



City of Newport, Rhode Island
Department of Planning & Development

August 22, 2025

SCAM ALERT

Dear Applicants,

In recent weeks, the Planning Department has received multiple reports of fake invoices being sent via email to applicants with active or recent applications before the Planning Board and the Zoning Board. These targeted phishing emails appear to glean personal information and project-specific details from applications that have been advertised on an agenda, and from publicly available application materials.

These phishing emails have been coming from email addresses with legitimate-sounding user names, but with fake domain names. Example of fake address: <Planning-Commission.CityofNewportRI@usa.com>

The scammer claims that in order for your application to move forward, you must pay an application fee or advertising fee via wire transfer, and only correspond with them by directly replying to the email. There is often a PDF attachment generically labelled "Invoice." These are all signs of a scam.

If you suspect that you have received a phishing email:

- **DO NOT** reply to the email.
- **DO NOT** click any links or attachments.
- **DO NOT** forward the email to anyone.

Please **DO**:

- ✓ Alert Planning Department staff of the scam attempt. Send a screenshot of the email.
- ✓ Call staff to independently verify the authenticity of the email. [A directory is available here.](#)
- ✓ If you have paid the scammer money, file a police report with the Newport Police Department.

Signs that the correspondence is real:

A real email address from Planning Department staff ends in [@cityofnewport.com](#) or [@newportri.gov](#). Always be alert for other signs of a scam as email domain names can be spoofed.

The City of Newport will **NEVER** ask for payment via wire transfer or gift cards. The Planning Department will **ONLY** ask for payment in the following ways:

- By Credit or Debit Card through your account in our application portal (OpenGov/ViewPoint)
- By a Check made out to the City of Newport, and mailed to the Planning Department at City Hall, 43 Broadway, Newport, RI, 02840
- By bringing a Check or Cash in person to the Planning Department on the 3rd floor of City Hall

Please, always reach out to Planning Department staff if you suspect a scam!