

**MUSCATINE COUNTY BOARD OF ADJUSTMENT
RULES OF PROCEDURE**

I. INTENT

These rules have been adopted to ensure:

- A. The efficient and orderly conduct of business before the Muscatine County Board of Adjustment;
- B. To comply with the statutory requirement contained in Iowa Code Section 335.12; and
- C. To supplement, as necessary, the Muscatine County Zoning Ordinance as stated Article XV: Board of Adjustment - Section 2.

II. ELECTION OF OFFICERS (See Section 2 – Muscatine County Zoning Ordinance)

- A. The Board of Adjustment shall consist of five members, all of whom shall reside within the County but outside the corporate limits of any city, appointed by the Board of Supervisors. Terms shall be five years and vacancies shall be filled by the Board of Supervisors for the unexpired term of any member whose term becomes vacant.
- B. The Board shall elect a chair and vice-chair from among its members at the first scheduled meeting of the calendar year.
- C. The Chairperson and Vice Chairperson shall take office immediately following their selection and shall hold office for a term of one year or until their successors are selected and assume office.
- D. The Zoning Administrator or their designee shall serve as the Secretary.

III. DUTIES OF OFFICERS

A. CHAIR

- i. The chair shall:
 - a. preside at all meetings of the Board and conduct hearings,
 - b. decide all points of order and rule as necessary on questions relating to cases not specifically addressed by these rules for the orderly and fair conduct of hearings,
 - c. administer oaths and compel the attendance of witnesses,
 - d. work in conjunction with the Zoning Administrator in the preparation of agendas.
- ii. The Board may overrule the chair by a majority vote of the members present and voting.
- iii. The chair is a voting member of the Board and shall be counted for the purpose of determining a quorum.

B. VICE CHAIR

The Vice Chair shall assume the duties of the chair in their absence.

C. SECRETARY

The Zoning Administrator or their designee shall act as secretary to the Board. The secretary shall:

- i. Record and maintain a permanent record of Board proceedings and minutes showing the date, time, location, members present, and the action taken at each meeting. Minutes shall show the result of each vote taken.
- ii. Keep records of the Board's examinations and other official actions.
- iii. Accurately summarize the testimony of those appearing before the Board.
- iv. Record names and addresses of all persons appearing before the Board.
- v. Conduct correspondence of the Board.
- vi. Provide notices of meetings as required by law.
- vii. File records of Board action in the office of the Board, such records shall be public.
- viii. Be custodian of the files of the Board and keep all records.

IV. POWERS OF THE BOARD (See Section 4 – Muscatine County Zoning Ordinance)

- A. Appeals of any order, requirement, decision or determination made by the Zoning Administrator in the enforcement of the Muscatine County Zoning Ordinance. The Zoning Administrator, when making an order, requirement, decision or determination shall inform the affected party of their rights of appeal.
- B. To hear and decide appeals where it is alleged that there is error of law in any order, requirement, decision or determination made by the Zoning Administrator in the enforcement of the Muscatine County Zoning Ordinance.
- C. To hear and decide applications for Variances of height, area, setback, parking or density requirements to the extent necessary to permit the applicant a reasonable use of their property.
- D. To hear and decide variances to the Floodplain as mapped by the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) and adopted by the Muscatine County Board of Supervisors.
- E. To hear and decide exceptions to the terms of the Muscatine County Zoning Ordinance as contained in the Ordinance.
- F. To hear and decide applications for Conditional or Special Use Permits.

V. PROCEDURE FOR APPEAL/APPLICATION (Section 3– Muscatine County Zoning Ordinance).

- A. Appeal/Application
 - i. Must be presented in written form to the Zoning Administrator.
 - ii. Must clearly state the action being appealed and the relief sought, or the Special Use Permit being applied for. Additional information may be requested by the Zoning Administrator or the Board.
 - iii. Must be accompanied by a filing fee.
 - iv. Must be filed with the Zoning Administrator within three (3) months of the ruling at issue.
- B. The Zoning Administrator shall:

- i. Deposit filing fee in County Rural Services fund and issue a receipt to the appellant/applicant.
- ii. Assign a case number to the appeal/application.
- iii. Gather all relevant documents together into a case file.
- iv. Determine date for hearing.
- v. Notify appellant/applicant and surrounding landowners.
- vi. Forward the application/appeal and relevant materials to the Board members along with agenda.
- vii. Provide notice of hearing.

VI. MEETINGS

- A. All meetings are open to the public in accordance with Chapter 21, Code of Iowa, as amended.
- B. Meetings shall be scheduled to occur pursuant to the Muscatine County Zoning Ordinance, or when called by the Chair.
- C. **Quorum:** Three members of the Board, including the Chair, shall constitute a quorum.
- D. **Order of Business:** The agenda will be prepared and sent to the Board four (4) to six (6) days prior to the hearing date and shall include:
 - i. Call to Order;
 - ii. Roll Call;
 - iii. Approval of Agenda;
 - iv. Minutes of Previous Meeting(s);
 - v. Public Comment;
 - vi. Hearings;
 - vii. Other Business;
 - viii. Board/Staff Comments and
 - ix. Adjournment

Notwithstanding, the order of business is subject to the will of the Board.

E. Voting

- i. Concurring vote of three members of the Board are required to reverse any order, requirement, decision, or determination of the Director or to decide in favor of the applicant in any matter acted upon by the Board as required under this ordinance.
- ii. Roll call vote is required on all resolutions.
- iii. Affirmative voice vote by a majority of members present and voting is acceptable in approval of minutes and motions pertaining to Board procedure.
- iv. The order of roll call shall be rotated for each action.

F. Ex-parte Contacts: Any contact through e-mail, phone, in-person, or in such similar fashion that a Board member may have with a party involved, or potentially involved, in a matter before the Board and outside of the hearing process is known as an "ex-parte" contact. Any substantive information or facts that a Board member may receive during the course of those contacts that relates to the matter at hand shall be made a part of the public record so that it can be available for consideration or challenge by all interested parties. This shall be done by way of making a public statement by the Board member prior to the presentation of the matter under consideration at the Board's meeting.

G. Conflict of Interest: A Board member shall abstain if the member believes there is a conflict of interest, particularly if the conflict is of a financial nature or otherwise. A member who elects to abstain from voting shall state the reason for the abstention prior to the presentation of the matter under consideration. During the presentation and discussion of the matter under consideration, a member who plans to abstain from voting should remove him/herself from the proceedings and from taking any action on the issue or attempting to persuade any other member of the Board to act in any specific direction. Board members may not receive any type of gift for their own personal use or enjoyment related to transaction of their official Board duties.

H. Continuances: The Board may postpone decision on a case until a later meeting to enable additional testimony to be heard, a site visit, or for other good cause by an affirmative vote of a majority of the members present and voting. The Board may reconsider the item at any time, however, may not take final action on the item unless a quorum is present and such action receives a concurring vote of at least three members of the Board.

I. Amending Motions.

- i. Motions can be amended only by the following:
 - a. Inserting or adding a word, phrase or sentence;
 - b. Striking out a word, phrase or sentence; and
 - c. Striking out and inserting (substituting) words, phrases, sentences or paragraphs.

After a main motion has been made and seconded, any member can propose an amendment, after being recognized by the Chair, by stating, "I move to amend the motion by...". Each proposed amendment must be seconded by another member to proceed. If there is a statement, the Chair states the main motion and the amendment so members will understand how the proposed amendment will change the main motion. The chair then ask for Commission discussion on the proposed amendment. After the discussion has ended, a vote on the proposed amendment is taken.

VII. HEARINGS

- A. Notice of hearings shall be given according to the Muscatine County Zoning Ordinance and Code of Iowa.
- B. Hearings will be conducted in an orderly and courteous manner. No abusive, demeaning, or harassing statements or questions will be tolerated. Persons disrupting a meeting of the Board may be ejected.

- C. Appellant/Applicant may appear on their own behalf or may be represented by an agent or counsel. In the absence of a personal appearance on behalf of the applicant the Board may proceed to dispose of the case on the evidence of forms and information provided before.
- D. The Board shall have the power to compel testimony, and any subpoenaed witnesses will be placed under oath; other witnesses, including the appellant/applicant, may be placed under oath.
- E. Order of Hearing:
- i. The Chair will open the hearing at the appropriate time according to the Agenda and make whatever opening statement they deems appropriate, including rules for the hearing and any time limits that will be imposed.
 - ii. The Zoning Administrator or County Staff will present a report on the detailed information and observations regarding the request.
 - iii. The appellant/applicant will be recognized to present their case, and may present any information and exhibits and call witnesses as necessary to justify the request. Testimony by witnesses will be in the form of narrative statements addressed to the Board. Appellant/Applicant may be assisted by legal counsel in delivery of their narrative.
 - iv. Any witnesses subpoenaed by the Board may be called to testify. They will be questioned only by the Board.
 - v. Members of the public are recognized to make statements. No particular order is required. All interested parties shall be heard, except that repetitious testimony may be ruled out of order by the Chair. The Chair may place time limits on public testimony if deemed necessary.
 - vi. After all interested parties have been heard, the hearing shall be closed to public comment and the appellant/applicant will be recognized to make a closing statement.
 - vii. The Board shall then deliberate the case, formulate a resolution and vote thereon. No motion need be made to enable discussion, but any resolution must be moved and seconded and further discussion will be allowed before the vote. No comment by the appellant/applicant or the public will be recognized during deliberations by the Board, but the Board may question anyone present. The Board may examine subpoenaed witnesses at this time.
 - viii. The Board shall not be bound by strict rules of evidence, but it may exclude irrelevant, immaterial, incompetent, or unduly repetitious testimony. All records, data, plats, drawings, plans and models shall be allowed as exhibits and retained as part of the case file. The Chair shall rule on questions relating to the admissibility of evidence, which may be overruled by a majority of the Board present and voting.
- F. A copy of the Board's recorded Findings of Fact is mailed to the appellant/applicant after the hearing.

VIII. SUPPLEMENTAL HEARING

A. A Supplemental Hearing may occur at the will of the Board upon:

- i. Request by the original appellant/applicant alleging new evidence; or
- ii. Action by the Board because of alleged fraud or misrepresentation at the original hearing.

A rehearing will be set by a motion by a Board member supported by a majority of the Board.

NOTE: A Supplemental Hearing that does not meet the above criteria shall be considered a request for another hearing that must meet the requirements of Article XVIII, Section 2 of our current Zoning Ordinance (Powers and Duties of the Zoning Administrator), which reads as follows:

2.4 To require all petitioners who have had applications for appeals pursuant to Section 3 of Article XV, special use permits, zoning classifications or variances denied to wait six (6) months prior to resubmitting the proposal for review.

IX. APPEALS OF BOARD ACTIONS

Decisions of the Board are final and dissatisfied parties may appeal to District Court.

X. RECORDS

The Zoning Administrator shall keep the minutes of proceedings and all records of case. All records are public.

XI. INFORMAL ADVICE

The Board will not consider a request (informal or not) for advice on theoretical or actual situations which potentially may later come before the Board as an appeal or application.

XII. OFFICE

Correspondence to the Board shall be directed to the Muscatine County Zoning Administrator.

XIII. AMENDMENTS TO PROCEDURAL RULES

These rules may be amended by an affirmative vote of three members of the Board. Amendments shall become effective at the meeting subsequent to the meeting in which the vote to amend was taken.

ADOPTED: September 5, 2025.