

A SHORTCOURSE

ON LOCAL PLANNING

Roles for an Effective Public Process

AWC Conference
Spokane, WA

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JUNE 2023



Washington State
Department of
Commerce

v1.4

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Overview

- *Roles of participants*
- *How does your role contribute to planning decisions?*
- *Typical legislative process*
- *Public participation and hearings*



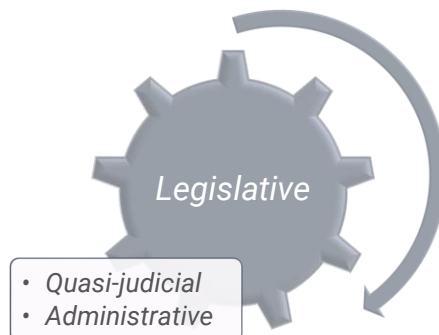
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Planning involves many participants

- *Elected officials*
- *Appointed*
- *Staff*
- *Public*
- *Hearings Examiner*
- *Other appointed bodies*



Land Use Planning Decisions



Roles: Elected Officials

Decision makers

- *Adopt comprehensive plan policies, and regulations*
- *Make final decisions on budget for operations, infrastructure, and funding programs*
- *Communicate vision*

Appointments

- *Select commissioners and board volunteers*
- *Be intentional about balance*

Roles: Planning Commissioner

- *Policy advisor*
- *Quasi-judicial Decisions (in some cases)*



Roles: Hearings Examiner

Typically involved in Quasi-Judicial activities.

- Professional contracted to make land use permit recommendations or decisions
- Allows local legislative or advisory bodies concentrate on policy-making
- Reduces local government liability exposure through more consistent and legally defensible quasi-judicial decisions.

Roles: Staff



Duty: Elected Officials & Commission

- *Respect the Commission's Role*
- *Take the time to explain "why" when agree or disagree*
- *Provide periodic two-way feedback to the Planning Commission*



Tips: Elected Officials

- *Do your homework*
- *If quasi-judicial hearing, **do not discuss** the item*
- *Give appropriate deference to staff's areas of expertise*
- *Be familiar with approval criteria and applicable codes.*



Tips: Elected Officials

- *Keep the workload priorities and schedule expectations in alignment with the resources available.*
- *If unhappy with staff or the Commission --- do not publicly reprimand*
- *Welcome public contributions*



Duty: Planning Commissioner

- *Do your homework*
- *Focus on the decision criteria*
- *Gracefully accept that the elected members will not always agree commission's recommendations*
- **It can be rough!** *Don't take public testimony personally*



Tips: Commission Chair

- *Annual work plan*
- *Run the meeting well*
- *Enforce rules of procedure*
- *Ensure that everyone contributes*
- *Treat people fairly and don't make exceptions*



All Roles: Public Participation and Hearings

General Public

- *Long-term residents*
- *Students*
- *Community groups*
- *Neighborhoods*

Special Interests

Business

Developers

*Environmental
advocates*

Tips: Managing Public Hearings

- *May require sign in*
- *May establish time limits*
- *May ask for testimony not to be repetitive*
- *May arrange the order of speakers*



Tips: Managing Public Hearings

- *Be helpful with the process*
- *Be respectful and patient*
- *Ask clarifying questions*
- *Assist staff (use of microphone, providing names)*



Discussion, Evaluation & Deliberation



**"Of course we can make fast decisions ...
once we have considered the 4872 factors."**

Discussion, Evaluation & Deliberation

Decision making bodies should:

- *Discuss why supporting approval or disapproval. **Base reasons on criteria.***
- *Determine positions and/or consensus for action.*
- *Do not seek new evidence, rely on the record and testimony*
- *Motion to approve or disapprove should instruct the staff to prepare draft findings and conclusions documenting the reasons.*

The Record of Decision

Decision must be based on findings
supporting the reasons for approval or disapproval of the proposal.

Rely on:

- *Application and supporting documentation*
- *Staff report with **relevant facts, local policies, and decision criteria** needed to make the decision*



Any questions or wisdom to share?

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