a copy of a diploma for completion of a master's or doctorate degree in planning from an accredited college or university, or
- a copy of a certificate for and the current certification number issued by the American Institute of Certified Planners, or
- a statement of completion and or certificate from Division Staff indicating prior workshop(s) completed presented by the Division no earlier than January 1, 2020, or
- a description of the number of hours completed and a copy of a school issued transcript or a certification of completion certificate of a land use planning course or courses from an accredited college, university or other recognized provider of land use education as determined by the DSP Staff no earlier than January 1, 2020, or
- an agenda from a training course or seminar for historic district commissions along with evidence of registration and confirmation of full attendance from a DSP Staff approved sponsoring agency no earlier than January 1, 2020. (See Appendix B for a potential example.)

- A copy of the workshop title, date(s), times, hours completed, and a roster of attendees signed by the former Land Use Training Collaborative Trainer and an associated municipal historic, planning or zoning official.

A determination (statement) of exemption certificate will be sent by Staff by email reply to the applicant. If an exemption is approved, it is up to the applicant to file with the city or town clerk the certificate if they are exempt from the initial introductory training, however, pursuant to R.I. General Law § 45-70-3, they remain subject to annual continuing education requirements.

Request for Acceptance of Equivalent Training – Applicants seeking credit for an equivalent number of hours of training provided by others shall submit an email request to designated DSP training staff. The request shall include submission of a copy of the agenda from the training, evidence of registration and confirmation of full attendance or certificate of completion from the sponsoring agency. Evidence submitted will be verified with sponsoring agency and upon validation, an equivalency certificate will be issued. Applications for equivalency must be directly specific to the duties and functions of planning, zoning and historic district boards and commissions as defined under Rhode Island Law. Generalized training for other topics and areas of interest while exemplary, will not be granted equivalency. See Appendix B for a sample of directly equivalent types of training.



Records & Reporting

The Division shall maintain a list of all persons trained and a list of all exemptions granted. The Division shall submit to the Director, the Governor, the Speaker of the House of Representatives, and the Senate President, a report detailing the program development and completion of training by board members of each community no later than April 30, 2027.



Program Development & Timeline

| 2022-23 | ITEM |
|---------------|---|
| June 25, 2022 | Enactment - S 2649 SUB A & H 7023 SUB B - Chapters 142/143 |
| Aug 11, 2022 | SPC meeting - Bill briefing & introduction of Draft Amendment to SPC Rules |
| | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Begin recruitment of Advisory Committee for Education (ACE) candidates |
| Sept 8, 2022 | SPC meeting - Final Draft rules & request for public hearing |
| | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Recruitment of ACE candidates continues |
| Oct 17, 2022 | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Staff - Conduct Public Hearing |
| Nov 10, 2022 | SPC meeting |
| | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Public Hearing Report & approve final amendment to rules ○ Draft slate of recommended candidates for ACE |
| Dec 8, 2022 | SPC meeting - Appointment of ACE candidates |
| | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Draft initial Program Syllabus/Schedule for ACE discussion at initial meeting • Conduct Informational workshop for ACE on Training ideas |
| Jan 2023 | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Conduct 1 Intro Workshop #1 – Virtual - Done - 34 participants – 7 communities |
| Feb 2023 | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Conduct meeting of ACE – Done - February 16, 2023 |
| | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Conduct 1 Intro Workshop #1 – Virtual – Done - February 15, 2023 – 20 participants – 7 communities |
| March 2023 | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Conduct 1 Intro Workshop #1 – Virtual - Done - March 30, 2023- 26 participants – 5 communities |
| April 2023 | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Conduct 1 Intro Workshop #1 – Virtual |
| May 2023 | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Conduct 1 Intro Workshop #1 – Virtual |
| | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Conduct meeting of ACE |
| June 2023 | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Conduct 1 Intro Workshop #1 – Virtual |
| Aug 2023 | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Conduct 1 Intro Workshop #1 – Virtual |
| Sept 2023 | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Conduct 2 Intro Workshop #1 – Virtual |
| Oct 2023 | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Conduct 2 Intro Workshop #1 – Public Meetings – Virtual |
| Nov 2023 | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Conduct 1 Intro Workshop #1 – Virtual |
| Dec 2023 | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • SPC meeting - Appointments for ACE if necessary |
| | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Conduct meeting of ACE – evaluation and adjustments |



| 2024 | ITEM |
|------------|---|
| Jan 2024 | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Conduct meeting of ACE – evaluation and adjustments • Finalize Workshop #4 • Begin organization of Planner’s Institute |
| Feb 2024 | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Conduct 2 Workshop #1 - Intro - Virtual (3.0 hours) • Continue organization of Planner’s Institute |
| March 2024 | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Conduct 1 Workshop #3 A & B - Sea Level Rise/Stormwater Management/Flooding– Virtual- (2 hours) • Continue organization of Planner’s Institute |
| April 2024 | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Conduct 1 Workshop #1 - Intro – Virtual (3.0 hours) • Continue organization of Planner’s Institute |
| May 2024 | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Conduct 1 Workshop #3 A & B - Sea Level Rise/Stormwater Management/Flooding - Virtual- (2 hours) • Continue organization of Planner’s Institute |
| Aug 2024 | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Conduct 1 Workshop #1 – Intro – Virtual (3.0 hours) • Continue organization of Planner’s Institute |
| Sept 2024 | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Conduct 1 Workshop #3 A & B - Sea Level Rise/Stormwater Management/Flooding – Virtual- (2 hours) • Continue organization of Planner’s Institute |
| Oct 2024 | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Planner’s Institute – In person – Topics - Workshops #1,#2, and #3 |
| Nov 2024 | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Conduct Annual Update Workshop #2 - Virtual |



Appendix A
State Planning Council
Advisory Committee for Education Appointees

Below is the list of current advisory committee members appointed in 2022 and other individuals asked by staff for assistance creating the initial educational program.

The * indicates the organizations required by Law.

The ● indicates a former land use collaborative trainer.

From time to time the Staff will add or remove additional non-statutorily required members and or ex-officio members to the Committee based upon participation, availability, and expertise needed for the topical content of the program. In some cases, there are alternates indicated for the appointees.

| | |
|--|--|
| * American Planning Association - R.I. Chapter - ● Nancy Letendre, Esq. | Alternate - Mike DeLuca |
| * American Council of Engineering Companies - Rhode Island - Len Bradley | |
| * Grow Smart Rhode Island - Scott Millar | |
| * Rhode Island League of Cities and Towns – Jordan Day | Alternate - ● Andy Teitz, Esq. |
| * Rhode Island Builders Association – John Marcantonio | Alternate - ● Christine J. Engustian, Esq. |
| * University of Rhode Island Coastal Resource Center – Joe Walsh | Alternate - Pam Pogue |
| * Office of Housing and Community Development – Mike Tondra | |
| RI Historical Preservation & Heritage Commission – Sarah Zurier | |
| Ex-Officio - Raymond Goff – Planning Director – Burrillville | |
| Ex-Officio - Al Rinaldi – Planning Director – East Greenwich | |
| Ex-Officio - ● Caroline Wells, AICP | |



Appendix B

Sample of Potential Equivalent Training

What: Historic District Commission Professional Education & Training - Training provided by instructors from the National Alliance of Preservation Commissions

When: October 15, 2022 — 9:00 am to 4:30 pm

Where: Peace Dale Neighborhood Guild, 30 Columbia St., South Kingstown, RI

Details: All towns with Historic District Commissions (HDC) can participate. In the event of over-registration, HDC members and municipal staff who regularly deal with historic property issues will receive priority seating. If space allows, interested elected officials and members of other boards and commissions are also welcomed to attend.

Sponsored By: Rhode Island Historical Preservation and Heritage Commission.