

PLANNING COMMISSIONER PERSPECTIVE

LEAGUE OF CALIFORNIA CITIES

PLANNING COMMISSION 101: THE NUTS AND BOLTS OF PLANNING

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Planning Commission Chair

- ▶ Anders Hauge
 - ▶ BS City and Regional Planning, Cal Poly SLO 1971
 - ▶ Public Experience
 - ▶ Bangor, ME / Woodland, CA / Calif Tahoe Regional Planning Agency / Town of Breckenridge, CO
 - ▶ Private Experience
 - ▶ Quad Consultants / Parsons / Hauge Brueck Associates
 - ▶ Notable Experience
 - ▶ General Plans/Codes: Bangor, Breckenridge, Woodland, Nevada County, 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

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Learning Objectives

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- ▶ Role of the Planning Commission
- ▶ A Good Planning Commissioner
- ▶ How a Commissioner deals with the information received
- ▶ Questions that I ask myself
- ▶ A Commissioner's perspective
- ▶ How a Commissioner works with others
- ▶ How I address the information and questions

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Role of the Planning Commission

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

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Role of the Planning Commission

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

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Role of the Planning Commission

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

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A Good Planning Commissioner

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- ▶ Know your community and bring special expertise to the Commission
- ▶ **A good Commissioner should have:**
 - ▶ 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 when working with others.
 - ▶ Willingness to spend the time required to study materials and attend regularly.
 - ▶ Commitment to making the process fair to all.
 - ▶ Faith in the future and the ability of the community to shape that future.

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How a Commissioner deals with the information received:

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- ▶ Educating myself
 - ▶ 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
- ▶ Have meetings (as appropriate)
 - ▶ Staff
 - ▶ Applicant
 - ▶ Stakeholders
 - ▶ Community

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How a Commissioner deals with the information received:

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- ▶ Reviewing large volumes of information
 - ▶ Start with the straightforward projects
 - ▶ 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

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Questions that I ask myself:

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- ▶ Is the proposal in compliance and consistent with the General Plan?
- ▶ Is the proposal in compliance with the Code?
- ▶ Does the environmental documentation disclose the impacts?
- ▶ Is the analysis thorough and correct?
- ▶ 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, take a different view of the project

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A Commissioner's perspective:

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- ▶ 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
 - ▶ Self driving cars
 - ▶ On-line shopping
- ▶ TIP
 - ▶ Have confidence in your decision

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Working with staff:

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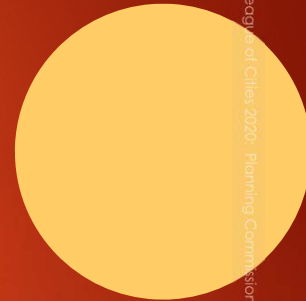
- ▶ Resource of knowledge (technical, policy, process, history)
- ▶ Resource to identify solutions
- ▶ Resource to understand options and consequences
- ▶ Make requests to staff to include information in staff report & presentation
- ▶ Request staff to consider modifications to the General Plan & Code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

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Working with the Community:

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- ▶ 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
- ▶ Information gathering
 - ▶ 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

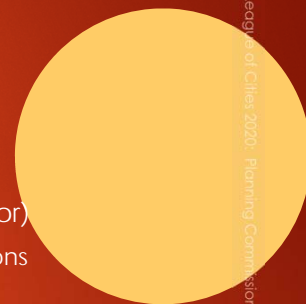


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How a Commissioner works with:

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- ▶ Commissioners
 - ▶ Resource for past decisions
 - ▶ Resource for the history of policy direction
 - ▶ Test ideas while mindful of the Brown Act
- ▶ Elected Officials (Council Member, Board Member, Supervisor)
 - ▶ Understand their policy and what are the drivers to their decisions
 - ▶ Discuss ideas and options that will work in the community
 - ▶ Memos identifying how I made my decision on major issues
 - ▶ Have staff keep you apprised on the decisions by Council
- ▶ Tip
 - ▶ Comply with the Brown Act (less than a quorum)



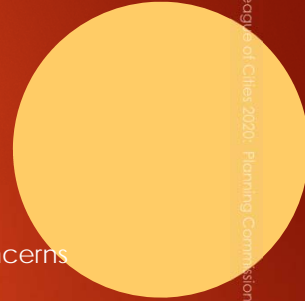
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How I address the information and questions:

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- ▶ The Commissioner's owns the burden
 - ▶ Decisions impact the quality of life
 - ▶ Decisions impact individuals and the community
 - ▶ Decisions impact economics
- ▶ Focus on facts
- ▶ Seek to verbalize (or identify) understand the unspoken concerns and/or questions
- ▶ Summarize relevant points and how my decision is 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.

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