

THE GENERAL ASSEMBLY OF PENNSYLVANIA

SENATE BILL

No. 705 Session of 2023

INTRODUCED BY MASTRIANO, LANGERHOLC, ROTHMAN, PHILLIPS-HILL,
BARTOLOTTA, DUSH, COSTA, AUMENT AND J. WARD, MAY 23, 2023

REFERRED TO ENVIRONMENTAL RESOURCES AND ENERGY, MAY 23, 2023

AN ACT

1 Amending the act of April 9, 1929 (P.L.177, No.175), entitled
 2 "An act providing for and reorganizing the conduct of the
 3 executive and administrative work of the Commonwealth by the
 4 Executive Department thereof and the administrative
 5 departments, boards, commissions, and officers thereof,
 6 including the boards of trustees of State Normal Schools, or
 7 Teachers Colleges; abolishing, creating, reorganizing or
 8 authorizing the reorganization of certain administrative
 9 departments, boards, and commissions; defining the powers and
 10 duties of the Governor and other executive and administrative
 11 officers, and of the several administrative departments,
 12 boards, commissions, and officers; fixing the salaries of the
 13 Governor, Lieutenant Governor, and certain other executive
 14 and administrative officers; providing for the appointment of
 15 certain administrative officers, and of all deputies and
 16 other assistants and employes in certain departments, boards,
 17 and commissions; providing for judicial administration; and
 18 prescribing the manner in which the number and compensation
 19 of the deputies and all other assistants and employes of
 20 certain departments, boards and commissions shall be
 21 determined," providing for environmental permits and plan
 22 approvals; making repeals; and abrogating regulations.

23 The General Assembly of the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania
 24 hereby enacts as follows:

25 Section 1. The act of April 9, 1929 (P.L.177, No.175), known
 26 as The Administrative Code of 1929, is amended by adding an
 27 article to read:

28 ARTICLE XIX-C

1 ENVIRONMENTAL PERMITS AND PLAN APPROVALS

2 Section 1901-C. Scope of article.

3 (a) Environmental permits and plans.--This article applies
4 to general permits, general plan approvals and individual
5 permits.

6 (b) Municipalities.--Nothing in this article shall be
7 construed as limiting the rights of a municipality in the lawful
8 performance of the municipality's functions.

9 Section 1902-C. Definitions.

10 The following words and phrases when used in this article
11 shall have the meanings given to them in this section unless the
12 context clearly indicates otherwise:

13 "Department." The Department of Environmental Protection of
14 the Commonwealth.

15 "Environmental law." Commonwealth statutes and regulations
16 promulgated in accordance with the act of July 31, 1968
17 (P.L.769, No.240), referred to as the Commonwealth Documents
18 Law, relating to the protection of the environment. The term
19 includes:

20 (1) The act of June 22, 1937 (P.L.1987, No.394), known
21 as The Clean Streams Law, the act of January 8, 1960 (1959
22 P.L.2119, No.787), known as the Air Pollution Control Act,
23 the act of November 26, 1978 (P.L.1375, No.325), known as the
24 Dam Safety and Encroachments Act, and the act of July 7, 1980
25 (P.L.380, No.97), known as the Solid Waste Management Act.

26 (2) Federal statutes and regulations relating to the
27 protection of the environment, to the extent the statute and
28 regulation are administered or enforced by the Commonwealth.

29 "General permit." A permit required by an environmental law
30 issued for a category of activities in which projects in that

1 category have been determined to be similar in nature and
2 capable of being adequately regulated utilizing standardized
3 specifications and conditions without the necessity of applying
4 for and obtaining an individual permit.

5 "General plan approval." A plan approval required by an
6 environmental law issued for a category of activities in which
7 projects in that category have been determined to be similar in
8 nature and capable of being adequately regulated utilizing
9 standardized specifications and conditions without the necessity
10 of applying for and obtaining an individual permit.

11 "Individual permit." A permit required by an environmental
12 law that contains site-specific terms and conditions.

13 "Necessary information." Plans, forms, fees, notifications,
14 receipts, analyses, certifications, reports, drawings, diagrams
15 or letters.

16 Section 1903-C. Filing of application.

17 An application for an individual permit or for coverage or
18 authorization to proceed under a general plan approval or
19 general permit shall be stamped by the department with the date
20 of filing. An application shall be deemed to be filed with the
21 department on the date the application is delivered to the
22 department.

23 Section 1904-C. Time period.

24 (a) Action.--

25 (1) Subject to paragraph (2), the department must issue,
26 modify, renew, transfer or refuse to issue, modify, renew or
27 transfer an individual permit or coverage or authorization to
28 proceed under a general plan approval or general permit
29 within the time frame required by law, or, if not specified
30 by law, within 45 days of the date the application was filed

1 under section 1903-C.

2 (2) The time requirement under paragraph (1) may be
3 tolled under sections:

4 (i) 1906-C(c);

5 (ii) 1907-C(d); or

6 (iii) 1909-C.

7 (b) Failure to act.--If the department does not comply with
8 subsection (a), section 1911-C applies.

9 Section 1905-C. Administratively complete application.

10 (a) Contents.--An application is administratively complete
11 if the application contains the necessary information or other
12 information requested in the application, notwithstanding
13 whether the necessary information or other information supplied
14 in the application is sufficient to grant the application.

15 (b) Disagreements.--Disagreements between the department and
16 the applicant as to the substance or merits of, or professional
17 judgment contained within, the application shall not render the
18 application to be administratively incomplete.

19 (c) Presumption.--An application accompanied by an affidavit
20 executed under penalty of perjury by a professional engineer,
21 landscape architect, geologist or land surveyor licensed by the
22 Commonwealth affirming that the application is administratively
23 complete to the best of the individual's knowledge, information
24 and belief shall be presumed to be administratively complete,
25 unless the department rebuts the presumption by clear and
26 convincing evidence in a proceeding under section 1907-C.

27 Section 1906-C. Administratively incomplete application.

28 (a) Written statement.--An application determined by the
29 department to be administratively incomplete shall be returned
30 to the applicant within 15 days of the date the application was

1 filed under section 1903-C accompanied by a written statement of
2 the specific necessary information or other information required
3 to complete the application.

4 (b) Identification.--An omission not identified in the
5 manner provided under subsection (a) shall be deemed to be cured
6 if not contained in the written statement required under
7 subsection (a).

8 (c) Tolling.--The time period under section 1904-C(a) shall
9 be tolled from the date the application is returned until the
10 date the application is refiled with the department.

11 Section 1907-C. Informal dispute resolution.

12 (a) Referee.--A dispute as to the administrative
13 completeness of the application may be submitted by the
14 applicant to a referee selected under section 1908-C.

15 (b) Response.--The department must file a written response
16 to the applicant's submission of the dispute within 10 days of
17 service of the submission of the dispute.

18 (c) Decision.--

19 (1) The referee's decision must be rendered without the
20 necessity of a hearing:

21 (i) within 10 days of the filing of the department's
22 written response; or

23 (ii) if the department does not file a response
24 under subsection (b), within 20 days of service of the
25 submission of the dispute.

26 (2) Failure of a referee to comply with the time
27 requirements under paragraph (1) shall be deemed to be a
28 ruling in favor of the applicant.

29 (3) A decision under this section is not appealable.

30 (d) Tolling.--The time period under section 1904-C(a) shall

1 be tolled during the time period the dispute is pending before
2 the referee.

3 Section 1908-C. Selection of referee.

4 (a) List.--If a dispute arises as to the administrative
5 completeness of an application, the applicant may request a list
6 of three referees from the master list of referees compiled by
7 the Environmental Hearing Board no later than three months
8 following the effective date of this subsection.

9 (b) Qualifications.--A referee under subsection (a) must be
10 a professional engineer, landscape architect, geologist or land
11 surveyor who has consented to serve as a referee under this
12 article.

13 (c) Process.--

14 (1) The department must eliminate one name from the list
15 under subsection (a) within five days after issuance of the
16 list. Failure to comply with the time requirement under this
17 paragraph shall be deemed a decision in favor of the
18 applicant.

19 (2) After elimination of a name under paragraph (1), the
20 applicant must, within five days of the elimination,
21 eliminate one name from the list. Failure to comply with the
22 time requirement under this paragraph shall be deemed a
23 decision in favor of the department.

24 (3) The individual whose name remains on the list shall
25 be the referee selected to decide the dispute under section
26 1907-C.

27 Section 1909-C. Public notice and comment.

28 The department shall hold public hearings or comment periods
29 on permit applications if the hearings or comment periods are
30 explicitly required by Federal or State law. The time period

1 under section 1904-C(a) shall be tolled while the department
2 completes statutorily required public hearings or comment
3 periods, but shall not be tolled if the department conducts a
4 hearing or comment period that is not required by statute. No
5 tolling under this section shall extend a time period clearly
6 established by a separate Federal law or law of this
7 Commonwealth that requires the department to issue, deny or make
8 a decision regarding a permit or authorization within a certain
9 time period.

10 Section 1910-C. Approval of application.

11 The department shall approve the application if environmental
12 laws governing the applicable general permit, general plan
13 approval or individual permit are satisfied.

14 Section 1911-C. Application deemed approved.

15 An administratively complete application shall be deemed
16 approved and an individual permit or coverage or authorization
17 to proceed under a general plan approval or general permit shall
18 be deemed issued if any of the following apply:

19 (1) The department fails to comply with the time
20 requirement under section 1904-C(a).

21 (2) The administratively complete application is
22 accompanied by an affidavit executed under penalty of perjury
23 by a professional engineer, landscape architect, geologist or
24 land surveyor licensed by the Commonwealth affirming that:

25 (i) the contents of the application are true and
26 correct to the best of the individual's knowledge,
27 information and belief; and

28 (ii) the requirements for issuance of the individual
29 permit or for coverage or authorization to proceed under
30 the general plan approval or general permit set forth in

1 all applicable environmental laws have been satisfied.

2 Section 1912-C. Construction.

3 If there is a conflict between a provision of this article
4 and another statutory provision:

5 (1) Except as set forth in paragraph (2), the provision
6 of this article governs.

7 (2) Paragraph (1) does not apply if the other statutory
8 provision specifically states that it governs over this
9 article.

10 Section 2. All acts and parts of acts are repealed insofar
11 as they are inconsistent with the addition of Article XIX-C of
12 the act.

13 Section 3. Regulations in the Pennsylvania Code are
14 abrogated insofar as they are inconsistent with the addition of
15 Article XIX-C of the act.

16 Section 4. This act shall take effect in 60 days.