

THURSTON COUNTY COMMUNITY PLANNING

Thurston County Atrium
3000 Pacific Avenue SE
Olympia, WA 98501



RULES OF PROCEDURE

THURSTON COUNTY PLANNING COMMISSION

Including Amendments through April, 2024

WE, THE MEMBERS of the Planning Commission of Thurston County, State of Washington, created by a Resolution of the Thurston County Board of County Commissioners, pursuant to Chapter 201, Laws of 1959, do hereby adopt, publish, and declare the following rules of procedure:

I. NAME

The official name shall be the "Thurston County Planning Commission."

II. DEFINITIONS

“Commission” means Planning Commission

“Board” means Board of County Commissioners

“Department” means Community Planning & Economic Development Department

“Manager” means Community Planning Manager

“Staff” means Community Planning Staff “Chair” means Planning Commission Chair

“Vice-Chair” means Planning Commission Vice-Chair

“Member” means Planning Commission Member

III. MEETINGS

- A. Meetings are typically held at the Thurston County Atrium, Building One, Room 110, 3000 Pacific Avenue SE, Olympia. Regular meetings shall be held the first and third Wednesdays of each month and shall be open to the public. Regular meetings will begin at 6:30 p.m. Public hearings will begin at 7:00 p.m.
- B. Special meetings shall be at the call of the Chair or by a quorum (see Article VIII. Section A. for quorum details). Meetings shall be noticed per Thurston County Code.
- C. When a regular meeting day falls on a legal holiday, the Commission shall not convene.

- D. If no matters over which the Planning Commission has jurisdiction are pending upon its calendar, a meeting may be canceled at the call of the Chair one meeting prior to the scheduled meeting.
- E. Except as modified by these rules of procedure, the latest edition of Robert's Rules of Order Newly Revised shall govern the conduct of the meetings and all procedures.

IV. ELECTION OF OFFICERS

- A. The officers of the Commission shall consist of a Chair and Vice Chair elected from the members of the Commission; and such other officers as the Commission may, by majority vote, approve and appoint.
- B. The election of officers shall take place at the second regular meeting in January of each calendar year. The term of office of each officer shall run until the subsequent election. If, for any reason, Planning Commission officers are not elected at the second January meeting, the existing officers shall continue to serve until an election is held.
- C. Any officer may be removed at any time by vote of a quorum plus one member.
- D. The vacancy of an officer caused by the resignation, removal, or expiration of term of any officer of the Commission during the term of office shall be filled for the remaining term of office by the vote of a majority of the appointed members of the Planning Commission.

V. DUTIES AND RESPONSIBILITIES OF OFFICERS

- A. The Chair shall preside over the Planning Commission meetings and may exercise all the powers afforded to the position, however, as a member of the Commission, the Chair retains the full right to have a vote recorded in all deliberations of the Commission.

The principal duties of the Chair of the Planning Commission under parliamentary rules are listed below:

1. To open the meeting at the appointed time by calling the meeting to order, having ascertained that a quorum is present.
2. To announce in proper sequence the business that comes before the Planning Commission or becomes in order in accordance with the prescribed order of business, agenda, or program, and with existing orders of the day.
3. To recognize members who are entitled to the floor.
4. To state and to put to vote all questions that legitimately come before the Planning Commission as motions or that otherwise arise in the course of proceedings (except questions that relate to the presiding officer in the manner noted below), and to announce the result of each vote or, if a motion that is not in order is made, to rule it out of order.

5. To protect the Planning Commission from obviously frivolous or dilatory motions by refusing to recognize them.
 6. To enforce the rules relating to debate and those relating to order and decorum within the Planning Commission. Formal disciplinary procedures should be reserved for serious or potentially serious situations and should be handled properly and tactfully. Prior to initiating any formal disciplinary procedure, the Chair, accompanied by another member, will meet discreetly and informally with the offending member in an effort to reach a satisfactory resolution. If a satisfactory resolution cannot be reached, the Chair will forward the matter to the Thurston County, County Manager and the Chair of the Board.
 7. To expedite business in every way compatible with the rights of members.
 8. To decide all questions of order, subject to appeal unless, when in doubt, the Chair prefers initially to submit such a question to the assembly for decision.
 9. To respond to inquiries of members relating to parliamentary procedure or factual information bearing on the business of the Planning Commission.
 10. To authenticate by their signature, when necessary, all acts, orders, and proceedings of the Planning Commission.
 11. To declare the meeting adjourned when the Planning Commission so votes or – where applicable – at the time prescribed in the program, or at any time in the event of a sudden emergency affecting the safety of those present.
- B. The Chair shall have full power to create subcommittees of one or more members.
- C. The Vice Chair shall, in the absence of the Chair, perform all the duties incumbent upon the Chair. The Chair and Vice Chair, both being absent, the members present may elect for the meeting a temporary Chair who shall have full powers of the Chair during the absence of the Chair and Vice Chair.

VI. MEETING RECORDS

The Department shall keep record of all regular and special meetings of the Commission and its committees and of other meetings when requested to do so, and these records shall remain the property of the Commission and be retained at such office as the Commission may direct. When the Chair of the Planning Commission is not available, the Vice Chair is authorized to sign Planning Commission documents. The Department shall once per year provide an anonymized report to the Commission of the demographic make-up of the Commission relative to the demographic make-up of Thurston County (by requesting members' optional self-identification for demographic categories including gender, race/ethnicity, age ranges, LGBTQI status, disability status, veterans status, housing-renters vs house-owners vs houseless status, and primary housing location in the unincorporated county, vs UGA, vs a city), to provide awareness and to encourage fuller representation.

VII. SUBCOMMITTEES

- A. Subcommittees shall be established as needed to conduct studies and prepare proposals for consideration by the full Planning Commission.
- B. At its first meeting, the subcommittee shall select its own chair.
- C. Within the bounds of the adopted work program, subcommittees may develop, as appropriate, detailed scope of work, review process and time frame for carrying out their assigned tasks.
- D. Work scope, schedule, and periodic progress reports shall be reported to the full Planning Commission for review.
- E. Subcommittees shall avoid the appearance of representing the full Planning Commission or of giving the commitment of the full Planning Commission.

VIII. QUORUM, VOTING, CONFLICT OF INTEREST

- A. Quorum: A simple majority of appointed Commission members shall constitute a quorum for the transaction of business. The Commission can receive reports whenever a quorum is not present, however, a quorum must be present to comment or take action on any reports received.
- B. Voting: No action of the Commission may be taken without the affirmative vote of a simple majority of the appointed members. Meeting minutes may be approved without a quorum of members who were in attendance at the subject meeting under the following conditions:
 - 1. At least two members who were in attendance at the subject meeting attest that the minutes accurately reflect the activities of the subject meeting; and
 - 2. A simple majority of appointed Commission members votes affirmatively to approve the minutes.
- C. Conflict of Interest: If there is a desire of any Commission member to abstain from voting because of a conflict of interest, this view should be expressed as soon as the conflict becomes apparent and before any discussion is held on the business before the Commission. They shall then recuse themselves from the discussion. When a member has recused themselves because of a conflict of interest, they shall not be counted as present for purposes of establishing a quorum during considerations. See also:
 - Municipal and State Resources Council's (MSRC's) overview on Washington state's ethics and conflicts of interest laws: <https://mrsc.org/explore-topics/officials/ethics/conflicts-of-interest#:~:text=and%20Ethical%20Issues-Overview,financial%20interests%20with%20their%20jurisdictions>

- MSRC’s overview on “Appearance of Fairness Doctrine” specifically applied to Planning Commissions:
<https://mrsc.org/explore-topics/officials/ethics/appearance-of-fairness>

IX. ATTENDENCE AND ABSENCE OF MEMBERS

- A. The Manager shall keep a record of attendance and submit it to the Chair of the Planning Commission at the beginning of each month.
- B. Planning Commission members are expected to attend all regularly schedule meetings. Those members attending are permitted to attend in-person or remotely.
- C. If a member knows they will be absent from a scheduled meeting, the member shall inform Staff or Chair in advance of the meeting, which will be considered a planned absence. Planned absences include those due to work-related commitments. Members who do not inform the Staff or Chair ahead of time will have those considered as an unplanned absence, with the exception of emergencies, which may be excused by the Chair with or without notice.
- D. In the event of a member having unplanned absences for three consecutive regular meetings, or having unplanned absences for 33% or more of all meetings (including committee) in any six-month period, the member's record shall be forwarded by the Chair to the Board for consideration of asking for the member's resignation.

X. REPORTS TO THE BOARD OF COUNTY COMMISSIONERS

- A. Majority and minority reports will be submitted through Community Planning.
- B. Any two or more concurring Planning Commissioners may submit a minority report to accompany the majority report to the Board. Findings of fact appropriate to the minority report should be included. Minority reports should be submitted, together with the names of Planning Commissioners in concurrence, by the next Planning Commission regular meeting.
- C. Any Planning Commissioner may have their minority opinion heard and entered into the minutes immediately following a vote, to be forwarded to the Board in addition to majority or minority reports.
- D. When Staff make a recommendation to the Board different from that of the Planning Commission, they shall notify the Planning Commission so the Commission Chair or a designee may represent the Planning Commission when the report is presented to the Board.

XI. COMMUNITY PLANNING STAFF

- A. Staff shall perform two major roles in its work with the Planning Commission:
1. The professional-technician role in which staff planners bring proposals to the Planning Commission, or comment on proposals before the Planning Commission, and make recommendations consistent with the County's adopted plans, ordinances, and standards and with accepted planning theory and practice.
 2. The traditional role in which the Staff provide research assistance to the Planning Commission, following a majority vote, to help its members in articulating their collective will.

Both of these roles involve research, fact-finding, identification of alternatives, evaluation and recommendations.

From time to time, these roles may lead to differing recommendations to the County Commissioners from the Planning Commission and Staff. On such occasions, it shall be the responsibility of Staff to prepare a report to the Board which includes both the Planning Commission and Staff recommendations and any minority reports in which two or more Planning Commissioners concur. Further, it shall be the responsibility of Staff to advise the Planning Commission Chair that they intend to present a separate recommendation to the Board so that the Chair or a representative may be in attendance to represent the Planning Commission.

The manner in which Staff provides its day-to-day service to the Planning Commission may be redefined annually by the Manager and the Planning Commission. The relationship between Staff and the Planning Commission shall be whatever the two entities negotiate between them.

The work of Staff shall be confined to those projects and activities officially incorporated into the County's adopted work program and budget. The work program is typically developed in consultation with both the Planning Commission and the Planning Staff, but the final adoption authority rests solely with the Board. If the Planning Commission should identify a new work task during the work year, the Staff may pursue work on this task only if the Board amends the adopted work program.

XII. AGENDA

An agenda shall be prepared by Staff and approved by the Chair for each regular meeting, consisting of at least the following order of business:

1. Call to Order
2. Public Communications
3. Approval of Minutes

4. Calendar
5. New Business Items (Briefings; Work Sessions; Hearings)
6. Other Business
7. Adjournment

XIII. MEETING MINUTES

A. Objectives of Minutes

1. Meet legal requirements to maintain a complete, factual record of motions, findings of fact and actions of the Planning Commission, as well as the usual details of time, place, type of meeting, members present, speakers and their addresses, roll call votes and other pertinent information needed to describe what was accomplished at the meeting.
2. Provide a brief summary of what occurred for use by a Planning Commissioner who misses a meeting or for Planning Commissioners to refresh their memories as to what occurred.
3. Provide the Board with enough information to be able to follow what the Planning Commission is doing.
4. Provide the greatest level of detail for public hearing testimony and final actions taken by the Planning Commission; a moderate level of detail for post-hearing work sessions that are continued to a later meeting; and the least amount of detail for briefings and other work sessions.
5. For an official meeting record, meeting audio shall be used.

B. Content of Minutes

1. Concise, factual record of what was done, not what was said. If a Planning Commissioner would like a particular statement to be placed in the minutes, they should state that for the record.
2. Detailed summary of public hearing testimony, actions taken and findings of fact for actions.
3. Summary of only major points for post-hearing work sessions that are continued to another meeting (for use by Planning Commissioners who miss the meeting or

want to refresh their memory as to what occurred in preparing for the follow-up work session).

4. Very brief summary of briefings and final work session discussions.
5. For Staff presentations, a brief statement of only new information that was not in the written staff report.
6. Planning Commission requests for information or questions of Staff that require follow-up work, with a list of outstanding requests attached to each set of minutes for reference.
7. Reference to documents that are cited by Planning Commissioners, rather than complete excerpts presented at the meeting.
8. Motions should be underlined, so that they stand out.
9. Factual errors, ambiguities, and misinterpretations should be corrected in draft minutes. Planning Commissioners should call staff in advance of a meeting if they have questions about the draft minutes, to allow time for staff to review the tapes if necessary.