Roles and Relationships in the Planning Process

Short Course on Local Planning
Sammamish WA
September 5, 2013
Overview

- Overview of key roles
  - Citizens
  - Planning staff
  - Advisory bodies
  - Elected officials

- Comprehensive Plan Review Process

- Building a high performing team
  Councils, Commissions, Staff
The legislative process develops, recommends, and adopts policies and development regulations.

The quasi-judicial process reviews and processes development applications.
Legislative Planning Process

- Role shared by commissions and legislative body
- Process invites public participation and involves conducting public hearings
Quasi-Judicial Planning Process

- Involves applying policy and development regulations to specific permit application
- Roles vary by jurisdiction and permit type
- May or not involve public hearings
- Commonly provides for public comment
Procedures differ and what is allowed in a legislative process is not necessarily proper and legal in a quasi-judicial process.
Roles in the Planning Process

- Public, interested stakeholders
- Elected officials
- Planning Commission/other advisory bodies
- Staff
- Hearing Examiner
- Developers
- Media
- Others
Public Stakeholders

Why involve the public?

- Credibility and local ownership
- Diverse perspectives
- Build and strengthen community
- Detailed and historical knowledge
“Each county and city that is required or chooses to plan...shall establish and broadly disseminate to the public a *public participation program* identifying procedures providing for *early and continuous public participation in the development and amendment of comprehensive land use plans and development regulations implementing such plans*. The procedures shall provide for *broad dissemination of proposals and alternatives, opportunity for written comments, public meetings after effective notice, provision for open discussion, communication programs, information services, and consideration of and response to public comments*....”
Effective Outreach

- Why would someone want to come to the meeting?
- Match strategies with audience and goals
- Get the word out
- Clearly state the purpose
- Meet the audience at their level of understanding
- Graphics and handouts
- Logistics: format, graphics, handouts, facilitator, special needs
Planning Commission

- Consider options policy direction and implementing actions
- Listen, consider and balance citizen input
- Promote healthy relationship between City and its citizens
- Recommendations to City Council
Planning Commission: Best Practices

- Understand and accept role
- Build individual relationships with council, staff and other commission members
- Understand legal and procedural rules
- Welcome the public
- Share input before voting
- Follow recommendations through Council review
Elected Officials

- Chief legislative authority.
- Primary function is *legislative*. Makes the final decision on whether or not to adopt new or amended policies and regulations.
- *May have* quasi-judicial functions by making the final decision on development approvals.
Staff

- Planners, engineers, parks, finance
- Evaluates and makes recommendations on legislative and quasi-judicial actions.
- Implements the adopted policies and development regulations on a day-to-day basis.
- Provides technical assistance and guidance to the public and applicants for permits.
Working with Staff: Best Practices

- Respect staff role
- Prepare for meetings
- Establish clear expectations
- Ask questions; let staff know of major issues before the meeting
- Civil discourse
Councils and Commissions: Best Practices

- Develop clear work program
- Give credit where credit is due
- Devote resources
- Celebrate “home runs”
- Don’t get too far out in front
- Provide and support opportunities to build relationships
Working as a Team

Establish and Maintain Contact

- Weekly emails, updates, phone calls, meetings
- Get together outside of regular meetings
  - Site tours
  - 2 x 2s with director
  - Shared time at training (travel & meals)
  - Subcommittee work
  - Pairing new commissioners with PC Chair
  - Coffee chats/meetings with the mayor
- Don’t cancel meetings
Working as a Team

Building Skills

- Annual work program
  - schedule of expectations
  - relationship to visioning and strategic planning
  - annual report and review of past decisions
- Running effective meetings
- New member orientation
- Legal, ethical and open meeting issues
- Retreats & joint study sessions
Comprehensive Plan Review

- Establish clear schedule and process
- Track progress
- Help the public participate effectively

Track your progress!
Maintaining Progress

- Focus on policy intent and direction
- Consider straw polls and provisional votes
- Track issues/questions to be addressed
High Performing Teams

High Performing Teams in Action

- Engage in healthy conflict
- Are committed, open and honest
- Are willing to make difficult decisions
- Have strong leadership
- Build consensus
- Solicit diversity of opinion & background
- Experience satisfaction after resolving issues
Challenges to High Performance

- Undervalued by other “team” members
- Lack of clarity in roles and responsibilities
- Lack of trust
- Lack of respect
- Varied experience and knowledge
- Not knowing others’ expertise
- Fear of making mistakes
- Politics
- Limited budgets and staff
Trusting Teams

- Admit weaknesses and mistakes
- Ask for help, exhibit vulnerability
- Accept questions and input about their role
- Give each other the benefit of the doubt
- Take risks in offering feedback and assistance
- Appreciate and tap into each other’s strengths
- Focus time and energy on the important issues
- Offer and accept apologies without hesitation
- Look forward to opportunities to grow as a group
Trust Busters

Trust is lost when team members:

- Share confidential information
- Withhold information
- Offer vague instructions
- Use hierarchical channels to share feedback
- Promote hidden agendas
- Use anger and fear tactics to get their way
Building Trusting Teams

- Recognize it takes time
- Get to know personalities & expertise
- Be open and take time to consider new information
- Make time for good communication
- Take time to debrief, especially when decisions are overturned
- Don’t be constrained by past decisions
- Reward members who put team’s interests first
Thank You!

Deborah Munkberg, AICP
Studio 3MW
Deborah@inovapcd.com
206.834.3897