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PLANNING COMMISSIONER'S GUIDEBOOK

City of St. Johns

The Fundamentals of Being a Planning Commissioner

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Purpose

Purpose of the Planning Commission

The purpose of the Planning Commission is to prepare and adopt physical plans for the City and review development proposals, both private and public as set forth in the Michigan Zoning Act, MCL 125.3801 et seq. The Planning Commission also acts in an advisory capacity for matters referred by the City Commission. The Planning Commission reviews the preliminary Capital Improvement Plan in addition to making and adopting a Master Plan.

Primary City Documents

City of St. Johns Charter

The City Charter defines the organizational powers, rules, and procedures of the city government.

Advantages of a City Charter:

- It secures Home Rule for St. Johns. It establishes a simple, direct and businesslike form of government.
- It creates a single-headed administrative establishment and this administrative unity makes for harmony between departments, since all are subject to a common head.
- It ensures expertise in administration at the point where it is most valuable, namely, at the head.
- Regular municipal elections will be held every two years.
- It makes elective officers responsive to public opinion by means of the initiative and referendum. It furnishes through the recall a simple method of removing inefficient or corrupt officials.
- It permits public work to be done by direct labor as well as by contract.
- It centralizes purchasing, which will effect greater saving in the purchase of supplies.
- It recognizes the people as the sole sources of governmental power and imposes upon each member of the community the duty and responsibility of actively interesting himself in the affairs of the city.

City Charter Link: https://cityofstjohnsmi.com/egov/documents/1589391981_32768.pdf

City of St. Johns Master Plan

The Master Plan is a policy framework for decisions that affect the physical, social and economic environment of the City. The Master Plan represents goals and strategies to guide the City over the next 20 years and beyond. The Plan provides vision, direction and a defined achievable future for the City by establishing specific goals and strategies for land use; transportation; community facilities; and implementation. This document must be reviewed every 5 years to ensure that it remains up to date and prevalent.

The Master Plan is to be used by City staff to evaluate and make recommendations to the Planning Commission and City Commission on regulatory and policy changes, zoning decisions and budgeting directives. The Planning Commission and City Commission use the Master Plan to make decisions regarding proposals that are presented before them. The Plan is used by

citizens and neighborhood groups to understand the City's long-range plans and proposals for different geographical areas and to encourage plan implementation. The Plan provides a basis for the City's development regulations and the foundation for its capital improvements program.

Master Plan Link: https://cityofstjohnsmi.com/egov/documents/1591737202_06145.pdf

Why Does the City of St. Johns have a Master Plan?

The Michigan Planning Enabling Act (MPEA), being Act 33 of 2008 as amended, gives the authority and responsibility to municipalities to “make and approve a master plan as a guide for development within the planning jurisdiction.” The Act further states that “a master plan shall address land use and infrastructure issues and may project 20 or more years into the future.” The City of St. Johns Master Plan is responsive to this State requirement and the various components required in it by the MPEA.

Master Plan v. Zoning Ordinance

A clear understanding of the difference between the City of St. Johns Master Plan and the City of St. Johns Zoning Ordinance is crucial to the operations of the Planning Commission and the decisions made by the Commission. Although a Master Plan is the community's expression of its land use policies and long-term land use goals, it is not a regulatory document and does not have the power of law behind it. Instead, the Master Plan is implemented by regulatory tools including the City of St. Johns Zoning Ordinance, and others. Absent these complimentary regulatory actions, the ability of the City to implement its vision, as expressed by the Master Plan, would be greatly compromised. As the Planning Commission reviews matters before it, including policy development in the Master Plan, regulatory standards in the Zoning Ordinance and other regulatory tools, and proposals for development, the distinction between the Master Plan (visionary policy document that we strive to achieve) and the Zoning Ordinance (regulatory document that must be complied with and can be legally enforced) must be kept in mind.

Code of Ordinance Link: http://www.amlegal.com/codes/client/saint-johns_mi/

City of St. Johns Capital Improvement Plan

A Capital Improvement Plan (CIP) is a multi-year planning instrument used to identify needs and funding sources for municipal capital project expenditures. Projects are generally described as significant, physical improvements or purchases that have a long, useful life. These projects include municipal facilities; information technology systems; transportation systems; water, sewer, and stormwater utilities; street lighting; vehicles and large equipment; and other large capital purchases or improvements. Upon adoption by the City Commission, the CIP becomes a statement of City policy regarding the timing, location, character, and funding of future capital projects. In Michigan, the formation of a capital improvements program is required by the Michigan Planning Enabling Act, Public Act 33 of 2008, MCL 125.3865.

CIP Link: https://cityofstjohnsmi.com/egov/documents/1589557876_75244.pdf

Purpose of the Capital Improvement Plan

The quality of the infrastructure and community facilities in the City directly influences the quality of life that the City can provide. As community infrastructure and facilities age, continual improvements and updates are required to stay current with changing demands and needs. In the midst of shrinking resources and deferred maintenance costs, a CIP is more important than ever. The 2020-2025 Plan will reflect a six-year anticipated scheduling and costs for infrastructure, facilities, and equipment based on input from the City's departments.

The purpose of the CIP is to achieve the following outcomes:

- Ensure the timely repair and replacement of aging infrastructure, facilities, and equipment.
- Provide a level of certainty for residents, businesses, and developers regarding the location and timing of public investments.
- Identify the most economical means of financing capital improvements.
- Provide an opportunity for public input in the budget and financing process.
- Facilitate coordination upgrades to capital infrastructure systems.
- Enhance the community's credit rating, control of its tax rate, and avoid sudden changes in its debt service requirements.
- Ensure that patterns of growth and development are consistent with the master plan.
- Balance desired public improvements with the community's financial resources.

Proceedings

Regular Meeting Schedule

Meetings of the Planning Commission are held on the 2nd Wednesday of the month at 5:30 p.m. These meetings will be held on the 2nd floor of the Clinton County Courthouse typically in the Commissioner Chambers, unless otherwise provided and publicized in advance.

Membership

The Commission shall consist of the Mayor, one of the administrative officials of the city selected by the Mayor, one member of the City Commission to be selected by it, as members ex officio, and six persons, representing insofar as possible different professions or occupations, who shall be appointed by the Mayor subject to the approval of a majority vote of the members elect of the City Commission. All members of the Commission shall serve as such without compensation and the appointed members shall hold no other municipal office except that one of such appointed members may be a member of the Zoning Board of Appeals.

The terms of the ex officio members shall correspond to their respective official tenures except that the term of the administrative official selected by the Mayor shall terminate with the term of the Mayor selecting him.

The term of each appointed member shall be three years or until his or her successor takes office except that the respective terms of two of the members first appointed shall be for one year and two for two years. Members other than the member selected by the City Commission may, after public hearing, be removed by the Mayor for inefficiency, neglect of duty, or malfeasance in office. The City Commission may for like cause remove the member selected by it. Vacancies occurring otherwise than through the expiration of term shall be filled for the unexpired term by the Mayor in the case of members selected or appointed by him and by the City Commission in the case of the Commission member.

Quorum

A majority of all the members elected to the Commission shall constitute a quorum at any regular or special meeting of the Commission. In the absence of a quorum, the presiding officer shall adjourn the meeting to another date.

Presiding Official

The Commission shall elect its Chairperson from amongst the appointed members and create and fill such other offices as it may determine. The term of the Chairperson shall be for one year, with eligibility for re-election. The Commission shall have at least one regular meeting in each month. It shall adopt rules for the transaction of business and shall keep a record of its resolutions, transactions, findings, and determinations, which records shall be a public record.

Meeting Structure

At any regular meeting of the Planning Commission, the following shall be the regular order of business:

- I. Call to Order
- II. Approval of Agenda
- III. Public Comment on Agenda / Non-Agenda Items
- IV. Old Business
- V. New Business
- VI. Planning Commissioner Comments
- VII. Adjournment

The Planning Commission may, at its discretion, adjust the order of items on the agenda of a given meeting.

Motions and Voting

Motions: motions shall be summarized or restated by the Chairperson before a vote is taken. The name of the maker of the motion and its second shall be recorded in the minutes of the meeting.

Voting: At all meetings of the Planning Commission, each member attending shall vote on all questions decided by the Commission unless excused by a declared conflict of interest or by consent of the other members present. An affirmative vote of the majority of the members present shall be necessary for the person to abstain from voting on the matter. The minutes shall reflect that such member abstained from voting on the matter. Voting shall be by voice vote, except for matters for which a public hearing has been held before the Planning Commission, a roll call vote shall be required. In the event that any members shall have a conflict of interest in a matter then before the Commission, that person shall disclose such interest. The affirmative vote of a majority of the members present shall be necessary for the adoption of any resolution or other voting matter, except that an affirmative vote of not less

than six (6) members of the Planning Commission is necessary to adopt or amend the Master Plan.

Parliamentary Procedure

Parliamentary procedure in Commission meetings shall be guided by “Robert's Rules of Order Newly Revised, 10th edition (2000) or as amended.”

Any matter before the Commission shall be brought by a motion of a Commissioner. Motions shall consist of four classes: main motions, subsidiary motions, privileged motions, and incidental motions.

The following are division of the types of motions:

- I. Privileged Motions
 - a. Adjourn
 - b. Recess
 - c. Question of Privilege
- II. Subsidiary Motions
 - a. ‘Lay on’ the Table (this is not debatable)
 - b. Vote Immediately
 - c. Limit or Extend Debate
 - d. Postpone to Specific Time
 - e. Refer to or Remove from Committee
 - f. Amend or Substitute
 - g. ‘Take from’ Table
- III. Main Motion
 - a. General Main Motion or Restorative Main Motion
- IV. Incidental Motions
 - a. Appeal
 - b. Point of Order
 - c. Parliamentary Inquiry
 - d. Withdraw a Motion
 - e. Suspend Rules
 - f. Division of Question
 - g. Division of Assembly

Master Plan

Contents

The Commission shall make and adopt a Master Plan for the physical development of the city, including any areas outside of its boundaries which, in the Commission's judgment, bear relation to the planning of the city. The Plan with the accompanying maps, charts and descriptive matter shall show the Commission's recommendations for the development of the territory, including among other things, the general location, character and extent of streets, viaducts, bridges, waterways, boulevards, parkways, playgrounds, and open space, the general location and extent of public utilities and terminals, whether publicly or privately owned or operated, for water, light, sanitation, transportation, communication, power, or other purposes; also the removal, relocation, widening, narrowing, vacating, abandonment, change of use or extension of any of the foregoing ways, grounds, open spaces, buildings, property utilities or terminals; the general location, character, layout and extent of community centers, and neighborhood units; and the general character, extent and layout of the replanning and redevelopment of blighted districts and slum areas; as well as a zoning plan for the control of the height, area, bulk, location and use of buildings and premises. As the work of making the whole master plan progresses, the Commission may from time to time adopt and publish a part or parts thereof, any such part to cover one or more major sections or divisions of the city, or one or more of the aforesaid or other functional matters to be included in the Plan. The Commission may amend, extend or add to the Plan.

Preparation

In the preparation of the Plan, the Commission shall make careful and comprehensive surveys and studies of present conditions and future growth of the city with due regard to its relation to the purpose of guiding and accomplishing a coordinated, adjusted, and harmonious development of the city and its environs, which will with present and future needs best promote safety, morals, order, convenience, prosperity and general welfare, as well as efficiency and economy in the process of development, including among other things, adequate provision for traffic, safety from fire and other dangers, adequate provision for light and air, promotion of the healthful and convenient distribution of the population, promotion of good civic designs, efficient expenditures of public funds, and adequate provision of public utilities and other public requirements.

Adoption

The Commission may adopt the Plan as a whole, by a single resolution, or by successive resolutions adopt successive parts of the Plan, such corresponding with major geographical sections or divisions of the city, or with functional subdivisions of the subject matter of the Plan, and may adopt any amendment, or extension thereto, or additions thereto.

Before the adoption of the Plan, or any such part, amendment, extension or addition, the Commission shall hold at least one public hearing thereon, notices of the time and place of which shall be given not less than 15 days prior to such hearing by one publication in a newspaper of general circulation in the city and by registered United States Mail to each public utility or railroad company owning or operating any public utility or railroad within the geographical sections or divisions of the city affected.

The adoption of the Plan, or any such part or amendment, extension or addition, shall be by resolution of the Commission carried by the affirmative votes of not less than six members of the Commission. The resolution shall refer expressly to the maps and descriptive matter intended by the Commission to form the whole or part of the Plan, and the action taken shall be recorded on the map and Plan and descriptive matter intended by the Commission to form the whole or part of the Plan, and the action taken shall be recorded on the map and Plan and descriptive matter by the identifying signatures of the Chairperson and/or Secretary of the Commission. An attested copy of the Plan or part thereof shall be certified to the City Commission and to the County Register of Deeds.

Amendments and Modifications of Plans

Amendments or modifications to such certified plats or additions to the adopted Master Plan may be made and certified to the City Commission by the Commission and ordinances embodying amendments to or changes in such certified plats may be adopted by the City Commission in accordance with the legal procedure for enactment of ordinances, provided that notice of the time and place, when and where it shall be considered for final passage shall be sent by mail to the record owners of land located within or abutting on the lines of proposed streets, ways, parks, places, playgrounds, or other public grounds. Any such proposed amendment or change shall be submitted to and approved by the Commission; provided that in the case of disapproval, the Commission shall communicate its reasons to the City Commission which shall have the power to overrule such disapproval by a recorded vote of not less than two-thirds of its entire membership. Any plat of a street, park, playground, or other public ground certified by the Commission to the City Commission under this chapter shall be deemed approved by the Commission without further submission thereof to said Commission.

Method of Showing Proposed Areas

The proposed future outside lines of streets, parks, playgrounds and other public grounds shown on any plat certified and adopted as hereinbefore provided may for convenience be shown, wholly or in part, by appropriate symbols on any official map or other map of the city, provided that showing such lines on any map shall not in and of itself constitute or be deemed to constitute the opening or establishment of any street or the taking or acceptance of any land for any of the aforesaid purposes.

Application Review

Development Application Review

When making a decision on any development, Commissioners must follow the rules and regulations of the City of St. Johns, as adopted by City of St. Johns City Commission. This ensures uniform, consistent, just and legally defensible rulings by the Commission. Planning Commissioners should keep the following specific intentions in mind when making their recommendations on applications:

For Site Plan Review Applications

- Provide a consistent and uniform method of review of proposed development plans
- Ensure full compliance with the regulations and standards of the Zoning Ordinance and other applicable ordinances and laws, including the building code enforced by the City of St. Johns, to ascertain that all development complies with current standards
- Create an accurate record of approved development
- Mitigate adverse impact on adjoining or nearby properties - within the rules and regulations of the City
- Grant approval when full compliance with the Zoning Ordinance and any other applicable ordinances is demonstrated

Site Plan Review

When are Site Plans Required?

- New industrial, commercial, and multi-family buildings
- Additions of more than 5,000 square feet to existing industrial, commercial, or multi-family buildings (more than 1,000 square feet if next to a residential district)
- Parking lots consisting of more than ten (10) spaces

Steps in a Site Plan Review

- I. *Applicant:* The owner, or his designated agent, of the subject property shall file a request with the Planning Commission for site plan approval.
- II. *Application:* Applications for preliminary and final site plan approval shall be submitted to the City Planning Commission on a special form for that purpose. Each preliminary application shall be accompanied by the payment to cover costs of processing the application in an amount set by the City Commission. No part of the fee shall be refundable.
- III. *Data required in preliminary application:* Every application for site plan approval shall be accompanied by the following information and data:
 - a. A special form supplied by the Zoning Administrator filled out in full by the applicant. This form shall contain the following information:
 - i. The applicant's name and address in full
 - ii. Applicant's phone number
 - iii. A statement that the applicant is the owner of property or acting on the owner's behalf
 - iv. The name and address of the owner of record if the applicant is not the owner of record
 - v. The address, legal description and parcel number of the property
 - b. An accurate drawing(s) showing:
 - i. Property dimensions
 - ii. Topographic elevations as required by the City Engineer
 - iii. Significant vegetation
 - iv. Watercourses and water bodies, including man-made surface drainage ways
 - v. Existing public right-of-way, pavements and/or private easements
 - vi. Existing buildings and structures
 - vii. Zoning classification of abutting properties

- c. A preliminary site plan, drawn to scale of 1 inch - 200 feet or less of the entire property involved showing:
 - i. Dimensions of property included in proposed development
 - ii. Location of abutting streets and proposed alignment of streets, drives and easements serving the development
 - iii. Location of proposed buildings and intended uses thereof
 - iv. Location of parking areas
 - v. Proposed water supply, wastewater systems and tentative locations
 - vi. Proposed grades and site drainage pattern
 - vii. Proposed common open spaces and facilities, if applicable
 - viii. Proposed accessory buildings and uses, including free-standing signs
- d. The Planning Commission may require written impact statements relative to traffic capacity or streets, schools, existing utilities or natural features.

Review by Planning Commission

The Zoning Administrator shall send notice of site plan review, by first class mail, to all persons owning property within a 300-foot radius of the property in question.

The City Planning Commission shall review the preliminary site plan to determine compliance with permitted land use, density of development, general circulation and other provisions of this code. The preliminary site plan shall also be reviewed for the same compliance, by the Zoning, Water, Wastewater, Public Works, Police and Fire Departments, along with the City Manager and City Engineer, and shall report to the Planning Commission their recommendations. This review will also include the County Drain Commission and county zoning, when applicable.

The Planning Commission shall respond to the applicant with its decision within 45 days of filing, and if denied, shall cite the reason for denial. If approved, a certificate of preliminary site plan approval shall be issued to the applicant by the Zoning Administrator.

Final Site Plan Approval

Within 365 days of the date of issuance of the certificate of preliminary site plan approval, the applicant shall file for final site plan approval.

The application shall be accompanied by the following information:

- A special form supplied by the Zoning Administrator and filled out in full by the applicant. This form shall contain the same information contained on the application

form for preliminary site plan approval and a reference to the date on which the Planning Commission granted preliminary site plan approval.

- Final site plan and site development specifications for the site, or portion thereof, on which site plan approval is sought.
- The final site plan shall conform substantially to the preliminary site plan.

The Planning Commission will forward its findings and recommendations for approval or rejection of the preliminary site plan to the City Commission for final site plan review.

The City Commission shall, within 45 days of action by the Planning Commission, act upon the application for final site plan approval. If final site plan approval is denied by the City Commission, notice thereof, together with the reason, shall be sent to the applicant. If approved, a certificate of final site plan approval shall be issued to the applicant.

Modification of Approval of Preliminary Site Plan

Once site plan approval has been granted by the Planning Commission, changes to the approved site plan shall require a resubmission.

Standards for Site Plan Approval

- A. All elements of the site plan shall be harmoniously and efficiently organized in relation to topography, the size and type of plot, the character of adjoining property and the type and size of buildings. The site will be so developed as not to impede the normal and orderly development or improvement of surrounding property for uses permitted in this chapter.
- B. The landscape shall be preserved in its natural state, insofar as practicable, by minimizing tree and soil removal and by topographic modifications which result in maximum harmony with adjacent areas.
- C. The site plan shall provide reasonable, visual and sound privacy for all dwelling units located therein. Fences, walks, barriers and landscaping shall be used, as appropriate, for the protection and enhancement of property and the privacy of its occupants.
- D. All buildings, or groups of buildings, shall be so arranged as to permit emergency vehicle access by some practical means to all sides.
- E. Every structure or dwelling unit shall have access to a public street, walkway, or other area dedicated to common use.
- F. There shall be provided a pedestrian circulation system which is insulated as completely as reasonably possible from the vehicular circulation system. In order to ensure public safety, pedestrian underpasses or overpasses may be required in the vicinity of schools,

playgrounds, local shopping areas and other uses which generate a considerable amount of pedestrian traffic.

- G. The arrangement of public or common ways for vehicular and pedestrian circulation shall respect the pattern of existing or planned streets and pedestrian or bicycle pathways in the area. Streets and drives which are part of an existing or planned street pattern which serves adjacent development shall be of a width appropriate to the traffic volume they will carry and shall have a dedicated right-of-way equal to that specified in the city specifications.
- H. All streets shall be developed in accordance with the city specifications unless otherwise approved by the City Commission.
- I. Any development affecting existing city streets shall comply with city specifications as to curb, gutter, walkways, liming, catch basins and underground utility locations.
- J. Appropriate measures shall be taken to ensure that removal of surface waters will not adversely affect neighboring properties or the public storm drainage system. Provisions shall be made for the construction of sewer facilities, including grading, gutters, piping, and the treatment of turf, to handle storm water, prevent erosion and the formation of dust. Surface water on all paved areas shall be collected at intervals so that it will not obstruct the flow of vehicular or pedestrian traffic and will not create puddles in paved areas.
- K. All appropriate measures shall be taken, by the developer, to complete a water loop system when deemed advisable by the City Engineer and City Water Department.
- L. All appropriate measures shall be taken by the developer to provide adequate water and fire protection systems when deemed advisable by the City Engineer, Water Department and Fire Department.
- M. Underground utilities may be required in all areas for distribution of utilities, including water, sewer, electric, gas, telephone and cable TV when deemed advisable.
- N. All loading and unloading areas and outside storage areas, including areas for the storage of trash which face or are visible from residential districts or public thoroughfares, shall be screened by an opaque wall not less than six feet in height.
- O. Exterior lighting shall be so arranged that it is deflected adjacent away from adjacent properties and so that it does not impede the vision of traffic along adjacent streets. Flashing or intermittent lights shall not be permitted.
- P. In approving the site plan, the Planning Commission may recommend to the City Commission that a bond or other financial guarantee acceptable to the city of ample sum be furnished by the developer to ensure compliance for such requirements as drives, walks, utilities, parking, landscaping and the like.

Appeals and Questions of Interpretation

Any person considering himself aggrieved by any interpretation of the Planning Commission or its recommendation granting or denying site plan approval shall have the right to take an appeal to the City Commission as herein set forth for final site plan approval.

In the event the City Commission shall reject the final site plan, an appeal may be taken to a court of competent jurisdiction; such appeal shall be deemed exclusive.

Conduct Guidelines

Michigan Open Meetings Act

All actions of the Planning Commission must follow the guidelines of the Michigan Open Meetings Act. The Open Meetings Act (OMA) was written in 1976, as was the Freedom of Information Act. These two laws, known as Michigan's "sunshine laws," are designed to make government processes and information more open to the public. Both laws were written in the post-Watergate, post-Vietnam war era.

It is important to keep in mind that the OMA applies to governmental bodies, those "empowered by state constitution, statute, charter, ordinance, resolution or rule to exercise...governmental authority." It does not apply to corporations, non-profits, churches or the like.

The law guarantees several rights of citizens. The public has a right to record meetings, within the bounds of reasonable rules which the public body may write to minimize disruption of the meetings. The public, likewise, has a right to address the public body, also within the bounds of rules written to facilitate orderly meetings and protecting everyone's right to address the board. An individual can only be removed from a meeting for a breach of the peace committed at that meeting.

Social or chance gatherings, or conferences which are not intended to avoid the OMA, are exempt. These types of gatherings often are treated with suspicion by the press and the public. It is important for public bodies to be careful not to discuss government business during these gatherings. This can be accomplished by paying careful attention to what the OMA says about deliberations and decisions.

The Freedom of Information Act

As Commissioners, your actions during meetings are subject to the Freedom of Information Act. Understanding the Act and what pieces of information it applies to is crucial to a transparent development process. Information created or presented under the following circumstances are included under the Freedom of Information Act.

ANY gathering, including work sessions, of the Commission, sitting (or through telephonic or video equipment) as the commission or an informal assemblage of:

- (i) as many as three members, or
- (ii) a quorum, if less than three, of the constituent membership,

WHEREVER the gathering is held;

WITH or WITHOUT minutes being taken; **AND**

WHETHER OR NOT votes are cast.

NOTE: This also applies to ANY meeting, including work sessions, of any subgroup of the commission.

WHAT IS NOT A MEETING?

The gathering of employees; or

The gathering or attendance of two or more commissioners at:

Any place or function where no part of the purpose of such gathering or attendance is the discussion or transaction of any public business, and such gathering or attendance was not called or prearranged with any purpose of discussing or transacting any business; OR

WHAT IS **NOT** A MEETING (cont'd)

A public forum, candidate appearance, or debate, the purpose of which is to inform the electorate and not to discuss or transact public business.

OTHER FOIA PROVISIONS

MINUTES: ARE REQUIRED for any meeting of the commission.

Minutes are also required for any subcommittee thereof **ONLY** if a majority of the commissioners are on the subcommittee.

VOTING: NO secret or written ballots are ever allowed.

CLOSED MEETINGS: Allowed **ONLY** as specifically authorized by FOIA and require motion stating purpose.

NOTES and RECORDS: If referred to or passed between members, your notes and records are subject to FOIA.

EMAILS: Any email to a majority of the commission or directed towards a decision of the commission is subject to FOIA. **REPLY ALL** responses are subject to FOIA and are to be avoided.

Ethics

Elected officials, appointees, and city employees, by virtue of their positions, are trustees of the public, chargeable with honesty, integrity, and openness in their handling of public affairs. When conduct inconsistent with this expectation occurs, public suspicion is heightened and public confidence is compromised. Where government is founded upon the consent of the governed, it is critical that each citizen have complete confidence in the integrity of the government. Each public official, appointee, and/or employee must endeavor to earn and honor the public trust in the conduct of all official duties and actions. The purpose of this chapter is to define standards of ethical conduct that are clearly established and uniformly applied and for enforcement of same. All ethical standards of conduct can be seen defined in chapter 37 of the City Code.

Deputy City Manager Training Session

Within one month of the start of your appointment, a mandatory training session will be scheduled with you by the City of St. Johns Deputy Manager. At that training, specific information and direction on complying with the Open Meetings Act will be provided. This training will also cover Freedom of Information Act requirements, as well as the ethical standards and expectations of the City as they apply to your appointment to the Planning Commission. Should you have any questions or concerns in these areas following that training, they may be directed to the Deputy City Manager for direct answer.

Attendance at Meetings

To the extent possible, prospective absences and the reason for absence shall be reported to the Chairperson before the meeting. The Planning Commission may decline to excuse the absence of any elected official or appointed officer from a meeting.

Being an Effective Participant

Before the Meeting:

- Come to the meeting with questions in mind. Make note of problems or questions and offer them for discussion. Study the agenda in advance.

During the Meeting:

- Listen thoughtfully and critically to others. Try hard to get the other person's point of view. Don't accept ideas that seem unsound, but remember: on almost every question there are several points of view.
- Don't fight over the ownership of ideas. Once you have given your ideas to the group, it becomes group property. Don't argue just because it was yours.
- Speak your mind freely. The meeting is yours – a chance for you to say what you think. SAY IT! Speak so everyone can hear.
- Don't monopolize the discussion. Don't speak for more than a minute or so at a time. Make your point in a few words, then give someone else a chance. Don't make a speech.
- Don't let the discussion get away from you. If you don't understand, say so. Ask questions or for examples and cases.
- Don't engage in side conversations with your neighbor. It is rude and distracting.
- Take part in friendly disagreement. When you are on the other side of the fence, say so and tell why, but in a friendly way. Avoid win-lose confrontations.
- Strike while the idea is hot! If you wait until "later", you may forget your point or it may no longer be relevant to the discussion.
- Be action-minded! Try to relate discussion to action. Wise action is the true purpose of group discussion.
- Above all, develop in yourself that rarest of communicative art – the art of listening.

After the Meeting:

- Ask yourself – **WHAT DID I CONTRIBUTE**