



**CITY OF TUMWATER PLANNING COMMISSION
TRAINING OPPORTUNITY MEMORANDUM
FEBRUARY 22, 2022**

Introduction

In January and February 2020, the Planning Commission started discussion of a training program scope to help orient new Planning Commissioners as well as provide continuing education for current Commissioners. A follow up was scheduled for early 2021, but staff changes postponed that discussion.

At their February 8, 2022 meeting, the Planning Commission reviewed an initial training proposal and asked for additional information to be provided.

The memorandum outlines the items that could make up a Planning Commission training program for new Commissioners and a continuing education program for current Commissioners.

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Training Topics

While there would be a different emphasis for training new Commissioners compared to continuing training for current Commissioners, it is likely that the general topics of the training would remain the same:

1. Legal basis for planning and the Planning Commission – state and local
2. Organization of the Planning Commission and its relationship to the City government
3. Meeting management – Robert’s Rules and other materials
4. Open Public Meetings Act (OPMA) and records training – required for new Commissioners and then every four years as continuing education
5. The City’s long range planning work program
6. Specific long range planning topics such as Comprehensive Plans, housing, or other topics that are current

Trainings in the topics above could include both internal and external training opportunities.

Planning Commissioner Training in Other Cities

At the request of the Planning Commission at their February 8, 2022 discussion, staff reached out to the Cities of Lacey and Olympia to find out what they currently do for Planning Commissioner training.

The City of Lacey has a new Commissioner training that consists of the following:

1. Introduction and discussion by staff with the new member that usually lasts about an hour to go over Planning Commission roles and current projects
2. New Commissioners are provided with the Lacey’s Planning Commission Policies and Procedures manual, which consists primarily of the Planning Commission Rules of Procedure (see Attachment B) and some other informational items
3. OPMA training

They do not have any formal training programs for existing members but do try to hold continuing education meetings when the schedule allows.

The City of Olympia has a new Commissioner training that consists of some onboarding materials in addition to the required OPMA training.

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Suggested New Planning Commissioner Training Focus

While there would be different emphasizes for training new Commissioners versus continuing training for current Commissioners, it is likely that the general training topics would remain the same.

1. Legal basis for planning and the role of the Planning Commission
2. Organization of the Planning Commission and its relationship to the City government
3. Open Public Meetings Act (OPMA) and Records training
4. Meeting management
5. Specific long range planning topics

Building on the list above and in preparation for discussion on February 22, 2022, staff would like the Planning Commission to think about what a new Planning Commissioner needs to know in order to work on the Commission.

As a start, staff suggests that a new Commissioner would need to be provided with the following:

1. Information on the legal basis for planning and the role of the Planning Commission, which would include:
 - a. Washington State Law (See Appendix B)
 - b. Tumwater Municipal Code (See Appendix A)
 - c. Open Government Training
 - d. Other legal training as identified
2. Organization of the Planning Commission and its relationship to the City government, which would include:
 - a. Planning Commission Rules of Procedure
3. Meeting management
 - a. Robert's Rules and other materials that discuss what makes productive meetings
4. Open Public Meetings Act (OPMA) and Records training
 - a. Required for new Commissioners
5. Support for Commissioners
 - a. How much time to expect to spend on Planning Commission meetings and preparation
 - b. Continuing education opportunities
 - c. List of materials/websites for information (Appendix C and D)

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- d. City of Tumwater and Planning Terms Glossary (Attachment C)
- e. Schedule for regular updates of Plans and code, color coded over next ten years
- f. Relationships with other organizations – Department of Commerce, Municipal Research Service Center (MRSC), Regional Housing Council (RHC), Thurston Regional Planning Council (TRPC), and others
- g. How to be better ambassadors for the City by knowing who to ask and where to look for more information:
 - i. Who to contact if you have questions, including:
 - 1. City Staff (Appendix G)
 - 2. Planning Commission chair and vice chair
 - ii. Structure of the City website
 - iii. How to access City Records
 - iv. City social media outlets
 - v. Frequently Asked Questions (FAQs) for Planning Commissioners, including:
 - 1. Meeting agenda structure (Appendix I)
- 6. The City's Long Range Planning Work Program (Appendix H)
- 7. Specific long range planning topics (Appendix C), addressing:
 - a. Growth Management
 - b. The Comprehensive Plan and subarea plans and policies
 - c. Development regulations, including:
 - i. Tumwater Municipal
 - ii. Tumwater Development Guidelines
 - iii. Citywide Design Standards
 - d. Housing and other topics that are of current interest

Suggested Planning Commissioner Continuing Education Focus

While there would be different emphasizes for training new Commissioners versus continuing training for current Commissioners, it is likely that the general training topics would remain the same.

- 1. Legal basis for planning and the role of the Planning Commission, which would include:

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- a. Washington State Law (See Appendix B)
 - b. Tumwater Municipal Code (See Appendix A)
 - c. Planning Commission Rules of Procedure
 - d. Open Government Training
 - e. Other legal training as identified
2. Organization of the Planning Commission and its relationship to the City government
 3. Meeting management – Robert’s Rules and other materials
 4. Open Public Meetings Act (OPMA) and Records training (required for new Commissioners and then every four years as continuing education)
 5. The City’s Long Range Planning Work Program, including discussions about:
 - a. What should be on upcoming work programs
 - i. Annual Joint City Council/Planning Commission meetings to set work programs
 - ii. Reflections on how the previous work program: What went well? What did not? What can be learned and applied to the next year’s work?
 - iii. Preparations for the new work program:
 1. What will help the Commissioners to prepare to take on the issues, manage the magnitude of information, have healthy deliberations, and achieve well thought out decisions?
 2. Confirming the amount of time each Commissioner spends preparing for the meetings.
 6. Specific long range planning topics such as Comprehensive Plans, housing, or other topics that are current
 7. Information on the development review process
 8. Potential annual individual meetings with Commissioners and staff to determine what is working and what is not

Trainings in the topics above could include both internal and external training opportunities:

9. Opportunities of internal training and coordination could include:
 - a. Annual meetings with the City Council to coordinate long range work programs and address specific long range topics

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- b. Meetings with other City boards or commissions to coordinate specific long range topics
 - c. Field trips to support review of specific long range topics
 - d. Retreats to discuss special Planning Commission topics
 - e. Annual individual Planning Commission discussions with staff
10. Opportunities for outside training could include:
- a. Washington State Department of Commerce Short Course for Planners
 - b. American Planning Association (APA) – Washington Chapter and South Sound and Planning Association of Washington (PAW) annual conferences and trainings
 - c. Municipal Research and Service Center (MRSC) trainings
 - d. Other trainings on special topics
11. Receiving regular updates on City activities from City monthly newsletters, Tumwater on Tap
12. Some other information that may be useful to consider:
- a. What information do the Commissioners find is key in coming to decisions for items on the work program?
 - b. How do the Commissioners access information
 - c. What framework is helpful to the Commissioners in understanding the issues on the work program?
 - d. What information would the Commissioners like to see in an executive summary?
 - e. What is policy and what is technical?
 - f. How do the Commissioners know when they have received sufficient and balanced information needed to make decisions?

Recognition of Work by the Planning Commission

Related to the development of a training program for the Planning Commission is developing ways to recognize the work done by the volunteers who make up the Planning Commission. It is suggested that this be a topic for a discussion as part of this process.

Staff Contacts

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Appendix A – TMC 2.56 *Planning Commission***Chapter 2.56****PLANNING COMMISSION**

Sections:

2.56.010 Created – Composition – Terms of office.

2.56.020 Vacancies.

2.56.030 Powers – Subject to state statute.

2.56.040 Quorum.

2.56.010 Created – Composition – Terms of office.

There is hereby created, in accordance with Chapter 35.63 RCW, a planning commission for the city, which will consist of nine members to be appointed by the mayor, with the consent of the majority of the city council, from citizens of recognized fitness for such position. Members must be residents of the city except at any given time one member may qualify for membership by residing in the city's urban growth area as an alternative to actual residency. The terms of office for the members appointed to such commission shall be designated from one to four years, in such a manner as to provide that the fewest possible terms will expire in any one year. Of the two positions that expire on November 1, 2012, the new term of office for one shall be a three-year term, and one shall be a two-year term. Thereafter, the term of office for each appointive member shall be four years.

(Ord. O2016-001, Amended, 02/02/2016; Ord. O2012-001, Amended, 05/15/2012; Ord. O2006-004, Amended, 02/07/2006; Ord. 1383, Amended, 05/18/1993; Ord. 1303, Amended, 08/20/1991; Ord. 992, Added, 07/01/1984)

2.56.020 Vacancies.

Vacancies occurring other than through the expiration of terms shall be filled for the unexpired term. Members may be removed, after public hearing by the appointing official, with the approval of the city council, for inefficiency, neglect of duty, or malfeasance in office. The members shall be selected without respect to political affiliations and they shall serve without compensation.

(Ord. 992, Added, 07/01/1984)

2.56.030 Powers – Subject to state statute.

The planning commission shall have the powers and shall conduct its business and shall be subject to the provisions and in accordance with the provisions set forth in Chapter 35.63 RCW as such chapter now exists or as it may be hereafter amended.

(Ord. 992, Added, 07/01/1984)

2.56.040 Quorum.

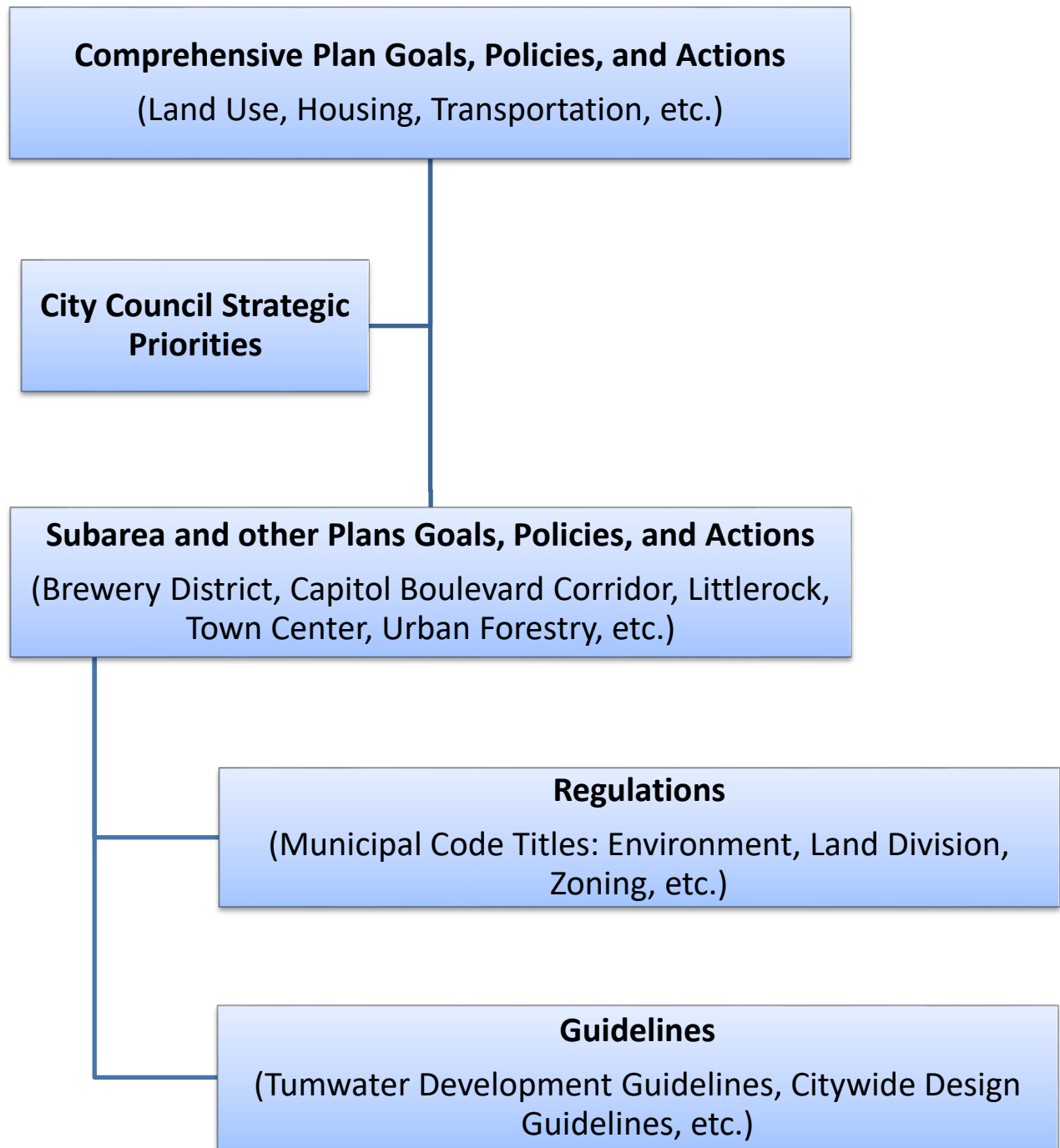
A simple majority of the currently appointed membership of the planning commission shall constitute a quorum for the transaction of business.

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(Ord. O99-010, Added, 04/20/1999)

Appendix B – RCW 35.63.090 Restrictions—Purposes of

All regulations shall be worked out as parts of a comprehensive plan which each commission shall prepare for the physical and other generally advantageous development of the municipality and shall be designed, among other things, to encourage the most appropriate use of land throughout the municipality; to lessen traffic congestion and accidents; to secure safety from fire; to provide adequate light and air; to prevent overcrowding of land; to avoid undue concentration of population; to promote a coordinated development of the unbuilt areas; to encourage the formation of neighborhood or community units; to secure an appropriate allotment of land area in new developments for all the requirements of community life; to conserve and restore natural beauty and other natural resources; to encourage and protect access to direct sunlight for solar energy systems; and to facilitate the adequate provision of transportation, water, sewerage and other public uses and requirements, including protection of the quality and quantity of groundwater used for public water supplies. Each plan shall include a review of drainage, flooding, and stormwater runoff in the area and nearby jurisdictions and provide guidance for corrective actions to mitigate or cleanse those discharges that pollute Puget Sound or waters entering Puget Sound.

Appendix C – Basis for Planning Commission Decision Making

Appendix D – Sources of Information

Good sources of information related to the Commission's work:

- City of Tumwater website – <http://www.ci.tumwater.wa.us/> contains links to:
 - Tumwater Municipal Code (TMC) ([Tumwater Municipal Code \(codepublishing.com\)](http://www.ci.tumwater.wa.us/codepublishing.com)) The Planning Commission typically focuses on regulations in TMC Titles 16 – *Environment*, 17 – *Land Division*, and 18 – *Zoning*, although other Titles may be reviewed depending on the topic.
 - Tumwater Development Guide ([Development Guide | City of Tumwater, WA](#)), which are the City's development engineering standards for constructing road and utilities.
 - Citywide Design Guidelines ([Citywide Design Guidelines | City of Tumwater, WA](#))
 - Planning Commission meeting minutes and agendas ([Planning Commission | City of Tumwater, WA](#))
 - Long-range planning documents: <http://www.ci.tumwater.wa.us/departments/community-development/long-range-planning>, such as the Comprehensive Plan, Shoreline Master Program, Subarea Plans and other citywide plans
 - City Record Center contains the City's archive of historical records, including meeting agendas, minutes, hearing examiner decisions, and copies of past ordinances and resolutions: <https://weblink.ci.tumwater.wa.us/public/Welcome.aspx?cr=1&cc=1>
- MRSC – <http://mrsc.org/Home.aspx> contains a very good range of information on what a City in the state of Washington has to address, including planning-specific topics such as growth management, zoning, comprehensive planning, housing, development, environmental protection, and the legal basis for planning. It is also a very good source for finding out what other jurisdictions in the state are doing to address planning issues and it includes links to their websites, Comprehensive Plans, and Municipal Codes.
- MRSC Planning Commission Page – <http://mrsc.org/getdoc/8ea977c9-fbd2-43a0-9ae1-fbb4d675a5f4/Planning-Commission.aspx> provides information related to Planning Commission resources.
- MRSC Legal Resources (RCW, WAC, Court Decisions) – <http://mrsc.org/Home/Research-Tools/Washington-State-Legal-Resources.aspx> provides links to state regulations and court decisions.
- Thurston County GeoData Center – <http://www.geodata.org/> is a good place to go for general map data and links to assessor property data, etc.

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- Department of Commerce Growth Management Related Documents and Resources – <http://www.commerce.wa.gov/serving-communities/growth-management/guidebooks-and-resources/> has links to a number of useful guides including *A Short Course on Local Planning Resource Guide*. The *Short Course* includes a “New to the Planning Commission: Frequently Asked Questions” section that is very helpful, but the entire Guide is a good way to understand the basics of planning in the state. The Department of Commerce Growth Management Services division holds Short Courses on Local Planning that are useful and the Planning Manager will let the Commissioners know when those are coming up.
- Department of Commerce Short Course on Local Planning – <https://www.commerce.wa.gov/serving-communities/growth-management/short-course/>

Appendix E – Materials to Consider as Part of Training Packet

As a new Planning Commissioner training package the developed, the following items should be considered:

Amended Planning Commission Rules of Procedure: The Planning Commission reviewed and updated its Rules of Procedure in 2020. The Rules of Procedure address meetings, election and duties of officers, absences, vacancies, the order of items in meetings, and meeting minutes.

Land Use Planning and the Art of Planning Commission Maintenance: Joe Tovar is a long-time planner in the state who has served in many roles locally and at the state level in Washington. His audience for his article is staff supporting a Planning Commission, but it is a good, short reminder of what makes a good Planning Commission work.

Jurassic Parliament – Essential Guidelines for Planning Commissions: Ann Macfarlane with the Jurassic Parliament in Seattle (www.jurassicparliament.com) may be a good resource for the Planning Commission. She prepared the guidelines and leads the *Great Planning Commission Meetings Webinar* that may useful for the Commission to attend the next time around. Ann was with the APA – Washington Chapter office and she is a good person to walk the Planning Commission through running meetings effectively.

Planning Short Course – Legal and Practical Objectives of Planning from A Short Course on Local Planning Resource Guide: The Department of Commerce has been running their Planning Short Course for more than twenty and it is an excellent source of information for how the work of Planning Commission fits into the state's planning processes. The first chapter of the Planning Short Course is a good summary of the legal basis for planning in the state.

Planning Short Course – New Planning Commissioner FAQs from A Short Course on Local Planning, Version 5.3 (2017), ix – xix: The introduction to the Planning Short Course includes a top ten list of things a new Planning Commissioner should know that could be a good start to a new Planning Commissioner training program.

MRSC - Parliamentary Procedure - A Brief Guide to Robert's Rules: A brief overview of important aspects of Robert's Rules of Order as applied to parliamentary procedure for local governments in Washington State.

New Planning Commissioner Orientation Presentation: A presentation used to orient new Planning Commissioner members. After Planning Commission discussions, staff will develop a version that can be used for new Commissioners.

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Appendix F – City Government Roles

- City Council – Policy makers for the City
- Planning Commission – Research and fact-finding advisors to the City Council
- Planning Commission Chair – Facilitator
- Planning Commission Vice Chair – Fills in for Chair
- Long Range Planning Manager/Staff – Policy administrators of the plans and codes adopted by the City Council
- Individual Commissioners – Listen to neighbors and the public, discuss issues, make recommendations to the City Council

Appendix G – City Staff Support

Planning Department staff, Kerri Kinnaird and Kelly Wallace, send out meeting packets prepared by Planning Division staff to the Commissioners the week prior to the next Planning Commission meeting, typically on the prior Wednesday or Thursday. The packet will include an agenda and the materials discussed at the next meeting.

The Planning Manager, Brad Medrud, is the primary staff contact for the Planning Commission, so if a Planning Commissioner has any questions regarding procedures or the materials being discussed, contact him first. David Ginther is a senior long range planner who also works in preparing and presenting agenda items to the Commission. Mike Matlock is the Community Development Director and he manages an eleven member staff made up of the Permitting Division, which reviews current planning applications for development, the Building Division, which reviews building plans for development, and the Planning Division.

Planning Division staff takes phone calls, e-mails, letters, but prefer e-mails, because it is easier to track discussions and archive. Short in person or Zoom meetings can be scheduled as needed as well.

Planning Commissioners are welcome to ask questions directly of other City staff that may be presenting materials, but are asked to copy the Planning Manager and Planning Commission Chair on any e-mails, so they can track of questions or requests.

Appendix H – Work Program and Agendas

Based on the City Council's annual long-range planning work program, which is approved in January every year, Planning Division staff works with the Planning Commission chair to prepare the Commission's agendas for the upcoming meetings. The Planning Manager typically tries to schedule agendas three months in advance, but it is common to have the Planning Commission's agendas change as the year goes on, depending on direction from the Mayor and City Council or outside events.

Appendix I – Meeting Agenda Terms

Quick note on terms used in the Planning Commission agendas:

- “Discussion” – Is used for items that will not require legislative action at some point by the Planning Commission. This could include an update on what was learned at a recent conference or a presentation by Intercity Transit staff, for example.
- “Briefing” – Is typically used for introducing items that will require legislative or quasi-judicial action at some point by the Planning Commission.
- “Worksession” – Typically used for a more in depth discussion of items between staff and the Planning Commission that will require legislative action at some point by the Planning Commission. Normally, a worksession occurs at the meeting after the first briefing is complete, so Commissioners have the time to digest the briefing, review the materials, and put together their questions. For in person worksessions, the Commissioners will sit around regular tables with staff to go over any questions or comments that the Commissioners may have. Issues that are more complicated may need more than one worksession, such as annual Comprehensive Plan amendments. Because the worksessions are meant to be for informal discussion, there is usually is a limited opportunity for public comment.
- “Hearing” – A formal legislative or quasi-judicial action where the Planning Commission will follow a set procedure to hear staff make a presentation, receive public comment, discuss the matter, and make a formal recommendation on the action that will go to the City Council for consideration.

Appendix J – “Top 10 Ways for a Planning Commissioner to Get in Trouble”

City staff put together an initial “Top 10 Ways for a Planning Commissioner to Get in Trouble” that can be modified further with input from the Planning Commission:

1. Get involved in the permit review process
2. Talk with rezone/plan amendment applicants outside of the public process
3. Miss too many meetings
4. Don't be prepared for meetings
5. Take gifts
6. Not disclose a conflict of interest
7. Only hear the loudest voice
8. Make it political
9. Break your relationship with your Commissioners
10. Break your relationship with staff