

# Evaluation for 2017 Workshops for Registered Community Organizations (RCOs)



**Monday, June 5: 12:30pm**

**1515 Arch Street, 18<sup>th</sup> floor, Room 18029**

## 1. Was the format and materials provided for this workshop helpful for your interests?

**If Yes- how?**

**If No- what was missing?**

- 1) Yes
- 2) Yes- but letters, communications, materials all need to be simpler
- 3) Yes, thanks again Donna for your comprehensive training
- 4) Yes, it was a decent refresher; Q&A after presentation was good
- 5) Yes, I may be on my RCOs Zoning Committee; It would be helpful to have the presentation in print so we could take notes on it (not everyone has the ability to print the powerpoint). Number every page in the RCO ops handout and refer to page #'s. Especially since you skipped around the handout.
- 6) The visuals should be included in the package given out.
- 7) Yes, a good reference package
- 8) Yes, the material was helpful because it provided a point of reference to which you can refer later. Also provided contact information.
- 9) Yes, It was organized, easy to follow ppt slides; followed the time schedule, a packet of resources was provided and provided time for questions from the public.
- 10) Yes, the workbook provided a good outline of the process and timing. Also directs well back to the RCO website.
- 11) Yes
- 12) Yes, good info, but more time or more workshops.
- 13) Yes. But what wasn't clear is if we were going to be sent the powerpoint because we signed in or if we have to go to the site which wasn't given. (NOTE: the powerpoint and presentation SCRIPT will be posted in the website: <http://www.phila.gov/CityPlanning/projectreviews/Pages/RegisteredCommunityOrganizations.aspx> (also in your "online resources" page 11- this was on a slide)
- 14) No- it was too short in time...it was too condensed; which made it too difficult to follow topic to topic.
- 15) Yes, the packet of extra handouts was helpful. Missing- coordinating the slides with the packet- I think people were too distracted by trying to follow along.
- 16) Yes, review of responsibilities of RCO, the packet of info coupled with info that w/b sent via pdf.
- 17) Yes
- 18) Yes, a bit more about meeting logistics. No- info re: empowering residents with info re: common consequences and considerations of types of development
- 19) Yes, great format with questions up front and revisiting at the end. Only challenge was taking notes on packet because different from slides.
- 20) Yes, my questions were answered and the information and course material was very useful to me.
- 21) Yes
- 22) No- it would be good to have examples for new RCOs on a zoning meeting structure. What you should and should not include in the meeting. Best Practices. (that's why we include "RCO policies & procedures" in the handout and encourage folks to look at those organizations' practices)
- 23) Yes, in determining whether I would like to become an RCO.
- 24) Yes

- 25) Yes- they did an awesome job explaining
- 26) Yes, please email me the link to all the RCOs in Philly (*sent*)
- 27) Yes, this information is helpful as we decide in becoming an RCO.
- 28) Yes, overview of RCO and its responsibilities
- 29) Yes, more information and upcoming new changes.

## 2. Question(s) not answered:

- 1) **Please produce a memo that provides pro vs. con of zoning committee voting vs. popular vote. Thanks**
  - a. **Answer:** *Planning Commission staff can't endorse one method over another. We'd suggest you visit RCO meetings of organizations that perform voting in different ways and decide what would work best for your group. We could, however, come up with a handout that provides more detail about different voting procedures that we are aware of.*
- 2) **What is the renewal process for an RCO?**
  - a. **Answer:** See the last handout in your packet with the application form. Applications are accepted every June for new RCOs and every 2 years by renewing RCOs.
- 3) **What is the selection process for coordinating RCOs?**
  - a. **Answer:** The district Council office determines who the coordinating RCO will be. The Council office notifies our RCO coordinator.
- 4) **Individuals who register as an RCO as an agency or organization, how are they vetted in the application process?**
  - a. **Answer:** *Applications must meet all the criteria spelled out in the application information. If more information is needed or unclear, the applicant will be contacted to try to make the application successful. If the applicant cannot satisfy the requirements, the application will be denied and staff will suggest submitting an application the following year, by which time the outstanding criteria should be rectified.*
- 5) **How much leverage does an RCO have? Ie: asking for financial information, using the proviso as a "\_\_\_"?; using personal experience as a reason for not approving...**
  - a. **Answer:** *You can ask the applicant questions to get a better understanding of their proposal, but you can't make your approval CONTINGENT on answers that don't relate to zoning issues. The applicant does not have to answer questions that do not pertain to zoning.*
- 6) **Who is allowed to vote in the zoning meeting?**
  - a. **Answer:** *It depends on the organization's bylaws, which are required at the time of application. See the handout on "Sample RCO Zoning Committee policies and procedures". Most organizations require voters to be residents within the boundaries of the RCO, some note "near neighbors". In three of the comparison RCOs, the Zoning Committee weighs public comment and votes or tries to reach consensus; one group provides community ballots.*
- 7) **Are voting ballots suggested or required?**
  - a. **Answer:** *See answer above. They are neither suggested nor required. It's up to the organization.*
- 8) **Is a RCO Board suggested or required? (President, etc.)**
  - a. **Answer:** *The RCO application asks for a description of the "leadership" of the organization and the "leadership selection process". This usually takes the form of a president, vice president, secretary, etc. A "board" is neither suggested or required.*
- 9) **Just answer the questions that were presented and forward to participants. This should have been filmed.**

- a. **Answer:** *We will include the written answers in an email back to participants. The workshop provides time at the end to answer additional questions. People are free to leave after the presentation. The first RCO workshop was filmed, which was identical to this one and we will post a link on the website.*

**10) How can PCPC support us with materials that give residents perspective (e.g. maps) as well as information that will better equip residents to ensure development is in the best interests of the neighborhood?**

- a. **Answer:** *See the sample questions “things to consider when reviewing a ZBA case”- (on the back side of the Sample RCO Zoning Committee policies & procedures). PCPC can provide support on a requested basis as each of our 18 planning districts has an assigned Community Planner who is here to provide guidance to communities. Contact the Planning Commission for the contact information of your community planner.*

**11) Would love examples when ZBA has surprised PCPC and logic/thought around why decision outcome. Just trying to understand ZBA better- but this was helpful.**

- a. **Answer:** *We don’t have any ready examples and as best as we can explain, the ZBA is made up of five independent thinking individuals who are appointed by the Mayor whom do not answer to any City Agency. This allows them to be fair and impartial with their decisions.*

**12) I want to set up mini community workshops for my residents who are afraid to come to a community meeting. Thus we ensure a better understanding of the process.**

- a. **Answer:** *Congrats! Good place to start is to ask folks why they are afraid. Is this fear based on their experiences at other meetings? Get to the bottom of their reluctance first, then figure out what structure will work best for the meeting and what kinds of information they need.*

**13) Someone from FNA (Fishtown Neighbors Association) is going to help me with this [setting up a zoning meeting structure]**

- a. **Answer:** *glad to hear it! <https://www.fishtown.org/committees/zoning/> We will add this resource to our “sample policies and procedures” handout. Very clearly done by this RCO, but remember, PCPC cannot “tell” you how you must set up the meeting. Visit other RCO meetings and see how others do it to determine what the best structure is for your group.*

**14) Will developers be allowed to become RCOs?**

- a. **Answer:** *A nonprofit “CDC”- community development corporation-- does real estate development and could also be an RCO if they satisfy all requirements in the application. A private developer would NOT, because it doesn’t function as an organization that is representative of the community with regular public meetings.*

**15) It was mentioned about food. The RCOs are volunteer and they don’t have finances to provide food. Does the city have funds to provide food for RCO meetings?**

- a. **Answer:** *The slide on “Practical Concerns” mentioned food, because for SOME meetings, it’s a “nice to have”. No one expects an organization to provide food at these meetings with developers. We know most RCOs are volunteer organizations and have limited resources. Talk to your Councilperson about your concerns about funding needed to hold these meetings. Unfortunately, there is no budget line to provide food for RCO meetings.*

**16) How do you ensure that a RCO does not have conflict of interest?**

- a. **Answer:** *If there is a member of a Zoning Committee who has a financial interest in a project being considered by the RCO, it’s common practice that that person would excuse themselves from voting on that case due to a conflict of interest. If a CDC happens to also be the coordinating RCO for one of their own projects, they would need to be clear about the decision-making process and give neighborhood residents the opportunity to weigh in, and listen to concerns.*