



Planning Commission

This document outlines the Planning Commission’s role, membership, actions, and processes.

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Who can be a member of the Planning Commission?

Anyone who lives in the City Limits or Urban Growth Area may be considered for appointment by the Mayor, with confirmation by the City Council, to the Planning Commission. Up to two members may reside outside the City Limits, in the Urban Growth Area. The Planning Commission is intended to represent the diverse interests and backgrounds of the community. Candidates reflecting the community's diversity are encouraged to apply. Each Planning Commissioner is required to complete the Open Public Meetings Act and Public Records Act training, or other training assigned by the Mayor.

How is the Planning Commission structured?

The Planning Commission is comprised of seven members who serve four-year terms. The terms are staggered with appointments/re-appointments occurring every year.

The officers of the Planning Commission include a Chairperson and Vice Chairperson. The Chairperson and Vice Chairperson are elected at the first meeting of each year (typically January) and serve until their successors have been elected. The Recording Secretary, also defined as an officer, is designated as the Community Development Director or designee and will serve ex-officio, without vote on the Planning Commission.

The Chairperson shall decide on all points of order and procedure, consistent with City Code, subject to rules adopted by the Planning Commission. Where City Code and the rules are silent, a majority of the Commission members in session at the time may direct how the Chairperson will proceed. The Chairperson shall appoint any committees found necessary to investigate any matters before the Commission.

The Community Development Director, or designee, provides support to the Planning Commission by keeping minutes of meetings, recommendations, findings and determinations. Additionally, the Community Development Director, or designee, may provide technical research, make agendas and packet materials, and manage any consultants for the Commission.

What does the Planning Commission do?

The Planning Commission duty is to consider and make recommendation to the City Council on items defined by the City Council's annual Docket. The Council may assign a variety of tasks to the Planning Commission; however, the duties need to be consistent with the Revised Code of Washington Chapter 35A.63 or 36.70A RCW, together with Leavenworth Municipal Code Title 21 which states:

The Planning Commission reviews and makes recommendations to the city council on the following issues:

- A. Amendments to the Comprehensive Plan;
- B. Amendments to the subdivision code, LMC Title 17;
- C. Amendments to the zoning code, LMC Title 18, including changes to the official zoning map, which are of general applicability;
- D. Amendments to the environment code, LMC Title 16, except to the SEPA procedures code, Chapter 16.04 LMC;
- E. Other actions as requested or remanded by the city council.

In considering any matter, it is the duty of the Planning Commission to act in accordance with applicable law, to consider public comment, and to recommend in the best interests of the entire community, including any under-represented members of the community. To complete this work, the Planning Commission may request information from city departments, legal support, and or consultant support.

The Planning Commission's work is generally legislative in nature and follows LMC 21.09 for process. This includes at least one public hearing. The Planning Commission's recommendations are forwarded to the City Council for final action, usually in the form of an ordinance. Council action will occur in an open meeting, and may or may not include a further public hearing.

Can anyone ask the Planning Commission to consider a new topic/need?

The City Council establishes the Planning Commission Docket each year and may amend the Docket during the year. Each November and December anyone may request an item be considered for the upcoming Docket, which is decided in January and confirmed in March (after applications for amendment within the Urban Growth Area are due).

Additionally, anyone may make application to amend the Comprehensive Plan and or Development Regulations, separately from the Docket process. These individual applications are reviewed based on the type of request, pursuant to Leavenworth Municipal Code Title 21.

When does the Planning Commission Meet?

The Planning Commission meets the first Wednesday of each month at 7:00 pm. Meetings may be canceled, especially when close to a holiday or at the end of the year. Additional meetings are also possible when properly noticed. All meetings are at City Hall Council Chambers, 700 Hwy 2, and via Zoom. It is recommended that individuals verify a meeting by checking the city's website calendar.

What is the Planning Commission Meeting/Hearing process?

Agendas are posted the Friday prior to the meeting, or sooner. Planning Commission meetings are semi-informal with a roll call, opening statement, staff presentation (if appropriate), public comment/question, and as appropriate dialogue between and among the Planning Commission, public, staff, and any presenter with action to follow.

For hearings, the meetings are conducted in a more formal manner, starting with the noticing. Noticing is posted at least ten days prior and includes the date, place and time of the hearing. Additionally, for hearings, the city issues a written staff report at least seven days prior to the hearing. The hearing includes an opening, staff presentation, public comment (which may be limited to 2-3 minutes per person), Planning Commission discussion, and motion for action. The Planning Commission recommendations to the City Council are based on findings of fact and conclusions of law (often provided in the staff report) supporting the recommendation. Changes to the staff findings and conclusions may be made by the Planning Commission. For a hearing, there is generally no discussion with the public. Depending on the substance of the matter, the recommendation of the Planning Commission may be adopted at the next City Council meeting, or the City Council may conduct its own public hearing. The Community Development Director, or designee, schedules the Planning Commission's recommendations to go before the Council.

For any action to occur at the Planning Commission, such as approval of meeting minutes, a quorum is required to be present. A quorum of the Planning Commission is not less than four members. All matters before the Planning Commission shall be decided by an affirmative vote of a majority of the quorum present.

Meetings may be postponed or canceled by the Planning Commission.

In addition to written meeting minutes, all meetings which include a public hearing are recorded.

What is proper meeting etiquette?

Some Planning Commission agenda items can result in complex and diverse opinions. The Planning Commission is open to hearing all relevant public comment and out-of-the-box ideas. However, to maintain a civil discussion, the following meeting etiquette has been established:

- Have one discussion at a time and limit distractions.
- Seek to understand before being understood.
- Be respectful of each other; by assuming good intentions & acknowledging it is ok to disagree.
- Focus on constructive problem solving.
- When necessary, items may be continued to provide time to reflect on comments.

Conflict and controversy can be common with active, productive Planning Commissions. It is helpful to think of conflict as neither good nor bad. Consider it as the appearance of differences of opinion, interests and experiences. Although conflict is no fun, it can be the “stuff” out of which comes progress. Additionally, it may provide a great deal of value if members are willing to review the experience and learn from it.

Sample Meeting/Hearing Procedure:

Call to Order: The Chair may state, “I will call the meeting to order at [TIME]. This is the [DATE OF MEETING] public meeting of the Leavenworth Planning Commission.”

Roll Call: Each member in attendance will be acknowledged. Members not in attendance will be noted as an excused or unexcused absence. Members joining late, or leaving early, will be acknowledged at the time they join or leave the meeting.

Open Meeting: The Chair will address each item on the agenda. The agenda order may be modified by the Chair. Items may be removed or scheduled for a different agenda as necessary to accommodate changes in available presenters, lack of information or lack of adequate time.

For Hearings:

Opening: The Chair shall open the public hearing and turn the matter to staff for a presentation of the staff report and staff recommendation. Discussion between staff and the Planning Commission may occur.

Public Testimony: The Chair formally opens the public testimony asking participants to use the microphone; state name and address when testifying and to print their name and mailing address on the sign-in sheet. Testimony may be limited in duration. It must be relevant to the matter being heard and should not be repetitive of other testimony. After all interested parties

have had the opportunity to provide comment, the Chair will formally close the public testimony and open the discussion with the Planning Commissioners.

Discussion: Planning Commissioners may approve, deny, or modify the proposal as part of the recommendation. Additionally, they may continue the public hearing to another date, time and place (clearly defined at the meeting) for additional discussion, information, or public comment (so long as the public comment has not been closed).

Motion: Any member of the Planning Commission may make a motion. For example, "I move to recommend denial of (the proposal)" or "I move to recommend approval of (the proposal) based on (the findings of fact and conclusions of law as stated in the staff report)."

The motion is required to be seconded before any discussion. Additional discussion may occur before the vote. The vote may be verbal or hand raising (for, against, abstain) or polling of each Commissioner. The Chair shall announce the vote results.

Actions will be reflected in the minutes of the meeting and any report or recommendation of the Planning Commission.

Close of the Meeting: At the close of all items on the agenda, the Chair may ask for discussion on future items or other items for the "good of the order," then the Chair shall adjourn the meeting.

What is the average meeting length?

Regular meetings are scheduled to start at 7:00 pm. There is no designated end time, however, agendas are formatted with the intent of a two-hour meeting. If it looks like a meeting will go long, the Chair may request items be moved to another meeting.



Are meeting minutes available?

Planning Commission meetings are recorded and draft meeting minutes are reviewed at the following meeting. Once meeting minutes are approved, they are available for the public. Recordings are also available.

Are there conflicts of interest for Planning Commissioners?

Planning Commission members serve on a recommending body for the City Council. They may own property that is affected by a change in the regulations or zoning, but as a single member of a recommending group (not a decision body), acting in a legislative capacity, is not subject to disqualification for conflict of interest.