



## **Virginia Association of Zoning Officials**

*Dedicated to promoting the interest and welfare of zoning administration and enforcement agencies*

### **OFFICIAL EXAMINATION, CERTIFICATION, AND RE-CERTIFICATION PROGRAM REQUIREMENTS AND REGULATIONS**

Title of Regulation: VAZO Examination, Certification, and Re-Certification Program  
Effective Date: June 1992 (revised July 30, 2004) (revised September 14, 2005) (revised June 23, 2008) (revised December 6, 2011) (revised March 24, 2014) (revised May 6, 2016)

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The following are the regulations relating to the implementation of a certification and re-certification examination program as established by the Virginia Association of Zoning Officials (VAZO). The initial certification exam was developed for VAZO by the National Assessment Institute and Virginia Polytechnic Institute and State University and was first administered in 1992. The certification exam is designed to identify critical principles of code enforcement and statutory laws affecting the decisions made by land use professionals working at the state and local level. Uniquely focused on Virginia laws, the certification promotes sound zoning enforcement according to the standards and guidelines established within the Code of Virginia. The certification program is a three-part examination requiring the zoning official to maintain the highest standards of understanding of Law and Technical aspects of zoning to receive the title of Certified Zoning Officer (CZO). To achieve the title Certified Zoning Administrator (CZA) the individual must also pass the Management examination demonstrating knowledge of management laws, principles, and concepts. In 2015, a transportation examination module was developed with The University of Virginia to keep Zoning Administrators at the forefront of the evolving zoning climate and provide a comprehensive training and examination preparing them to serve localities as a resource for transportation management and its coordination with land use and zoning. To achieve the title of Certified Transportation Manager (CTM) the individual must first achieve the title of Certified Zoning Administrator and then pass the Transportation examination demonstrating knowledge that incorporates zoning, land uses, transportation network and appurtenant facilities. The Certified Transportation Manager title runs concurrently with the title of Certified Zoning Administrator.

The Virginia Association of Zoning Officials assumed sole responsibility for the certification program under the oversight of Dr. Michael Chandler, PhD., Professor associated with the Department of Economics at Virginia Tech, in 1998 and Dr. Emily Parkany, PhD, Managing Director, Mid Atlantic Transportation Sustainability University Transportation Center, University of Virginia. The examination became a routine part of the VAZO yearly calendar. Certification examinations are offered at least once a year. An exam preparation program is offered at least two months prior to each exam in order to prepare applicants for the examination. In 1998, VAZO responded to the practical issues of a long term certification program relating to the goal of maintaining a high standard of performance by those certified. The professional CZA,

CZO and CTM, in this ever -changing profession, must expand their knowledge base yearly to stay abreast of innovations in land use laws, construction and environmental laws, and development trends. To fill this need and to ensure that holders of the title CZA, CZO and CTM diligently attend regular training, the certification program expanded to provide for expiration of the certifications. Re-certification requirements are based upon attending certain required and other optional training programs. The recertification program was implemented with the first re-certifications on October 1, 2000. Through conferences, workshops, and the certification program, VAZO provides the zoning professional with information and training on an annual basis to help keep them in step with the changes in the profession.

# ***EXAMINATION, CERTIFICATION, AND RE-CERTIFICATION PROGRAM***

## ***PART I. GENERAL***

### ***Definitions.***

The following words and terms when used shall have the following meanings unless the context clearly indicates otherwise:

***“Certified Zoning Administrator (CZA)”***, is the title held by an official who has successfully passed the Law, Technical, and Management examinations as offered by the VAZO Certification Program.

***“Certified Zoning Officer (CZO)”***, is the title held by an official who has successfully passed the Law and Technical examinations as offered by the VAZO Certification Program.

***“Certified Transportation Manager (CTM)”***, is the title held by an official who has successfully passed the Certified Zoning Administrator examinations and Transportation examination as offered by the VAZO Certification Program. This certification runs concurrently with the CZA status and title,

***“VAZO”*** is the abbreviation for Virginia Association of Zoning Officials, a professional organization chartered in 1990 as a not for profit organization focused on the enhancement of the quality and level of professionalism of zoning administration in the State of Virginia

***“VAZO Executive Committee”*** is the governing body of VAZO as designated in the organization bylaws.

***“VAZO Education Committee”*** is the Committee appointed by the VAZO State President to oversee and administer the examination, certification, and re-certification program. The Committee reports to the VAZO Executive Committee.

***“Chief Examination Proctor”*** the individual appointed by the VAZO Education Committee to oversee and administer a specific examination session.

***“Re-certification Program Administrator”*** the individual appointed by the VAZO Education Committee to oversee and administer the VAZO Re-certification program.

## ***PART II. ENTRY***

### *Qualifications for Certification.*

Applicants for certification shall meet the minimum requirements adopted by the VAZO Executive Committee as set forth in this regulation.

### *Receipt of Application.*

The date the completely documented application and fees are received by the Chief Examination Proctor at the address published on the application, shall determine if the application has been received by the established deadline to sit for a specific examination session.

### *Qualifications for Examination.*

In order to qualify for the examination an applicant shall satisfy the following criteria:

- A. Be permanently employed in the field of zoning, planning, land use law, or other division that is charged with enforcing or implementing the provisions of a zoning or subdivision ordinance as established under the authority of Chapter 22 (§ 15.2- 2200 etseq.) of Title 15.2 of the Code of Virginia.
- B. Be a member in good standing of VAZO with all annual dues paid in full.

### *Prior Education or Experience Requirements.*

The applicant must meet **at least one** of the following minimum education requirements prior to taking the exam.

- A. Hold a bachelor or master's degree in any curriculum relating to Zoning, Planning, Law, Public Administration or related disciplines.
- B. Successfully completed the Virginia Police Academy for law enforcement officers.
- C. Successfully meet the job requirements for a position in a local municipality and have completed all probationary requirements and having achieved full time employment status.
- D. Attend and complete the VAZO exam preparation program.

### *Examination.*

- A. Once approved by the Chief Examination Proctor, an applicant shall be eligible to sit for a VAZO approved examination.
- B. An applicant must meet all eligibility requirements as of the date the completed application documents are received by the Chief Examination Proctor. For examination candidates, the

completely documented application and fee must be received by the Chief Examination Proctor 20 days prior to the examination unless other arrangements are requested and approved by the Chief Examination Proctor

- C. A candidate approved to take an examination shall do so within one year of the date of approval or submit a new application and fee in accordance with these regulations. Applicants that do not pass the VAZO approved examination shall be required to submit a new application and fee in accordance with this regulation in order to retake the examination.
- D. A candidate who is unable to take the examination at the time scheduled must notify the Chief Examination Proctor in writing prior to the date of the examination. Such a candidate will be rescheduled for the next scheduled examination without an additional fee. Failure to so notify the Chief Examination Proctor will result in forfeiture of the examination or re-examination fee.
- E. A minimum of 75% or more of the questions on the examination must be answered correctly to pass. Candidates will be notified in writing of a passing or failing grade on the examinations either by US Postal Service or electronic mail.
- F. The examination is administrated under the discipline modules titled Law, Technical, and Management. A passing grade in any module will be recorded by the VAZO Education Committee and will remain valid for three years towards the awarding of the CZA or CZO status.
- G. Once a candidate has passed the Technical and Law examinations and received the status of CZO, the candidate may at any time thereafter use the CZO status to up-grade the standing to a status of CZA by successfully passing the Management examination.
- H. Once a candidate has passed the Technical, Law and Management examinations and received the status of CZA, the candidate may at any time thereafter use the CZA status and achieve a status of CTM by successfully passing the Transportation examination. The status of CTM runs concurrently with the CZA status.

Waiver of written examination and administration of an oral examination:

A candidate shall be granted a one time opportunity to be examined orally on any or all of the examinations provided under the following circumstances and conditions.

- A. The candidate must meet the qualifications for examination previously referenced in these Regulations; and
  - 1. The candidate has challenged the examination modules at least three (3) times and failed all attempts; or
  - 2. The candidate submitted written documentation requesting an oral examination based upon a known physical disability that makes the written examination otherwise unavailable to the candidate.

- B. After receiving a request for oral examination the Chief Examination Proctor and the VAZO Education Committee Chair will conduct a personal interview with the candidate. Should they concur that the individual meets the requirements of these regulations and appears to have the knowledge base necessary to pass the examination; an oral examination of each module may be administered by the Chief Examination Proctor, Chair of the VAZO Education Committee, or other individual designated by the VAZO Education Committee as being qualified to administer the oral exam.
  
- C. Oral examinations will only be conducted on the regularly scheduled VAZO certification examination dates and at regularly scheduled exam locations. The applicant may be required to come early before or stay late after the written exam periods if the person administering the oral examination is unavailable to conduct it while the written exams are being administered.

**PART III.**  
**FEES, RE-CERTIFICATION AND**  
**REINSTATEMENT REQUIREMENTS.**

Fees.

All fees required by the VAZO Executive Committee for examination are nonrefundable and shall not be prorated.

Fee Type Amount:

Full State Membership	\$50.00
VAZO Exam Prep per discipline (Complete session includes three CZA disciplines for \$200.00)	\$75.00
VAZO CZO examination (Two exams Law and Technical)	\$75.00
VAZO CZA examination (Three exams Law, Technical & Management)	\$100.00
Upgrade from CZO to CZA (First attempt at management examination)	\$50.00
VAZO CTM (First attempt at transportation examination)	\$50.00
Failed Examination Retakes	\$50.00 per (Examination modules retaken)

Adjustment of Fees:

The VAZO Examination, Certification, and Recertification Program is designed as a self sufficient program based upon the adopted administration fees. From time to time, the VAZO Executive Committee shall review the programs budget. Should the Committee determine that the fees do not sustain the program, the fees may be raised by a majority vote of the VAZO Executive Committee to cover the cost of administration.

Expiration.

Certificates issued under this examination program shall expire three years from the day they were issued as indicated on the certificate. Summer expiration dates shall be July 31 and winter expiration dates shall be December 31. Certification holders must maintain VAZO membership in good standing throughout the period of certification.

Re-certification.

- A. VAZO shall post on the Official VAZO website (**www.vazo.org**) by the 30<sup>th</sup> of January, a list of all certification holders, CZA, CZO and CTM, expiring in that calendar year.
- B. Failure to see such notice does not relieve the certification holder from the requirement and responsibility to file and obtain re-certification on or before midnight of the expiration of the certification.
- C. If the re-certification application and qualifying continuing training certificates are not received by the VAZO Recertification Program Administrator on, or before, the expiration as noted on the certificate, the certification will become void on the date specified. There is no grace period, or exceptions, for late, incomplete or rejected applications not meeting the expiration deadline.
- D. An application on an expiring certification may be filed at any time during the expiring year prior to the date of expiration.
- E. A qualifying re-certification application shall include the following:
  - 1. A fully executed re-certification application form as found on the VAZO website.
  - 2. Signed statement that the certification holder is a member in good standing with VAZO and all dues are paid up as of the date of recertification.
  - 3. The attendance certificates from at least one Fall VAZO sponsored Professional Conferences.
  - 4. Attendance certificates or other acceptable documentation of at least twelve (12) hours from either VAZO sponsored events, VAZO Region sponsored events approved for training or non-VAZO certification or training programs that is on the approved training list shown in Appendix A.
- F. Should there be a unique training session not shown on the approved training list as published in Appendix A, any certification holder may submit to the VAZO Education Committee a request for consideration of acceptance of such alternative training for re-certification. The submissions shall include at minimum:
  - 1. A copy of the syllabus for the training session
  - 2. Instructors credentials
  - 3. Sufficient information demonstrating that the training provided is uniquely required for the fulfillment of the professional's employment duties



G. Once the completed re-certification application is received, the Re-Certification Program Administrator will review the application form and supporting documentation, and:

1. If finding them in order and compliant with the re-certification criteria as established by the VAZO Executive and Education Committees the certification holder will be sent by e-mail to the e-mail address as noted on the re-certifications application a new certificate identifying the new expiration date.
2. If finding that the re-certification package is lacking, the Re-Certification Program Administrator shall contact the applicant by e-mail or letter outlining the deficiencies in the submission. In this case the Re-Certification Program Administrator will hold the package until the day after the expiration of the certification. The certification holder may resubmit the request with additional information up until the day of expiration of the certification.

#### Reinstatement

- A. If the re-certification application and qualifying documentation were not received by the Re-Certification Program Administrator and/or the certification became void, the certification holder shall no longer be considered a CZA, CZO or CTM and will be required to complete the requisite examinations prior to reinstatement of the CZA, CZO or CTM status.
- B. The applicant shall be required to meet the current eligibility standards for certification examination as a Virginia Certified Zoning Administrator or Virginia Certified Zoning Official.

#### Denial of Application or Renewal

The VAZO Re-Certification Program Administrator, with the concurrence of the VAZO Education Committee Chair, may, in his/her discretion, refuse to grant or re-certify any person should the applicant fail to comply with the regulations specified herein. Appeals of the decisions of VAZO Re-Certification Program Administrator may be submitted in writing to the VAZO Education Committee. Decisions of the VAZO Education Committee may be appealed to the VAZO Executive Committee.

***PART IV.***  
***STANDARDS OF PRACTICE AND CONDUCT,***  
***DISCIPLINARY ACTION AND ADDRESS CHANGE.***

*Standards of Practice and Conduct*

A Virginia Certified Zoning Administrator (CZA), a Virginia Certified Zoning Officer (CZO) or Virginia Certified Transportation Manager (CTM):

- A. Shall not submit any false statements, make any misrepresentations or fail to disclose any facts requested concerning any application for certification or recertification.
- B. Shall not engage in any fraud, deceit or misrepresentation in providing professional services to the employer or public.
- C. Shall not knowingly inspect, review, opine or apply any influence towards the outcome of a decision or enforcement case on a project or property on which the certificate holder has any personal interest or holding without making full disclosure thereof and in good conscious is not in violation of any conflict of interest laws.
- D. Shall express a professional opinion only when it is founded on adequate knowledge of established facts at issue and based on a background of technical competence in the subject matter.
- E. Shall not knowingly misrepresent factual information in expressing a professional opinion.
- F. Shall immediately notify the local government attorney or commonwealth attorney if the certificate holder's professional judgment is overruled and in the certificate holder's professional judgment such action substantially threatens the public health, safety or welfare.
- G. Shall exercise reasonable care when rendering a professional service or opinion and shall apply the technical knowledge, skill and terminology ordinarily applied by the practicing zoning professional.

*Grounds for Suspension, Revocation or Other Disciplinary Action.*

On the recommendation of the VAZO Education Committee, the VAZO Executive Committee has the power to suspend or revoke any certificate issued under the provisions of this regulation where the certificate holder has been found to have violated or cooperated with others in violating any provision of these regulations.

*Change of Address*

A certificate holder shall keep the VAZO Membership Chairman informed of the correct current mailing address and electronic address. Change of address shall be reported to the membership chair in writing within 60 calendar days of the change.

**PART V.**  
**AMENDMENTS TO REGULATIONS**

*Amendments to Regulations*

- A. At any time should the VAZO Education Committee becomes aware of need to review and change the regulations as found herein, a written proposal outlining the issue, change proposed and final regulatory language will be submitted to the VAZO Executive Committee for review and consideration.
  
- B. After review of the proposed changes, the VAZO Executive Committee may by majority vote pass such changes in these regulations and establish an effective date for implementation of the change.
  
- C. The revised requirements and regulations shall be published on the open forum on the official VAZO website when adopted, and in the next regularly scheduled VAZO newsletter.

## ***APPENDIX A***

### ***Re-certification***

**To retain certification** applicants must within three years attend:

- The attendance certificates from at least one Fall VAZO sponsored Professional Conferences and
- Attendance certificates or other acceptable documentation of at least twelve (12) hours from either VAZO sponsored events, VAZO Region sponsored events approved for training or non-VAZO certification or training programs that is on the approved training list.

(Please note that Certification training can be counted as a Fall VAZO event if two of the four modules are attended.)

It is the individual's responsibility to submit his or her re-certification application anytime during the expiring year **prior** to his/her expiration date. There are no grace periods. Anyone failing to obtain recertification must retake the exam to retain a valid CZA, CZO or CTM. Everyone is encouraged to check the list of expiring certifications.

### **Re-certification deadlines**

July 31 of each year

December 31 of each year

### ***Re-certification Resolution adopted by the membership - October 1, 1999***

(Revised for clarification and event update by the VAZO Executive Committee – September 14, 2005)

Be it hereby resolved, that the VAZO certification program be amended to require re-certification every three years to maintain certification. Re-certification may be obtained by reexamining or demonstrated continuing professional development through successful completion of courses as approved by the Executive Board and the Education Committee.

The following programs, courses and/or events shall be deemed acceptable for qualifying by way of continuing education credits to meet the requirements:

### **Additional Non-VAZO certification programs, courses, and approved programs**

- CPEAV Commonwealth Land Use and Zoning Conference
- CPEAV Certified BZA Member Program (10 week program)
- CPEAV Certified Planning Commissioner Program (10 week program)
- CPEAV BZA or Planning Commissioner Graduate Seminar – Dr. Mike Chandler
- VA Dept. of Conservation & Recreation – Basic E/S, Inspector, Plan Reviewer, or

Program Administrator

- American Planning Association – AICP
- Certified Building Official – DPOR
- Certified Professional Code Administrator, CPCA
- Building Code Academy or Advanced Official Module of the Virginia Building Code Academy
- Virginia Police Academy for Law Enforcement Officers
- VA Dept. of Criminal Justice Services – Special Conservator of the Peace Certification Program

**The following may qualify for credit hours if approved in advance by the VAZO Education Committee:**

- VAZO Regional Training Meetings
- Building Certification, Course Title: \_\_\_\_\_, DPOR
- Other: Continuing Education Units \_\_\_\_\_, Course Title \_\_\_\_\_
- Accrediting college Name: \_\_\_\_\_
- Other Zoning, Planning, or Building Related Educational Program

If approval of an alternative course is denied by the VAZO Education Committee, the decision may be appealed to the Executive Committee for final determination.

**FORMS**

Application form for Re-certification

Approved list of eligible re-certification training programs and classes (Appendix A)

Suggested reading list for examination