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An Act To Encourage Greater Public Input into the State Environmental Licensing Process

Be it enacted by the People of the State of Maine as follows:

Sec. 1. 38 MRSA §345-A, sub-§5 is enacted to read:

5. Public meetings. At the board's or commissioner's discretion, the board or commissioner may schedule and hold public meetings in the geographic area of a proposed project for the purpose of collecting comments that become part of the record in a pending action. Any such meeting must be held during the period when written public comments may be submitted to the department. This subsection and the conduct of a public meeting do not change any other obligation the department has to hold public hearings that are mandatory by statute or required after a timely request is filed.

SUMMARY

This bill provides the authority to the Department of Environmental Protection to hold a public forum at which comments will be accepted and included as part of the official record in a pending proceeding. The purpose of this bill is to fill a gap between the receipt of written comments and the holding of an adjudicatory proceeding by allowing an additional means by which the public can provide comments.