

# PLANNING COMMISSIONER PERSPECTIVE

LEAGUE OF CALIFORNIA CITIES

PLANNING COMMISSION 101: THE NUTS AND BOLTS OF PLANNING

League of Cities 2022: Planning Commission 101



## Planning Commissioner Anders Hauge

- ▶ BS City and Regional Planning, Cal Poly SLO 1971
- ▶ Public & Private Experience
  - ▶ Bangor, ME / Woodland, CA / Calif Tahoe Regional Planning Agency / Town of Breckenridge, CO
  - ▶ Quad Consultants / Harland Bartholomew & Associates / Parsons / Hauge Brueck Associates
- ▶ Notable Experience
  - ▶ General Plans/Codes: Bangor, Breckenridge, Woodland, Nevada County, Delhi, Folsom, Monoplan, Mariposa County, Auburn, Sutter Creek, Moraga and Loomis
  - ▶ Complex Projects: Heavenly Ski Resort Master Plan, Arizona Military Land Use Compatibility Plan, Southern Nevada Water Authority In-State Projects, Lake Tahoe Airport Master Plan, Santa Rosa Long-Term Wastewater Project, El Plan de Desarrollo de Petroleos de Venezuela, Dominican Republic Strategic Plan

League of Cities 2022: Planning Commission 101

# Role of the Planning Commission

3

- ▶ Creation Process
  - ▶ Participate in the development
    - ▶ General Plan
    - ▶ Housing Element
    - ▶ Zoning Code
  - ▶ Facilitate community engagement
  - ▶ Conduct
    - ▶ study sessions
    - ▶ other forums



League of Cities 2022 - Planning Commission 101

# Role of the Planning Commission

4

- ▶ Approval/Amendment Process
  - ▶ General Plan Elements.
  - ▶ Specific Plans and other specialized plans.
  - ▶ Zoning Code and Map.
  - ▶ Review Projects.
  - ▶ Conduct public hearings.
  - ▶ Make recommendations to the Council.

League of Cities 2022 - Planning Commission 101

# Role of the Planning Commission

5

- ▶ Implementation Process
  - ▶ Individual development project review
    - ▶ Site and Architectural Permits
    - ▶ Conditional Use Permits
    - ▶ Other
  - ▶ Consistency of the General Plan and Zoning Code
  - ▶ Public hearings
- ▶ Project approval
  - ▶ Quasi-Judicial Action



League of Cities 2022 - Planning Commission 101

# A Good Planning Commissioner

6

- ▶ Know your community and bring your expertise and knowledge to the Commission
- ▶ **A good Commissioner:**
  - ▶ An open mind to listen to new ideas.
  - ▶ An ability to see both the strengths and weaknesses of proposals.
  - ▶ Critical thinking skills leading toward finding solutions.
  - ▶ Willingness to spend the time required to study materials and attend regularly.
  - ▶ Commitment to making the process consistent and fair to all.
  - ▶ Faith in the future and the ability of the community to shape that future.

League of Cities 2022 - Planning Commission 101

## Preparing:

7

- ▶ Education
  - ▶ Read the staff report
  - ▶ Read the environmental documentation
  - ▶ Read the mitigation monitoring program
  - ▶ View project site on-line
  - ▶ Visit the site
  - ▶ Read the comments
  - ▶ Research prior projects
  - ▶ Understand the findings
- ▶ Meetings (as appropriate)
  - ▶ Staff
  - ▶ Applicant
  - ▶ Stakeholders
  - ▶ Community

League of Cities 2022: Planning Commission 101

## Dealing with information:

8

- ▶ Reviewing large volumes of information
  - ▶ Review the staff report
  - ▶ Review the CEQA summary, read the detailed analysis as appropriate
  - ▶ Identify the key issues, focus my review on those topics
- ▶ Tips
  - ▶ Sort out emotion from facts
  - ▶ Apply the scientific method – Create Hypothesis, test, adjust
  - ▶ Don't review in one setting, if you do your head might explode
    - ▶ Letting your brain work overnight helps focus on the key issues

League of Cities 2022: Planning Commission 101

## Questions to ask yourself:

- ▶ Is the proposal in compliance and consistent with the General Plan?
  - ▶ Is the proposal in compliance with the Code?
  - ▶ Does the environmental documentation disclose significant impacts?
  - ▶ Is the analysis thorough?
  - ▶ Do the Mitigation Measures work?
  - ▶ Are there Mitigation Measures that work better?
  - ▶ Are the Mitigation Measures flexible enough to adjust to changing conditions?
  - ▶ How will the Mitigation Measures be enforced?
  - ▶ What is best for the community?
  - ▶ What would I do if this Project impacted me?
- ▶ Tips
- ▶ Break down the project into manageable pieces (pizza pie approach)
    - ▶ Make decisions on each piece, then build your final decision
  - ▶ Pretend you're the applicant or neighbor, take a different view of the project

## Commissioner's perspective:

- ▶ You are the Decision Maker
- ▶ You have local knowledge
- ▶ You have knowledge of prior decisions
  - ▶ Make consistent decisions
  - ▶ Use approaches that work
- ▶ Identify when a policy or approach needs to change
  - ▶ Changes in technology, economics, politics, culture
    - ▶ California Housing Legislation
    - ▶ California CEQA Legislation
    - ▶ On-Line services/meetings
- ▶ Have confidence in your decision

# Working with staff:

11

- ▶ Staff Provide
  - ▶ Resource of knowledge (technical, policy, process, history)
  - ▶ Resource to identify solutions
  - ▶ Resource to understand options and consequences
- ▶ Direction to Staff
  - ▶ Request to staff to include information in staff report & presentation
  - ▶ Request staff to consider modifications to the General Plan & Code when appropriate
  - ▶ Provide staff with clear and concise direction
- ▶ Tip
  - ▶ Close coordination with staff can give you confidence in your decision and back you up

League of Cities 2022 - Planning Commission 101

# Working with the Community:

12

- ▶ Commissioners are a resource of knowledge
  - ▶ Undocumented local knowledge and history
  - ▶ Ideas for practical implementation
  - ▶ Understanding of the practical issues
- ▶ Commissioners are educators
  - ▶ On how the process works
  - ▶ On how to comment effectively
  - ▶ On what points are important in the decision process
  - ▶ Explore options that work
- ▶ Commissioners solve problems
  - ▶ Listen and observe to identify the real issues
  - ▶ Explore options that work
- ▶ Tips
  - ▶ Decisions are to be made only at the Commission Meeting
  - ▶ It is OK to have different opinions



League of Cities 2022 - Planning Commission 101

## Working with Decision Makers:

13

- ▶ Commissioners
  - ▶ Resource for past decisions
  - ▶ Resource for the history of policy direction
  - ▶ Test ideas while mindful of the Brown Act
- ▶ Elected Officials
  - ▶ Understand their policy and what are the drivers to their decisions
  - ▶ Discuss ideas and options that will work in the community
  - ▶ Have staff keep you apprised on the decisions by Electeds
- ▶ Tip
  - ▶ Comply with the Brown Act

League of Cities 2022 - Planning Commission 101

## Final Thoughts:

14

- ▶ Own your decision
  - ▶ Decisions impact the quality of life
  - ▶ Decisions impact individuals and the community
  - ▶ Decisions impact economics
- ▶ Focus on facts
- ▶ Seek to verbalize (or identify) unspoken concerns
- ▶ Summarize relevant points and how a decision was reached
- ▶ Tips
  - ▶ Stay cool and calm.
  - ▶ The Commissioner is helping identify and understand the issues for the community that does not have the time to research the project.

League of Cities 2022 - Planning Commission 101

# PLANNING COMMISSIONER PERSPECTIVE

LEAGUE OF CALIFORNIA CITIES

PLANNING COMMISSION 101: THE NUTS AND BOLTS OF PLANNING

League of Cities 2022 | Planning Commission 101

