



# City of Seattle Seattle Planning Commission

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## Seattle Planning Commission Ethics Management Plan

The Seattle Planning Commission (SPC) acts in accordance with the rules and policies outlined in;

- ✓ City Charter Article XIV sections 1-4 adopted in 1946 and amended on March 13, 1962 (City Charter),
- ✓ Enabling legislation ordinance 109155 (Enabling legislation),
- ✓ Seattle Municipal Code 4.16
- ✓ City of Seattle Planning Commission Bylaws amended in February 1996, approved by Mayor and City Council (Bylaws),
- ✓ SPC roles and functions (adopted by SPC resolution April 2002), and
- ✓ Federal, state and local laws and regulations that apply to appointed advisory bodies of public agencies.

### Operating Procedures and Administrative Policies – Approved May 11, 2006

The Operating Procedures and Administrative Policies listed here are not intended to supersede the above mentioned documents, but rather to clarify the Planning Commission's specific administrative policies as they relate to ethics management.

- 1) **Transparency** - The Seattle Planning Commission shall continue to conduct its business in a manner which ensures that discussions, deliberations and the resulting advice and recommendations of the Commission are open and transparent to the general public. To ensure this the Planning Commission will do the following:
  - In accordance with SPC bylaws, all regularly scheduled meetings of the Commission shall be open to the public. On occasion, a Commission meeting, or a portion of a meeting, may be closed to the public in order to consider personnel matters or other matters exempt from the Open Meetings Act..
  - In accordance with Commission Section 13 of the SPC bylaws and Commission resolution 7/8/82, final decisions of the SPC will only be made at Full Commission meetings that are open to the public. As outlined in SPC Bylaws, "Decisions" include formal Commission positions, statements that go to City and other governmental officials (Mayor, Council, department directors, agency directors); SPC committee generated letters of comment if requested to come from the Full Commission and; formal SPC recommendations to City staff.
  - In accordance with the Open Meetings Act, The Planning Commission will give sufficient notice to the public about dates and locations of Full Commission meetings.
  - As is outlined in SPC Bylaws, Planning Commission meetings will allow for public comment. The Chair shall designate the appropriate time for public testimony and establish time limits for each speaker.
  - Planning Commission meeting notes will be prepared and made available in a timely manner.
  - As is required by SPC bylaws, all decisions of the Commission shall be evidenced in writing.

- 2) **Disclosure of Interests** – Planning Commission advice is enhanced by its broad membership. Although Commissioners exhibit a variety of interests, professional experience and opinions, they act as individuals and represent the entire city as opposed to any particular special interest group or groups (Commission Resolution 7/8/82). The disclosure of interests and affiliations of Commissioners will help mitigate the appearance of a conflict of interest by better informing the public and the recipients of Seattle Planning Commission advice. The Commission’s disclosure process includes the following procedures;
- Planning Commissioners will disclose, for the record, an interest or affiliation that create conflict or may cause an appearance of conflict. Such disclosures will be clearly noted for the record.
  - The Director and the Chair of the Planning Commission will ensure that regular opportunities for disclosure of interests are made for the record in Full Commission meetings.
  - The Planning Commission as a whole will advise and/or seek advice for individual Planning Commissioners who disclose interests where there is a possibility of conflict of interest that may limit the individual’s participation in a matter which comes before the Planning Commission for advisory recommendations.
  - Planning Commissioners will follow the rules for disclosure as outlined for advisory boards in SMC 4.16
- 3) **Conflict of Interest and Recusal** - Planning Commissioners shall act in accordance with appropriate conflict of interest rules and standards. The Commission conflict of interest and recusal process includes the following procedures;
- After appointment to the Commission, a Commissioner will review the policies, standards and bylaws which address operating procedures and ethical standards. The Commissioner will provide written verification for the record that these documents have been reviewed and understood. The Commissioners will also pledge in writing their willingness to act in accordance with said rules and standards.
  - A Commissioner who has recused himself or herself from a matter before the Commission due to a conflict of interest will refrain from Commission deliberation in forming SPC recommendations or advice on the matter and will not vote on SPC recommendations or advice.
  - A Commissioner who has recused him or herself from a matter before the Commission due to a conflict of interest will remove himself or herself from the room during the formation of formal SPC advice or recommendations.
  - A Commissioner who has recused him or herself from a matter before the Commission due to a conflict of interest will refrain from engaging in conversation or communication with other members of the Planning Commission on the matter for which they have recused themselves.
  - Commission members may recuse themselves from any matter or activity they choose even if there is not a conflict of interest.
  - Planning Commissioners will follow the rules for recusal as outlined for advisory boards in SMC 4.16

- 4) **Representing the Planning Commission** – In accordance with the Seattle Planning Commission bylaws the Commission shall act as one entity in making and announcing its decisions.
- SPC Bylaws stipulate that the Chair will represent the Commission and the Commission shall act as an entity in making and announcing its decisions.
  - In accordance with the SPC bylaws, no member other than the Chair shall speak or act for the Commission without prior authorization by the Chair.
  - The Chair may delegate performance of duties to a Commission member or staff including representing the Commission to the media, the public and public officials.
  - An action by the Chair may be overruled by a majority vote of the Commission members unless otherwise specified in the bylaws.
  - When the Chair is absent or unavailable, the Vice Chair will perform the duties of the Chair.
  - Individual commission members' may represent full Commission or Committee if authorized by the chair or the full commission. Such occasions may include representing the Planning Commission by providing testimony; attending meetings with Council, Mayor, and others; representing the Commission in public venues, acting as a SPC representative on special committees, task forces, or other activities as specified.
  - Individual commission members' may speak as an individual Commissioner – reflect and inform about Commission positions and activities and on their own position as long as it is clear whether such position is or is not a Commission position.
  - Individual commission members' may speak as an individual, clearly specifying they are speaking as an individual, or as an individual Planning Commissioner articulating their own views and concerns (e.g. I am speaking as an individual, not representing the Planning Commission.)
  - Commissioners should acknowledge that being on the Planning Commission can be somewhat limiting to the extent that people view them in that role even if a disclaimer is provided .All personal statements should be made with the recognition that the Planning Commission does get judged by the actions and opinions of its members.
- 5) **Planning Commission membership composition** – The public interest is best served by a Planning Commission membership that represents a broad set of viewpoints, knowledge, experience and expertise. To that end the Planning Commission includes the following policies and procedures;
- The SPC's enabling legislation (ordinance 109155) states that it will "...Provide through its own broadly based membership an informed opinion to complement the work of the City's elected officials and administrative departments..." and that "its function shall be advisory only".
  - In accordance with ordinance 109155 the Planning Commission membership as a whole shall "reflect a broad range of opinion, experience, and expertise with the objective of providing sound advice representative of the citizenry..." and "To achieve that purpose, it shall include residents from different neighborhoods within the City, at least one engineer or architect and an urban planner, and among others, members of ethnic minorities and citizens active in neighborhood or community affairs."
  - In advance of a vacancy, the Commission shall actively work with the Mayor's Office in finding a replacement
  - The Planning Commission membership will rotate on a regular basis in accordance with Ordinance 109155.