

# What is APA?

The American Planning Association (APA) elevates and unites a diverse planning profession as it helps communities, their leaders and residents anticipate and meet the needs of a changing world.

APA's Vision is to lead the way to equitable, thriving communities by creating unique insights, as well as innovative and practical approaches that enable the planning community to anticipate and successfully adapt to the needs of a rapidly changing world.

APA's 40,000+ members are planners, commissioners, public officials, educators, students, and engaged citizens who are committed to creating vital communities. Four in 10 APA members have obtained required education, professional experience and passed a rigorous exam to become certified by the American Institute of Certified Planners (AICP).

The Planning Officials Program provides fundamental onboarding and training materials for those who serve as appointed planning and zoning officials for their communities.

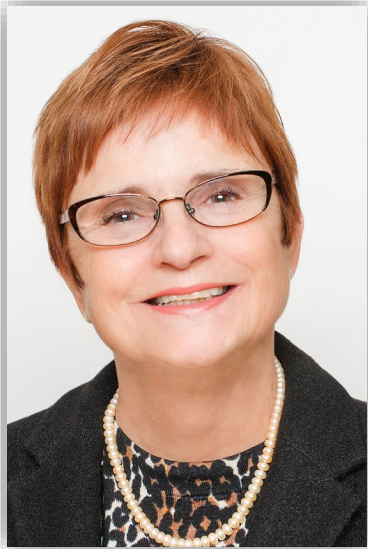
The program provides essential information, insights, and sound practices applicable to zoning entitlement for most every community. However, it is essential to know that each state has unique and specific requirements for planning and zoning.

Throughout the videos we use terms to describe these officials and their actions that differ from what is used in your state. Though the terms may differ, the lessons are universal.

There is no “one size fits all” training for planning officials, check local state codes or state enabling legislation for relevancy to your community.

If there are any questions about what is appropriate or legal in your community or state, please contact your local staff or municipal officials.

# Commissioner Roles & Responsibilities



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*Planning Official Development Officer for APA Texas*

*Member of APA Planning Officials Committee*

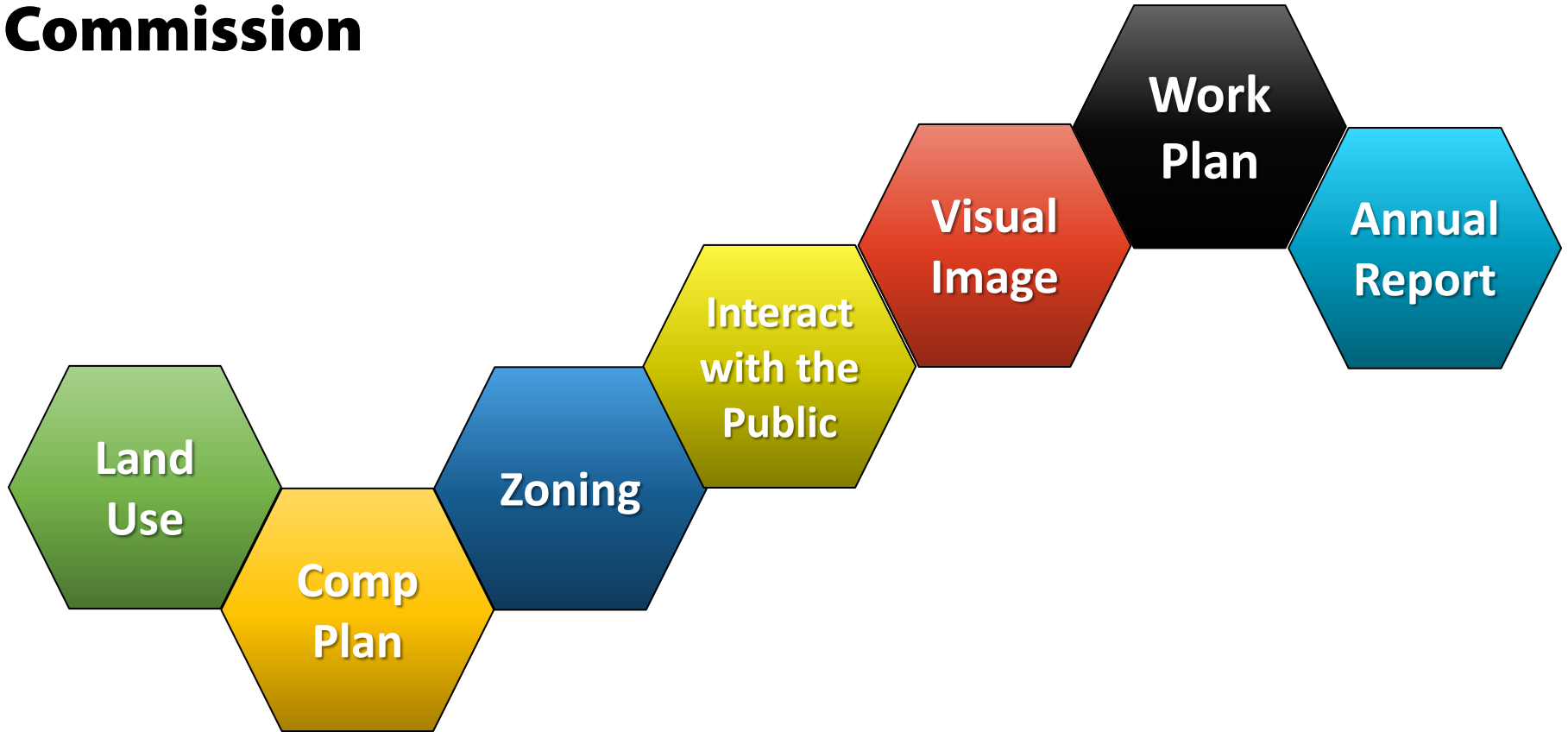


**American Planning Association**  
*Creating Great Communities for All*

*A group of citizens appointed by the legislative body that performs both required and discretionary functions in land use matters.*

**What's a Planning and Zoning Commission?**

# Responsibilities & Activities of the Planning Commission



# Orientation for the Commission

- Open Meetings Act
- Basic Elements of Planning
  - Comprehensive Plan
  - Zoning Ordinance
  - Subdivision Regulations
- Enabling Statutes for Planning/Zoning
- Duties Identified in Charter
- Code of Ordinances
- By-laws or Rules of Procedure



**Become familiar with your  
responsibilities & expectations both  
on and off the Commission**

# Traits of a Commissioner

- Visionary – Sees Big Picture
- Aware of Problems and Potential
- Impartial and Objective
- Community Interest First
- Comes Prepared
- Practical and Creative
- Consistent







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# **Importance of Commission Meetings**

# **Planning Commission Meetings/Hearings are public meetings expressly intended to serve the public interest:**

- **Open to Everybody**
- **Affected Parties Notified**
- **Public Notices**
  - **Newspaper**
  - **Online**
  - **City Hall**

# Preparing for the Meeting

# Be Prepared for the Meeting

- Read the materials
- Understand codes, ordinances & Comp Plan
- Visit site, unless not allowed
- Contact staff with questions (before the meeting)
- Play active part: Ask Questions!
- Be there on time
- Listen to everybody
- Consider relation to Comprehensive Plan



# Commissioners' Responsibilities

If you're contacted prior to a meeting:

- Suggest attending the hearing
- Recommend sending comments to staff
- Avoid contact that might invalidate determination
- Disclose any Ex Parte at the hearing
- Never discuss cases outside of the meeting



# **Conduct During the Meeting**

# Professional Duties

- Remain calm, model appropriate behavior
- Leave your personal bias at the door
- Be patient, courteous and respectful
- Use terms understandable to public
- Don't just repeat others' comments
- All comments on the record
- Do not text during the meeting
- Be consistent, fair, and impartial

*All of the above will help your Planning and Zoning Commission function properly while providing an important service to your community.*





# A Good Hearing

Meetings should be structured

- *Local Procedures*
- *Robert's Rules of Order*

The Chair of the Commission:

- *Controls meeting/Sets Tone*
- *Ensures all parties have input*
- *Focuses discussion on the topic*
- *Expedites action*
- *Votes*



# Hearing Procedures

- Follow local process or Robert's Rules for structure
- Avoid parliamentary procedure
- Mitigate impacts raised by public
- Avoid starting debates
- Obtain all information
- If necessary, continue the meeting

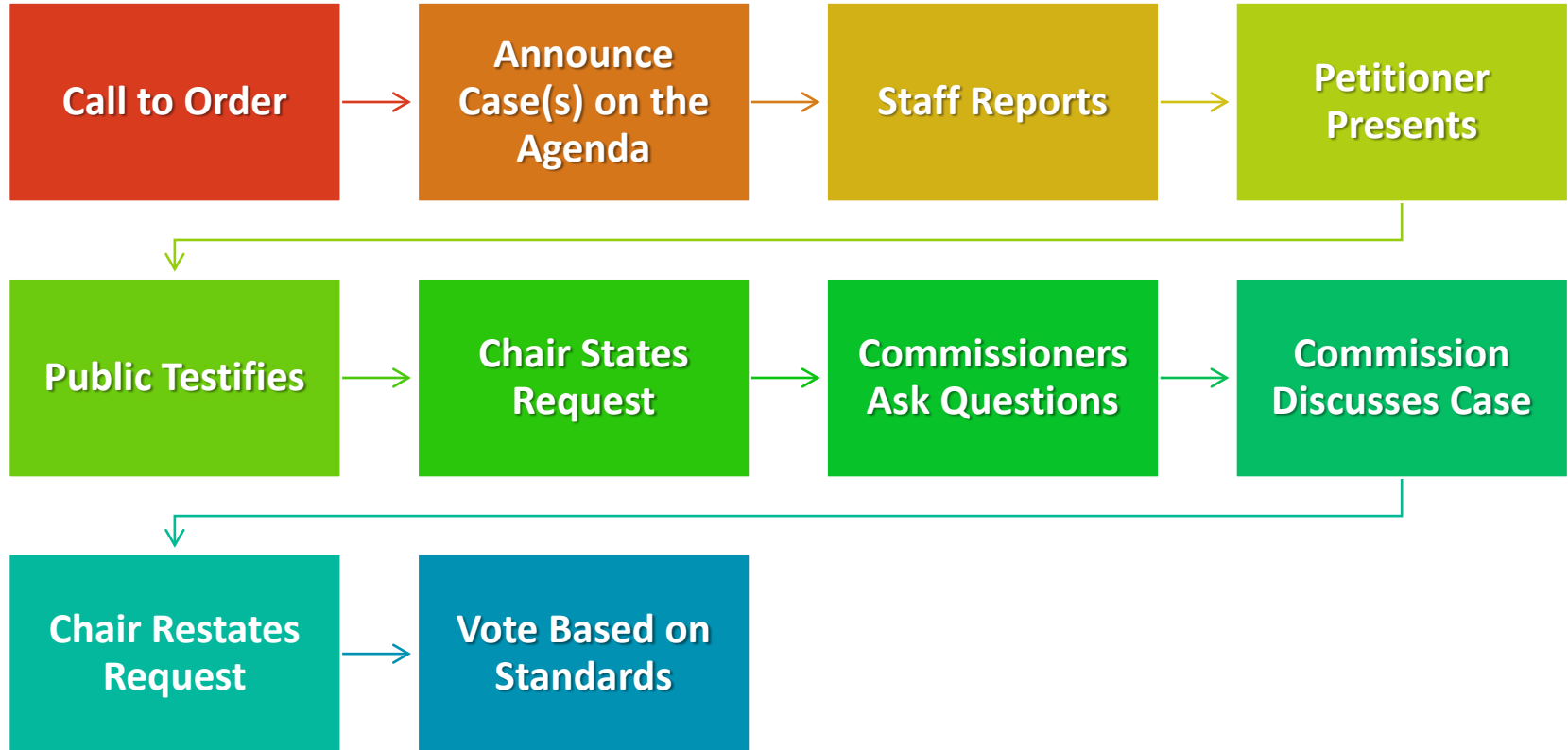


# Fair Hearing

- Everyone has opportunity to be heard
- Relevance weighed by standards of review
- All testimony considered when voting
- Number of people is not criteria for decision



# Meeting Procedure



# Vote Based on Standards

- Standards of review
- Staff recommendations
- Don't always have to agree
- Keep an open mind
- Audience may not represent all views
- Do not exceed authority granted





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