

# Planning and Development Committee JOINT FAVORABLE REPORT

**Bill No.:** SB-1026

AN ACT CONCERNING TRAINING FOR CERTAIN PLANNING AND ZONING

**Title:** OFFICIALS.

**Vote Date:** 3/31/2021

**Vote Action:** Joint Favorable Substitute

**PH Date:** 3/15/2021

**File No.:** 561

***Disclaimer:** The following JOINT FAVORABLE Report is prepared for the benefit of the members of the General Assembly, solely for purposes of information, summarization and explanation and does not represent the intent of the General Assembly or either chamber thereof for any purpose.*

## **SPONSORS OF BILL:**

Planning and Development Committee

## **REASONS FOR BILL:**

Currently, there are no mandated requirements for training or continuing education for members of a municipal planning commission, zoning commission, combined planning and zoning commission or zoning board of appeals. This bill would allow municipalities to require members of these boards to undergo training conducted by specific knowledgeable entities and creates an annual reporting mechanism. This bill would ensure that commissioners would understand their statutory and legal requirements and ensure the integrity of the planning and zoning process. Included in the training requirement are not less than two hours of education on alternative or affordable housing.

**\*\*Proposed substitute language:** In section (a), training is increased from four hours to five hours annually and language was removed related to the carryover of training hours from year to year. In section (c), the timeframe for training to count toward compliance as provided to the governing body was established as within each calendar year (January 1 – December 31).

## **RESPONSE FROM ADMINISTRATION/AGENCY:**

None expressed.

## **NATURE AND SOURCES OF SUPPORT:**

[Robin Newton, President, CT Association of Zoning Enforcement Officials \(CAZEO\)](#). CAZEO submitted written testimony, stating their belief that training will be "an effective tool in providing commissioners the resources and information they need to make clear and

enforceable decisions." They further noted that as most planning and zoning commissioners are elected or appointed volunteers, many do not have the technical training related to land use. CAZEO would, however, prefer that the training be required, rather than optional for municipalities.

[Connecticut Chapter of the American Planning Association](#). CCAPA provided written testimony in support of the bill, noting the crucial role that the volunteers who serve on these land use boards and commissions play in their community. Given the impact that they have, CCAPA strongly supports members having a baseline of knowledge as it relates to the issues over which they have authority.

[Samuel Gold, Executive Director, RiverCOG](#). Mr. Gold submitted written testimony in support of SB-1026, noting that he hoped that the COGs would continue to be used as a resource for convening and hosting training events.

[Francis Pickering, Executive Director, WestCOG](#). Mr. Pickering submitted written testimony in favor of SB-1026 and recommended that the training include relevant case law, environmental laws and regulations, and the role of commissioners in economic development. He stated that he did not believe 50% of the training time should be spent on housing, as outlined in the current bill language.

[Michael Criss, First Selectman, Town of Harwinton](#). Mr. Criss provided written testimony in support of SB-1026, particularly due to it being voluntary for municipalities to require the training. He noted that it is essential that no cost or low-cost training options are provided, as members are volunteers and towns have limited budgets to support training.

Multiple members of the Hamden neighborhood group Spring Forward, established to increase housing equity, submitted written testimony in support of the bill as one way to confront the consequences of longtime housing discrimination.

- [Lauren Garrett](#)
- [Dave Bechtel](#)
- [Laura Perkins Davidson](#)
- [Rev Jack Perkins Davidson, Senior Pastor, Spring Glen Church](#)

[Representative Jason Rojas, House Majority Leader](#). Representative Rojas provided written support of this bill, among other proposed zoning reforms, stating that he has "long been a proponent of modernizing our housing and zoning policies to address the cost of housing overall and the racial and economic isolation that is the result of both intentional and indifferent policy making at the local, state and federal levels."

[Eric Santini, Santini Homes](#). Mr. Santini offered written testimony stating his support for SB-1026 as well as other proposed zoning reforms.

### Support with Changes

Multiple representatives of organizations and other interested parties submitted written testimony in support of SB-1026 with the following changes: that the bill be amended to increased training to five hours annually; that the training be mandated, not optional; and that the state be directed to develop the training curriculum. Other states that require similar

training were also referenced (New York, New Jersey, Tennessee, Kentucky, South Carolina, Louisiana, and Maryland).

- [Kiley Gosselin, Executive Director, Partnership for Strong Communities](#)
- [Janice Elliott, Hamden resident](#)
- [Hartford Foundation for Public Giving](#)
- [Jim Horan, Executive Director, LISC Connecticut](#)
- [Carol Martin, Executive Director, Westport Housing Authority](#)
- [Hiram Peck, Director of Planning and Community Development, Town of Avon](#)
- [Jim Perras, CEO, Home Builders & Remodelers Association of Connecticut](#)
- [Daniel Shackelford, Community & Economic Development Clinic, Yale Law School](#)
- [Aicha Woods, Executive Director, City Plan Department, City of New Haven](#)
- [Anika Singh Lemar, Clinical Professor of Law, Yale Law School](#)
- [Michele Conderino, Executive Director, Open Door Shelter](#)

[Betsy Gara, Executive Director, CT Council of Small Towns](#). Ms. Gara provided testimony in support of SB-1026 with the recommendation that the bill be revised to require the state Department of Housing to establish guidelines for training curricula and qualifications for training providers to ensure a wide range of training options available to local officials, including no cost/low cost options.

[Connecticut REALTORS](#). Written testimony was submitted in support, but requesting training be made mandatory, should require the development of an online video training option offered at no cost to municipalities, and that there be a more realistic renewal period, as course materials may not change from one year to the next.

## **NATURE AND SOURCES OF OPPOSITION:**

[Steven Byrne, Executive Director, CT Federation of Planning & Zoning Agencies](#). Mr. Byrne submitted written testimony stating his belief that the bill is unnecessary, as training is already widespread, most members are well-informed, and the current bill excludes qualified people from offering training to fulfill the requirement.

[Donna Hamzy, Advocacy Manager, CT Conference of Municipalities](#). CCM submitted written testimony in opposition to flag concerns raised by the smaller communities who expressed concern with finding volunteers for these boards and commissions now and that this new requirement could compound that problem.

[Anne Manusky, President, Connecticut Republican Assembly](#) (CTRA). Ms. Manusky offered written testimony in opposition, stating that it usurps freedom, liberty, and rights as regards local control and is an overreach by the state of Connecticut.

[Brenda L. Kupchick, First Selectwoman, Fairfield](#). Ms. Kupchick provided written testimony in opposition to this and other proposed zoning reforms stating that she "cannot support bills that remove our community's ability to govern through our Town bodies."

Additional sources of opposition: Multiple individuals provided written testimony in opposition to a variety of bills, including HB-1026. The specific nature of their opposition was not stated.

**Reported by: Erica Byrne**

**Date: 4/20/2021**