

Planning Commission

LOB #84:

PLANNING COMMISSIONERS

Purpose

Planning Commissioners review and provide recommendations to the BOS and/or the Board of Zoning Appeals on land use policies and plans that will result in orderly, balanced and equitable County growth.

Description

Planning Commissioners are responsible for thorough review and interpretation of Land Use applications in order to provide recommendations to the Board of Supervisors for approval or denial. The PC evaluates each application against all applicable plans, codes and ordinances.

Planning Commissioners actively participate in public sessions up to twice weekly, eleven months per year, through both public hearings and committee meetings. Through its public hearing and committee processes, Planning Commissioners provide a forum for the public to provide input into the County's Comprehensive Plan, both in terms of policy and specific site requests, land use applications mandated by state and County codes, and policy issues as they arise. Obtaining citizen input on pending land use applications and/or policy issues continues as a key driver for the PC.

The PC was founded on July 6, 1938 and has carried out its mission to provide the Board of Supervisors and the Board of Zoning Appeals recommendations on land use policies. The recommendations provided by the PC help Fairfax County fulfill its highest potential to be a safe and thriving community. The Planning Commission consists of 12 members appointed for four year terms by the Board of Supervisors; 9 representing the Magisterial Districts and three at-large members.

Benefits

The Planning Commissioners priority is to engage the community on land use and development proposals and the comprehensive planning process. As a direct result of this effort, residents, businesses, visitors, and employees working within Fairfax County will enjoy a unique and desirable place to live, work, shop, and connect with others. Residents will have the ability to access places and resources in a timely, safe, and convenient manner. Neighborhoods and businesses will be designed and built with a focus on environmental stewardship and sustainability.

The Planning Commissioners lines of business area provides the following benefits:

- Prepare for the future;
- Manage the present;
- Respond to legislative changes;
- Maximize community strengths;
- Minimize community weaknesses;
- Provide for community input and coordination;
- Build a sense of community; and,
- Provide for the community's public, health, safety, and welfare.

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Mandates

Pursuant to Virginia Code § 15.2-2200, localities are encouraged to “improve the public health, safety, convenience, and welfare of their citizens and to plan for the future development of communities to the end that transportation systems be carefully planned; that new community centers be developed with adequate highway, utility, health, educational, and recreational facilities; that the need for mineral resources and the needs of agriculture, industry, and business be recognized in future growth; that the concerns of military installations be recognized and taken into account in consideration of future development of areas immediately surrounding installations and that where practical, installation commanders shall be consulted on such matters by local officials; that residential areas be provided with healthy surroundings for family life; that agricultural and forestal land be preserved; and that the growth of the community be consonant with the efficient and economical use of public funds.”

Specifically, Virginia Code § 15.2-2210 stipulates that “Every locality shall by resolution or ordinance create a local planning commission in order to promote the orderly development of the locality and its environs. In accomplishing the objectives of § 15.2-2200 the local planning commissions shall serve primarily in an advisory capacity to the governing bodies.”

Additionally, Virginia Code § 2.2-3707 related to public meetings, record keeping, and transparency of government.

Trends and Challenges

- The Planning Commission maintains two standing committees: Policy and Procedures and Personnel and Budget. In addition, there are ad hoc committees which include: Housing, Environment, Tysons, Capital Improvement Program, Schools, Parks, Land Use Process Review, Transportation, and Telecommunications. Several of these committees are joint efforts with the Fairfax County School Board, the Park Authority Board, the Redevelopment and Housing Authority Board, the Transportation Advisory Commission, and the Environmental Quality Advisory Commission. The committees respond to directives by the BOS to further analyze certain issues including electric vehicle charging stations or area-specific plans which will further impact planning and zoning processes.
- In addition, the Planning Commission has seen a growing trend with regard to meetings, actions and public participation. In FY 2015, the Planning Commission held 59 public meetings, an increase of more than 20 percent from FY 2014 and more than 50 percent from FY 2013. FY 2015 also saw 331 speakers, compared to the 247 from FY 2014 and the 200 from FY 2013, and 240 actions, compared to the 207 in FY 2014 and 222 in FY 2013. These trends present challenges in staffing, meeting frequency and length, and complexity of analysis and review.

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Resources

Category	FY 2014 Actual	FY 2015 Actual	FY 2016 Adopted
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FUNDING			
<u>Expenditures:</u>			
Compensation	\$180,579	\$175,963	\$228,000
Operating Expenses	4,930	7,440	5,832
Total Expenditures	\$185,509	\$183,403	\$233,832
General Fund Revenue	\$0	\$0	\$0
Net Cost/(Savings) to General Fund	\$185,509	\$183,403	\$233,832
POSITIONS			
Authorized Positions/Full-Time Equivalents (FTEs)			
<u>Positions:</u>			
Regular	0 / 0	0 / 0	0 / 0
Total Positions	0 / 0	0 / 0	0 / 0

Metrics

Metric Indicator	FY 2013 Actual	FY 2014 Actual	FY 2015 Actual	FY 2016 Estimate	FY 2017 Estimate
Commission public sessions attended	37	47	59	73	91
Committee meetings attended	32	38	43	48	54
Planning Commission Actions recommended to the Board	246	207	240	240	240
Percent of Planning Commission Actions supported by the Board of Supervisors	99%	99%	99%	99%	99%

Statistics continue to indicate that the BOS maintains a 99 percent or better concurrence rate on recommendations forwarded by the PC, a trend that has remained consistent over the past decade. This high rate demonstrates the level of commitment undertaken by the Commission in ensuring that all major issues raised by applicants and surrounding neighborhoods are resolved prior to consideration by the Board of Supervisors.