

## PLANNING MEMO

TO: Planning Commissioners  
Glenn Steckman, City Manager  
FROM: Erin Reinders  
RE: Planning Commission Training  
DATE: April 2, 2024

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It has been some time since we had commission training, and Planning Commissioners have recently joined the team. Training provides a great opportunity for us to learn and grow together.

We will be using a training video series to assist you in your role as Planning Commissioner, developed by the American Planning Association ([www.planning.org](http://www.planning.org)). To foster engagement and a collaborative learning space, we will view videos together, over the course of the next several meetings. Collectively, we will go over the video concepts and discuss effective practices for planning officials. I have grouped the video modules into sessions that total between 29 to 41 minutes of video time, not including transition and discussion.

This program provides fundamental on-boarding and training materials for those who serve as planning commissioners, such as yourselves. The program provides information, insights, and sound practices applicable to zoning entitlement for most every community. However, it is important to know that each state has unique and specific requirements for planning and zoning. There is no “one size fits all” training for planning officials, so it's also important to understand our local state codes or state enabling legislation for relevancy. To this end, I encourage you to review the Planning [Commission Handbook](#), produced by DCRA.

Additionally, you will hear references to local code of ordinances and zoning ordinances. I want to be sure the following information is easily accessible, so I have embedded links in this memo. Nome’s [Code of Ordinances](#), including the zoning code, can be found online. [Maps and other zoning information](#) is also found on the City’s website. The [Planning Commission](#) page on the City’s website provides access to Comprehensive Plan, Subdivision Regulations and other key planning documents that will be helpful in your roles. Several of these documents are also referenced in the following video sessions.

Session overview is as follows:

### Session 1 (39 min):

- **Essential Skills Training Topics - Roles & Responsibilities (22 Minutes)** Gain a deeper understanding of your role and responsibility as a planning official. Listen as our presenter describes the activities of the planning commission and expectations of planning officials.
- **Keys To Sound Actions Training Topics - Procedural Requirements (17 Minutes)** Hear from a seasoned lawyer and a planning professional as they present Open Meetings Act, Conflicts of Interest and Ex Parte Communications to provide you with information that can help you in your role.

**Session 2 (30 min):**

- **Essential Skills Training Topics - Managing the Meeting (30 Minutes)** Watch as seasoned veterans share best practices for managing commission public meetings and hearings. Learn tips to establish a welcoming, civil, and ethical process while allowing robust citizen engagement.

**Session 3 (41 min):**

- **Essential Skills Training Topics - Staff Reports (30 Minutes)** Learn how to use staff reports and understand the use of the information in these communications. Understand how they are prepared and what detailed and graphic information they contain.
- **Keys To Sound Actions Training Topics - Findings of Fact (11 Minutes)** Gain a deeper understanding of the importance of making findings of fact during a hearing process, including what they are, how they are used, and the reason you need to make sure your findings of fact align with the standards set forth in your state laws and in the zoning code.

**Session 4 (29 min):**

- **Essential Skills Training Topics - Comprehensive Plans (8 Minutes)** A comprehensive plan sets forth a vision, goals for a city's future, and provides the overall foundation for all land use regulation in the city. State law encourages all cities to prepare and implement a comprehensive municipal plan. Learn more about the development and use of comprehensive plans and why they are a valuable resource to planning officials.
- **Essential Skills Training Topics - Zoning/ Ordinances (10 Minutes)** Zoning ordinance is a formal categorization of land-use policies applicable to land within a municipality. The zoning ordinance establishes permitted land uses and distinguishes between different land use types. Learn what zoning ordinances are and understand their role in implementing the comprehensive plan as well as ensuring there is adequate space & resources throughout your community.
- **Keys To Sound Actions Training Topics -Equity in Planning (4 Minutes)** Learn the importance of using equity as a guiding principle throughout the planning process and as a community representative. Review APA's valuable resources and tools available to support planning officials.
- **Keys To Sound Actions Training Topics - Ethics in Decision-Making (7 Minutes)** Learn how APA's Ethical Principles in Planning can guide you in your service to the community.

**Session 5 (33 min):**

- **Keys To Sound Actions Training Topics - Legal Decision-Making (33 Minutes)** Legal, defensible decision making is central to planning official meetings. Listen as legal experts discuss findings of fact, making the record, and the legal context for planning.