

Seattle Planning Commission

Bylaws

September 2017

Article I – Purpose

1. The Seattle Planning Commission (“the Commission”) was established by Article XIV of the Charter of the City of Seattle. Section 3 provides that: “It shall be the duty of such Commission to make recommendation to the Legislative and other City departments on the City’s broad planning goals and policies and on such plans for the development of the City as its present and future needs may require. The Commission shall also advise and make recommendations to the Legislative and other City departments in connection with matters relating to the City’s physical development and redevelopment as may be directed by ordinance.”
2. The Commission acts in accordance with the rules and policies outlined in:
 - City Charter Article XIV, Sections 1-4 adopted in 1946 and amended in 1962
 - Enabling legislation - Ordinance 109155
 - Seattle Municipal Code 3.64 and 4.16
 - Seattle Planning Commission Ethics Management Plan
 - Seattle Planning Commission Protocol and Procedures Manual
 - Federal, state, and local laws and regulations that apply to appointed advisory bodies of public agencies.
3. Chapter 3.64.010 of the Seattle Municipal Code states “The Commission shall provide opportunities for public participation in City planning by:
 - A. Providing through its own broadly-based membership an informed opinion to complement the work of the City’s elected officials and administrative departments;
 - B. When pertinent, soliciting public comment on planning issues of City-wide importance or of a substantial community concern, and evaluating comments received; and
 - C. Securing the assistance of experts and others with knowledge or ideas to contribute to City planning.

Its function shall be advisory only.

Article II – Goals

1. To influence in a positive manner the major planning efforts and projects that will affect the city.
2. To advocate for consistency and integration among plans which provide a future image and direction for the city as well as the means for meeting more immediate needs.

3. To ensure that effective citizen participation, including opportunities for timely public involvement, are part of the City's planning processes.
4. To represent a whole-city view point when evaluating proposed plans, projects, and issues.
5. To make recommendations which recognize the City's needs and government's constraints as well as identified citizen viewpoints.

Article III – Role

1. Monitor, contribute to, and advise on city-wide and neighborhood physical development policies, plans, projects, and issues.
2. Follow selected planning activities of the City and other public and private sector entities which might affect the future physical development of the city:
 - a. maintain liaison with City planning offices and agencies,
 - b. review selected planning projects throughout their duration as appropriate, and
 - c. encourage non-City public and private sector entities to consult with the Commission regarding their related planning activities.
3. Give special attention to process and timely opportunities for public involvement.
4. Analyze problems, issues, and solutions and, when appropriate, formulate alternatives and recommendations.
5. Identify gaps and inconsistencies among planning efforts and suggest coordinating activities to correct problems.
6. Consider new plans and amendments to adopted plans and make recommendations.
7. Identify issues for future planning efforts.
8. Advocate for appropriate planning initiatives and other recommendations adopted by the Commission.
9. Produce public forums where citizens and Commissioners can gain information concerning planning issues, where differences over planning issues may be identified, and where an opportunity may be provided for discussion and problem solving.

Article IV – Membership

1. The Commission shall consist of sixteen members.
2. All Commissioners shall be residents of the City of Seattle.
3. Commissioners shall reflect a variety of interests, professional experience, and opinions.
4. Commissioners shall act as individuals and represent the whole city, as opposed to any special interest group.
5. The Commission shall include residents from different Council Districts within the city, at least one engineer or architect and an urban planner, and among others, persons of color, women, persons with disabilities, and sexual minorities, and residents active in neighborhood or community affairs.
6. Seven Commissioners shall be appointed by the Mayor, seven shall be appointed by the City Council, and one shall be appointed by the Commission itself. The term of office for these positions shall be for three years.
7. The Get Engaged position for young adults ages 18-29 shall be appointed by the Mayor for a one-year term.
8. All appointments are subject to confirmation by the City Council.
9. A Commissioner whose term has expired may continue to hold office until a successor has been confirmed.
10. No Commissioner shall serve more than two complete consecutive terms. *(Placeholder for language about partial terms)*
11. A Commissioner may be removed from office if absent without being excused from three consecutive Commission meetings or six regularly scheduled meetings in a year.
12. In the event of a vacancy, the Commission shall actively work with the Mayor's Office or City Council, as appropriate, in finding a replacement.
13. Commissioners shall receive no monetary compensation for service on the Commission.

Article V – Committees

1. Commissioners shall serve on the following committees, as assigned or elected.
 - a. Executive Committee. The Executive Committee shall consist of the Commission Chair, Vice Chair, and the Standing Committee Co-Chairs. The Executive Committee determines work programs, agendas, rules, assignments, and recruitment of new Commissioners. The Executive Committee will monitor each committee's activities.
 - b. Standing Committees. Standing Committees shall be formed based on subject areas as determined by the work program. Commissioners shall be assigned to a committee by the Executive Director. Committee Chairs shall be elected by the Commission. Commissioners shall serve on at least one committee or more if desired. Committees should meet regularly once a month and more often if necessary. Committees should analyze issues and receive subject matter briefings in advance of full Commission consideration. The Commission may assign one or more persons to sit with and participate in the proceedings of any committee of the Commission as deemed appropriate, to provide a specific expertise or viewpoint. This person will not be considered a member of the Commission and will have no authority to vote.
 - c. Nominating Committee. A nominating committee made up of no less than three Commissioners shall be convened prior to the annual leadership election process. This committee will propose a leadership slate of the Executive Committee to the full Commission for consideration. The Nominating Committee shall not include any Commissioners who are interested in serving on the Executive Committee.
 - d. Special Committees. The Commission may at any time create special committees and shall designate the committee's duties and functions.

Article VI – Leadership Elections

1. The Executive Committee shall be elected annually by the Commission.
2. Elections shall be held according to the Commission's Protocol and Procedures Manual.
3. Members of the Executive Committee are limited to two consecutive one-year terms in the same leadership role.
4. If a member of the Executive Committee other than the Chair vacates a position prior to completing their term, a special election shall be held to fill that position. Filling a partial term of less than six months shall not count toward a Commissioner's eligibility to serve in an Executive Committee position for two consecutive one-year terms.

Article VII – Duties of Chair

1. The Chair shall preside at all meetings and act as spokesperson for the Commission at meetings with other organizations unless another spokesperson(s) is chosen by the Commission, the Chair, or the Executive Director.
2. When the Chair is absent, unavailable, or resigns, the Vice Chair will perform the duties of the Chair.
3. The Chair shall meet on a regular basis with the Executive Director to discuss ongoing business and priorities of the Commission.

Article VIII – Work Program, Priorities, and Agendas

1. The Commission shall annually adopt a work program which will be discussed with the City Council and Mayor throughout the year.
2. The Commission's work program should be established by evaluating:
 - a. Seattle Comprehensive Plan major updates and amendments;
 - b. the Mayor's policy initiatives;
 - c. City Council's work program;
 - d. City Department work programs;
 - e. Other agency work programs (King County, Puget Sound Regional Council, Sound Transit, etc.);
 - f. Commission initiatives; and
 - g. Other emerging issues.
3. All Commissioners shall attend an annual retreat where the past year's performance of the Commission shall be evaluated and the next 12-month work program developed.
4. Agendas should reflect the Commission's priorities and the amount of time allocated to each item. Action items will be distinguished from information items.

Article IX – Meetings

1. Commission meetings shall be held on a regular basis, with at least one meeting per month. The Chair may adjust the regular convening time of meetings.
2. 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 to consider personnel matters or any other matter exempt from the Open Meetings Act.

3. Commission meetings shall be conducted according to meeting rules, ethics, and customs established in the Commission's Protocol and Procedures Manual and the Seattle Planning Commission Ethics Management Plan.
4. The public may speak on issues which come before the Commission. The Chair shall designate the appropriate time for public testimony and establish time limits for each speaker.
5. Special meetings of the Commission may be held whenever and wherever the Chair and/or Executive Committee may determine or upon petition by a majority of the members. Commissioners shall be entitled to 24 hours notice of a special meeting.
6. A quorum is required to take action on a matter before the Commission. A quorum shall consist of a majority (more than half) of all current Commissioners.
7. The Commission shall act as one entity in making and announcing its decisions. No Commissioner other than the Chair shall speak or act for the Commission without prior authorization by the Chair or Executive Director.
8. Commissioners are not allowed to vote by proxy at Commission meetings.

Article X – Conflict of Interest

1. Commissioners shall comply with the rules for disclosure of interests and recusal as outlined for advisory boards in Seattle Municipal Code 4.16 and described in the Seattle Planning Commission Ethics Management Plan.
2. Commissioners must disclose any personal interest or affiliation that creates a conflict or may cause an appearance of conflict. Such disclosures shall be clearly noted for the record.
3. A personal interest is broadly defined to include any actual or potential benefits or advantages that a Commissioner, a spouse, family member or person living in their household might directly or indirectly obtain from an action taken by the Commission.
4. Commissioners shall recuse themselves from Commission business when a Commissioner has a financial or other personal interest, direct or indirect, personally or through a member of their immediate family, in the matter upon which the Commission is taking action.

Article XI – Commission and Commissioner Actions

1. Full Commission actions include formal Commission positions, reports, statements, and letters to City and other governmental officials (Mayor, Council, department directors, agency directors) and staff.
2. Final decisions will only be made at full Commission meetings.
3. Committee actions include commenting as a committee on Department or agency generated draft policies and plans, presenting proposals or preparing comments for full Commission action, and sponsoring Commission activities related to the Committee's focus.
4. Individual Commissioners may represent the full Commission (e.g. providing testimony; meetings with Council, Mayor, etc.) if authorized by the Chair or Executive Director.
5. Commissioners may speak as an individual, clearly specifying they are speaking as an individual, or as an individual Commissioner articulating their own views and concerns (e.g. "I am speaking as an individual, not representing the Planning Commission.")

Article XII – Records, Publications, and Reports

1. All decisions of the Commission shall be evidenced in writing.
2. Minutes of full Commission meetings shall be prepared. After approval by the Commission, these minutes shall be posted on the Commission's website as a public record.
3. Copies of specific Commission documents will be made available to the public upon written request, and upon payment of fees for copies if applicable.

Article XIII – Personnel Administration

1. City Human Resources Department rules and guidelines shall apply to all Commission staff.
2. The Commission shall appoint an Executive Director. The Executive Director shall be responsible for recommending the appointment of additional staff members, and for supervising such additional staff.
3. The Executive Director shall also recommend suspension, dismissal, or other discipline of a staff member when circumstances warrant such action.
4. The Chair shall annually gather input from the Commissioners and evaluate the Executive Director's performance.

Article XIV – Adoption and Amendment of Bylaws

1. The Commission shall adopt these bylaws for the conduct of its business. Copies of such bylaws shall be posted for the public.
2. These bylaws, as adopted by the Commission, may be revised or amended by a majority vote of all Commissioners currently in office, provided that copies of the proposed revision or amendment shall be made available to each Commissioner at least seven days prior to the meeting at which the proposed revision or amendment is to be acted upon. Announcement and discussion of the proposed change(s) shall occur at one meeting, and voting shall occur at the next meeting.
3. These bylaws supersede those adopted and amended between 1957 and 1996.