

# Planning Commission Member Reference Outline

The El Dorado County Planning Commission is a Board of Supervisors appointed hearing body consisting of one appointed Commissioner for each corresponding Board of Supervisor District responsible for reviewing matters related to planning and development and is advisory to the Board of Supervisors on land use planning.

## Roles and Responsibilities of Members

1. Members are encouraged to take an active role in making progress towards objectives such as, acting as an advisory board to the governing Board of Supervisors, reviewing development applications within capacity against County policies, codes, strategic plan goals, and functions as the decision making body for minor applications within capacity of County policies and codes.
2. Members are responsible for attending meetings to ensure a quorum and facilitate the business of the Commission. Failure to regularly attend meetings may result in removal of the member by the Board.
3. It is the responsibility of members to provide advance notice of their absence from a meeting to the executive director, liaison, or staff.
4. Members are responsible for reviewing meeting materials in advance of a meeting. (In accordance with Brown Act regulations, documents are released to Commissioners and the public simultaneously and agendas are to be posted no less than 72 hours prior to a meeting).
5. It is the desire of the Planning Commission to have all documents, with the exception of public comment, attached to Legistar no less than 48 hours prior to the noticed hearing. If documents are posted after 48 hours the Planning Commission requests a direct email notification to apprise them of the late attachment(s).
6. Members are expected to comply with the [Ralph M. Brown Act \(Brown Act\)](#) and [Rosenberg's Rules of Order](#).
7. Members should have knowledge of the [County's Strategic Plan](#) and priorities of the Board of Supervisors.
8. Members are expected to comply with the Bylaws and other applicable governing documents or Board direction relating to the Planning Commission. ([Planning Commission Bylaws](#) & [Member Reference Guide](#)).

## Ethics

The residents and businesses of the County of El Dorado are entitled to have fair, ethical, and accountable local government, which includes appointed committees and commissions. Such a government requires that public officials and appointed committees and commissions adhere to the following:

- Comply with both the letter and spirit of the laws and policies affecting operations of the government;
- Be independent, impartial and fair in their judgment and actions;
- Prioritize the public good when fulfilling duties as a public servant and avoid any appearance that title or position is used for personal gain; and
- Conduct public deliberations and processes openly, unless legally confidential, in an atmosphere of respect and civility.

## Relationship with County Departments, Staff and the Public

The Planning and Building Department Director (ex-officio Executive Secretary to the Commission) and planning staff support the operation and function of the Planning Commission including preparation of agendas, keeping of minutes, delivery of correspondence, reports and other matters on behalf of the Commission. County staff is not supervised or directed by the Commission and staff works directly under the direction of their Department Director who ultimately has final say on all staff priorities. However, staff is expected to foster cooperative working relationships with the Commission.

- No authority is given to individual members of the Commission to direct or assign tasks to any executive director, liaison, or staff member.
- County departments may be a resource to answer questions, clarify County policy, and ensure applicable information related to the County is made available to the public as well as the Commission.
- Planning staff advises the commission on local agency plans, ordinances, and policies. In addition, they provide background information and research, prepare plans and reports, make recommendations, and answer technical questions on development proposals under the Commission's consideration.
- Commissioners, staff, applicants and their representatives, and the general public shall always be treated in a respectful manner.

## Who Does What in the Planning Project Review Process?

- **County Staff**

- Identifies relevant local, state, and federal regulations for project applications.
- Works with applicants to make sure the project complies with applicable regulations and Board Policies including the Board adopted Strategic Plan.
- Works with other departments, divisions, and affected agencies to incorporate technical recommendations and conditions into a project.
- Ensures the application is processed in a timely fashion and that all applicable procedures/policies are being complied with.
- Prepares a professional analysis and recommendation.
- Ex-officio Executive Secretary of the Commission (Planning and Building Department Director) and planning staff support the operation and function of the Planning Commission including preparation of agendas, keeping of minutes, delivery of correspondence, reports and other matters on behalf of the Commission.
- Monitors post hearing project implementation and conditions of approval and mitigation measure compliance.
- Staff serves the Commission by preparing staff reports. Staff works directly under the direction of their Department Director.
- Processes, procedures and ministerial processes are staff's responsibilities.
- Staff will work with Commission members to answer questions, clarify County policies, and ensure applicable information related to the County is made available.

- **Planning Commissioner**

- Balances staff analysis and recommendations, including County policies, codes, strategic plan goals, and community input.
- Renders an independent decision based on findings of fact when acting in a quasi-judicial capacity (applying policies and law to specific projects). Commissioners should be able to support decisions based on objective facts, even if the decision is not consistent with his or her personal opinion.
- Makes recommendations to the governing body for certain projects including, but not limited to, rezones, general plan amendments, zoning ordinance amendments.
- Evaluates general land use and environmental review aspects of projects and leaves more technical issues for staff review and implementation.
- It is within the Planning Commission's authority to request information or research from County staff, however, the final decision on how much staff resources to devote to a request will be made by the Department Director.
- Commissioners should trust staff to implement their decisions as provided by the Commissions' direction, recommendations, and approvals.

- **Board of Supervisors – Governing Body**

- Each Elected Supervisor individually appoints one member of the Planning Commission pursuant to County Code section 2.20.600 and, with a majority vote of the Board of Supervisors, may remove a member of the Planning Commission pursuant to County Code section 2.20.630.
- Approves the Bylaws of the Planning Commission pursuant to County Code section 2.20.650.
- Balances staff analysis, Planning Commission decisions and recommendations, including County policies, codes, strategic plan goals, and community input in consideration of final project actions.
- Develops, directs and approves County ordinances, policies and procedures.
- Directs communications to the community and press on behalf of the County, often accomplished through the Chief Administrative Officer and the Director of Communications & Outreach.
- Meet with new Planning Commissioners to ensure they are provided with orientation documents.

## County Rules, Regulations & Policy Resources

- [General Plan](#)
- [Title 130 – Zoning Ordinance](#)
- [Title 120 – Subdivisions](#) [El Dorado County Code of Ordinances]
- [Planning & Zoning Law](#) [California Government Code, Title 7. Planning and Land Use, Division 1. Planning and Zoning 65000 – 66301]
- [Subdivision Map Act](#) [California Government Code, Title 7. Planning and Land Use, Division 2. Subdivisions 66410-66499.38]
- [2020 CEQA Statute & Guidelines](#)
- [Ralph M. Brown Act \(Brown Act\)](#)
- [County’s Strategic Plan](#)
- [Planning Commission Bylaws](#)
- [Rosenberg’s Rules of Order](#)
- [County Code Chapter 2.20 – County Boards, Committees, and Commissions](#)

## Additional Resources

- [League of California Cities – Planning Commissioner’s Handbook: Section 1, The Planning Commissioner’s Role](#)
- [Institute for Local Government – Understanding the Basics of Land Use and Planning: Guide to Local Planning](#)
- [Institute for Local Government – Attributes of Exceptional Boards](#)