



Appearance Commission Meeting Agenda Item Submittal

Item To Be Considered: **Appearance Commission Strategic Plan**

Board Meeting Date: **September 17, 2026**

Prepared By: **Larry Philpott – Commission Member**

Overview: Board review and discussion of the proposed framework for creation of the Appearance Commission Strategic Plan.

A Strategic Plan for an Appearance Commission serving under local government leadership (such as a Town or County Board of Commissioners) acts as a critical roadmap. Its purpose is to guide community beautification, protect regional aesthetic character, and align neighborhood design projects with broader town goals.

Because Appearance Commissions function strictly as advisory bodies without final permitting power, their strategic plans focus heavy energy on framework design, community partnerships, and standardized recommendations rather than regulatory enforcement.

Phase 1: Establish the Governance Foundation

Before determining aesthetic goals, the commission must define its operational boundary lines to stay legally compliant and productive.

- **Draft Structural By-Laws:** Establish clear codes of conduct, meeting cadences, voting procedures, and strict adherence to open meeting laws.
- **Define Inter-Board Relationships:** Formally document how the commission interacts with the primary Board of Commissioners, the Planning Board, and the Board of Adjustment
- **Clarify Advisory Boundaries:** Clearly establish that the commission provides non-binding design recommendations to developers and the town board, ensuring it doesn't cross over into building permit vetoes.

Phase 2: Design Standardized Visual Frameworks

Rather than critiquing projects on a purely subjective case-by-case basis, the commission should proactively outline community design expectations.

- **Signage and Lighting Standardization:** Author uniform aesthetic rules for downtown corridors, commercial strip zoning, and public pathways to prevent visual clutter.
- **High-Impact / High-Visibility (HI/HV) Rules:** Create specific design review guidelines for large-scale development projects, oceanfront/waterfront views, or properties touching main historic streets.
- **Indigenous and Ecological Integration:** Build localized plant lists and landscaping requirements that honor regional history, coastal elements, and environmentally sound irrigation practices.

Action: _____

Phase 3: Funding & Project Implementation

Beautification cannot rely entirely on general city funds. The strategic plan needs mechanisms to support and accelerate actual physical improvements.

- Façade and Corridor Grants: Partner with town economic developers to create community appearance grant programs that subsidize private-property renovations, tree planting, and building exterior enhancements.
- Public-Private Art Partnerships: Build relationships with local non-profits, youth commissions, and private corporations to organize murals, public sculptures, and community gardens.
- Community Beautification Campaigns: Organize ongoing town decorating programs, holiday storefront contests, and neighborhood cleanup days to cultivate pride.

Phase 4: Accountability, Feedback, and Engagement

A strategy is only useful if it evolves and stays transparent to the community it shapes.

- Community Needs Surveys: Periodically distribute community-wide surveys to track how residents feel about local visual quality, park access, and overall town character.
- Annual Progress Reporting: Mandate a comprehensive year-end presentation to the Board of Commissioners outlining completed projects, grant allocations, and milestone targets.

To help customize this strategic framework for your specific community:

- What is the specific town, city, or county jurisdiction this is being designed for?
- Are there immediate visual issues you are looking to address (e.g., historical preservation, commercial urban sprawl, coastal storm damage)?
- What is the current annual budget or funding limit available to the commission?

Background Attachment(s): Resource Links

Recommended Action: Review and discuss next steps.