



CITY OF BELLINGHAM PLANNING COMMISSION BYLAWS

ARTICLE I - NAME

The official name of the organization shall be the City of Bellingham Planning Commission.

ARTICLE II - OFFICIAL MEETING PLACE

The official meeting place of the Planning Commission shall be in the Council Chambers of City Hall in Bellingham, Washington. All meetings shall be held there except on such occasions, and at such times as the Commission may, by a majority vote of those present at any regular or special meeting, otherwise direct.

ARTICLE III – MEMBERSHIP

The Planning Commission shall consist of seven (7) members appointed by the Mayor and confirmed by the City Council. The term of each member shall be 4 years, and no member shall serve more than two (2) consecutive terms except as described in the Bellingham Municipal Code section 2.42.010.

ARTICLE IV – ELECTIVE OFFICERS

1. **Officers**: Each year, the Commission shall elect a Chair and a Vice-Chair. In the absence of both the Chair and the Vice-Chair, members may, by majority vote of those present, elect a Chair *pro tem* who shall assume the duties and powers of the Chair.

The Director of the Planning and Community Development Department shall serve as Executive Secretary of the Commission. The Director may designate a member of the staff to perform any of the duties of the Executive Secretary under the Director's supervision.

2. **Vacancies in Offices**: Vacancies in elective offices shall be filled immediately by regular election procedure for the unexpired portion of the term.
3. **Nomination and Election of Officers**: Officers shall be nominated and elected annually at the first regularly scheduled meeting of the year. The nominee receiving the majority vote of those present shall be declared elected, and will assume their duties immediately.

Elections shall only be held when a minimum of five members are in attendance.

4. **Terms of Officers**: The elected officers shall take office at the first regular meeting in January, or as soon as possible thereafter, and serve for a term of one year.
5. **Duties of the Chair**: The Chair shall be a full voting member of the Commission. The Chair shall preside at all meetings and public hearings and shall call special meetings when deemed necessary. The Chair shall appoint all committees and their respective

Chairs, and shall sign all official papers involving the authority of the Commission which are transmitted to the City Council. The Chair shall have all the duties normally conferred by parliamentary usage on such officers and shall perform such other duties as may be ordered by the Commission except as otherwise provided in these Bylaws, in other Commission resolutions or in City Ordinances.

6. **Duties of the Vice-Chair:** The Vice-Chair shall assume the duties and powers of the Chair when the Chair is absent.
7. **Duties of the Executive Secretary:** The Executive Secretary shall provide proper and legal notice for all public hearings, prepare and post the agendas of all regular and special meetings, and draft and sign routine correspondence of the Commission. The Executive Secretary shall record and retain, by electronic means, each meeting of the Planning Commission and any of its committees. The Executive Secretary shall prepare summary minutes, which must be approved by the Commission and maintain a file of all studies, plans, reports, and recommendations for the official record.

ARTICLE V - MEETINGS

All regular and special meetings, hearings, records and accounts of the Commission shall be open to the public.

1. **Regular Meetings:** Regular monthly meetings shall be held at 7:00 p.m. on the first and third Thursdays of every month. Should a regularly scheduled meeting fall on a holiday, the meeting shall be postponed to the succeeding Thursday, unless a majority of the Commission votes to select another day.
2. **Special Meetings:** Special meetings may be called by the Chair, by a majority of the members of the Commission or by the City Council.
3. **Recessed Meetings:** Any regular meeting may be recessed to a definite time and place by a majority vote of the Planning Commission members present at the meeting.
4. **Notice of Meetings:** Written notice of all regular and special meetings shall be given by the Executive Secretary to the members of the Planning Commission. Notice of all regular meetings shall be sent at least 4 days (96 hours) prior to the meeting. Notice of all special meetings shall be sent at least 2 days (48 hours) prior to the meeting. The notice shall state the time and place of the meeting and shall be accompanied by an agenda of the matters to be considered by the Commission at such meeting.
5. **Agenda:** The order of the agenda shall be set by the Executive Secretary after consulting with the Planning Commission Chair or Staff. The number of items to be included on an agenda shall be limited to a number, which may be reasonably considered by the Commission in one evening.
6. **Order of Business:**
 - Call to Order
 - Roll Call
 - Approval of Minutes from Preceding Meeting

- Explanation of Procedures by Chair
- General Public Comment (15 minutes in length)
- Public Hearings and Meetings
- Regular Business (new, old and unfinished)
- Director's Report
- Communications from Staff
- Reports from Commission Members and Committees
- Adjourn

7. Public Hearing Procedure:

- (a) The Chair reviews the subject of the hearing orally.
- (b) The Planning Director or Staff representatives present the application and add any related or background information. Commissioner members are permitted to ask any relevant questions to clarify the presentation by staff.
- (c) The Applicant is given the opportunity to make a presentation. Information given should be factual, relevant and not merely a duplication of the previous presentation. The Chair may limit the applicant's presentation to no more than 15 minutes. Commission members are permitted to ask any relevant questions of the applicant.
- (d) The public hearing is opened and audience members have the opportunity to address the Commission regarding the application. Each person speaking shall provide their name and the information offered should be relevant and not a duplication of the previous presentations. Commission members are permitted to ask questions at the conclusion of each person speaking.
- (e) Applicant may make a brief response for the sole purpose of clarifying points or answering questions brought up by earlier testimony. No new information is to be presented at this time. A reasonable amount of time should be allowed for the response.
- (f) The Planning and Community Development Director or representative may briefly clarify any remaining outstanding issues or answer any Commission questions.
- (g) Commission members discuss significant considerations or pose questions.
- (h) The public hearing is closed and the Planning Commission Chair entertains a motion for disposition.
- (i) The Chair restates the motion and obtains a second to the motion.
- (j) Additional discussion by Commission members.
- (k) Disposition of motion.

ARTICLE VI – TRANSACTION OF BUSINESS

1. **Quorum**: Four members of the Planning Commission shall constitute a quorum for the transaction of business and the taking of official action. Official actions are limited to those matters included on the agenda.
2. **Attendance**: Attendance is expected of each Commission member at all regular and special meetings. In the event that a member must miss a meeting, communication with the Chair or Executive Secretary shall take place prior to the meeting. If a member is absent from four (4) or more consecutive regular meetings, a recommendation for removal from the Commission may be forwarded to the Mayor.
3. **Motions and Voting**: Motions shall be restated by the Chair before a vote is taken. Each member, including the Chair, shall have one vote and no proxies shall be allowed. A majority vote shall carry, and minority opinions shall be formally registered in the summary minutes and reported to the City Council. Any action taken by a majority of those present, when those present constitute a quorum, at any regular or special meeting of the Planning Commission shall be deemed and taken as the action of the Commission.
4. **Conflict of Interest**: When a quasi-judicial matter is before the Commission, the Chair shall ask members if they have any conflicts of interest. Such conflicts must be publicly disclosed and the member who has an interest in any matter before the Commission that could prejudice his actions shall refrain from any discussion on the matter as well as voting thereon.
5. **Appearance of Fairness**: The members of the Planning Commission, in considering quasi-judicial matters, shall maintain the appearance of fairness as required by law.
6. **Parliamentary Procedure**: The current edition of Robert's Rules of Order, shall provide the basis for meeting structure and official decisions shall be made by motion and vote of the Commission unless stated otherwise in these Bylaws, in other Commission resolutions, or in City Ordinances.
7. **Open Public Meeting Act**: The City of Bellingham Planning Commission shall adhere to the requirements outlined in the Open Public Meeting Act.

ARTICLE VII - COMMITTEES

1. **Establishment of Committees**: The Planning Commission may establish such standing or special committees as it deems advisable and assign each committee specific duties or functions. Each standing committee shall consist of three members. No standing or special committee shall have the power to commit the Commission to the endorsement of any plan or program without its submission to the body of the Commission.
2. **Appointment and Terms**: The Chair of the Planning Commission shall appoint the members of each standing or special committee and shall name the chair of each committee. The members of each standing committee shall be appointed at the first

regular meeting in January for a term of one year. Special committees may be appointed at such times and for such purposes and terms as the Commission approves.

3. **Vacancies**: Any vacancy shall be filled immediately by the Chair of the Planning Commission for the unexpired portion of the term, or until another member can be appointed.
4. **Meetings**: All committees shall meet at the call of the committee chair, provided that the Chair of the Planning Commission shall also have the authority to call a special meeting of any committee at any time and upon such notice as he may specify.
5. **Quorum and Voting**: A majority of the members appointed shall constitute a quorum of all committees. The affirmative vote of a majority of the committee membership shall be required for the adoption of a matter before the committee.

ARTICLE VIII - AMENDMENTS

These Bylaws may be amended at any regular or special meeting by the affirmative vote of five members of the Planning Commission; provided that the proposed amendments have been submitted in writing at a previous meeting.