

## **Citizen's Guide to the Plan and Zoning Commission**

### **What is the Plan and Zoning Commission?**

The Plan and Zoning Commission is a seven (7) member body of citizens appointed by the Mayor and confirmed by the City Council, whose main task is to conduct thorough reviews of development proposals to ensure that the development proposals are consistent with the community's established land use patterns and development standards. The Commission bases its reviews on the goals and policies of the City, as outlined in the Comprehensive Plan and Zoning Ordinance. Upon completion of its review, the Commission makes a recommendation for approval, conditional approval or denial of the development proposal to the City Council, who has final decision-making authority.

### **What types of projects are reviewed by the Plan and Zoning Commission?**

In general, the Commission reviews land use changes, zoning changes, proposed new development projects, and significant changes or additions to existing projects or developments. Such projects include site plans, grading plans, subdivision plats, comprehensive plan amendments, rezoning requests, and master plans for development proposals.

### **How is the project review process conducted?**

An application which includes all of the necessary drawings and documents as outlined in the application submittal requirements is submitted to the City Administrator. The application is reviewed for completeness; if complete it starts the review process. It is then assigned and the project is tentatively placed on a Commission and Council agenda. Copies of the application are distributed to various City departments and other applicable outside agencies for their review and comments. The comments are summarized by the City Administrator in a letter back to the applicant and any major problems are worked out. Additionally, the planner prepares a staff report which summarizes the proposed project, discusses any major problems or issues, actions taking to resolve them, and recommends approval, conditional approval or denial of the project based upon consistency with the Comprehensive Plan, all relevant City Codes, requirements, established City policies and standard practices. The project is then reviewed at a Plan and Zoning Commission meeting and a recommendation to Council is made by the Commission.

### **How are Plan and Zoning Commission meetings conducted?**

The Chairperson of the Commission conducts the meeting following a pre-approved agenda. First, the applicant is asked to explain the proposed project and identify any conditions of approval with which they disagree. Second, the City Administrator is asked to discuss the project explaining any issues or conditions and general to respond to questions from the Commission. Third, the Commission will listen to comments from the general public regarding the proposed project. Upon hearing all comments applicable to the proposed project, the Commission will discuss the project, ask questions of the applicant and/or staff, and vote on a recommendation to the City Council. The Commission's options are: recommend approval, recommend conditional approval, recommend denial. In some circumstances the Commission continues its review to a subsequent meeting.

### **What happens after the Plan and Zoning Commission makes its decision?**

The Commission does not have the authority to approve or deny a project. They are a recommending body only and therefore recommend approval, conditional approval or denial to the City Council who has the final authority to approve or deny a project proposal. An applicant can proceed to Council with a recommendation of denial from the Plan and Zoning Commission; however, the City Council takes into consideration the Plan and Zoning Commission's recommendation when making their decision and may concur, modify or reject the Plan and Zoning Commission's recommendations. The City Council has the final authority to act on these applications.

### **When and where does the Plan and Zoning Commission conduct meetings?**

Unless otherwise posted, the Commission meets the last Wednesday of the month at 4:30 p.m., in the Council Chambers, Windsor Heights City Hall, 1133 66<sup>th</sup> Street. At the start of each year, the Commission adopts a schedule of meeting times and dates for the upcoming year. In rare instances, a meeting date may be changed to avoid conflict with some other activity, holiday, special event, etc., or a special meeting is scheduled; therefore, you are advised to verify the time and date. The agenda for the upcoming meeting is typically available on the website prior to the next meeting date and also posted at City Hall, Bankers Trust and Hy-Vee.

**How are the Commissioners selected to serve on the Plan and Zoning Commission?**

The Commissioners are appointed by the Mayor of Windsor Heights and confirmed by the City Council to serve a five (5) year term. Terms begin on January of each year. The terms for the Commissioners are staggered to ensure there are always experienced members serving on the Commission. Residents of Windsor Heights interested in becoming a member of the Plan and Zoning Commission may contact the City Administrator at (515) 279-3662 to request an application to be considered by the Mayor for appointment.

**How do I obtain additional information regarding the Plan and Zoning Commission?**

For more information please contact the City Administrator at (515) 279-3662, or visit our office located at City Hall building at 1133 66<sup>th</sup> Street. Business hours are from 7:30 a.m. to 5:00 p.m., Monday through Friday. Additional information is also available on the City's website at [www.windsorheights.org](http://www.windsorheights.org)