



MEETING DATE: 11/7/07

COUNCIL RETREAT REPORT

DATE: NOVEMBER 2, 2007
TO: MAYOR AND TOWN COUNCIL
FROM: PAMELA S. JACOBS, INTERIM TOWN MANAGER *Pamela Jacobs*
SUBJECT: JOINT TOWN COUNCIL/PLANNING COMMISSION RETREAT

Attached are the agenda materials for the Joint Town Council/Planning Commission retreat scheduled for November 7, 2007. The retreat will be facilitated by Les White, Special Advisor to the Town Council. The retreat agenda and materials were developed based upon a discussion with Joe Pirzynski and Planning Commission Chair Joanne Talesfore. The overall focus will be to discuss and reach consensus on practices that contribute to excellent Council and Commission performance.

Attached is material which will be used to facilitate the discussion.

Attachments:

1. 10/31/07 memo to Planning Commission forwarding meeting materials
2. Working agenda
3. Planning Process Working Paper
4. Planning Process Accomplishments
5. Best Practices for Excellent Performance as a Town Council/Planning Commission Member
6. Summary of Previous Council/Planning Commission Retreats in Los Gatos
7. Checklist for Successful Board, Commission, Committee Meetings
8. Boards, Commissions and Committees – Guidelines for Good Communication

PREPARED BY:

BL

BUD LORTZ

Community Development Director

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Reviewed by: _____ Assistant Town Manager OV Town Attorney
_____ Clerk Administrator _____ Finance _____ Community Development



MEMORANDUM

COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT DEPARTMENT

To: Planning Commissioners

From: Bud Lortz, Community Development Director

Subject: Town Council/Planning Commission Retreat

Date: October 31, 2007

Attached for your review is the background material for the November 7, 2007, Town Council/Planning Commission Retreat scheduled for 8:00-10:00 AM in the Council Chambers. To assist with the retreat, Staff has assembled a packet containing a Working Agenda, Planning Process Working Paper, List of Planning Process Accomplishments, Best Practices for Excellent Performance, and a Summary of Previous Council/Planning Commission Retreats. Les White, former Interim Town Manager and Parks and Public Works Director, is serving as Special Advisor to the Town Council and will be facilitating the retreat. The Mayor has discussed the Planning Process Working Paper with the Chair of the Planning Commission.

Randy and I will be at the retreat to observe and participate as requested. Please call me if you have any questions.

BNL:ah

Attachments

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WORKING AGENDA
TOWN COUNCIL/PLANNING COMMISSION RETREAT
Wednesday, November 7, 2007
8:00-10:00 am
Town Council Chambers

- 7:45-8:00 a.m. Coffee and pastries
- 8:00-8:05 a.m. Verbal Communications
- 8:05-8:10 a.m. Introduction by Mayor of Retreat Participants
- 8:10-8:15 a.m. Overview of Expected Outcomes and any Suggested Changes to the Agenda -- (Facilitator)

Outcomes

- Discuss and clarify key issues
 - Reinforce open communications among Town Council, Planning Commission and staff
 - Reaffirm Best Practices for Excellent Performance document
- 8:15-9:15 a.m. Discuss Five Key Issues from the Planning Process Working Paper (Facilitator and Planning Director)
- An improved understanding of the roles and relationships of the Council, Planning Commission and staff
 - Understanding of the process of accepting and weighing evidence
 - Discussing and deliberating effectively as a Commission to reach clear, objective and rationale decisions
 - Practicing appropriate dialogue among the Commission, applicants and staff
 - Improved guidance from staff in assisting the Commission in formulating its recommendations to Council and in providing feedback on behalf of the Council regarding its decisions to the Commission
- 9:15-9:35 a.m. Review of Best Practices for Excellent Performance Document (Facilitator)
- 9:35-9:50 a.m. Other Topics that Town Council or Planning Commission May Wish to Discuss at this Meeting or Schedule for a Future Retreat (Facilitator)
- 9:50-10:00 a.m. Closing Comments by Planning Commission Chair and Mayor

PLANNING PROCESS WORKING PAPER
9/18/07

Over the past six years, the Town has made a variety of improvements in planning processes, added clarity to the roles and relationships of the Town Council, Planning Commission and planning staff, and cultivated a better understanding of how to develop and implement planning policies in the Town. This has led to specific accomplishments, such as better staff teamwork in reviewing plans, hillside development standards, commercial design guidelines, and improved public hearing noticing (for a more complete listing of almost two dozen accomplishments refer to Attachment I). During this timeframe, there have been six joint Town Council/Planning Commission retreats that have resulted in an improved understanding of roles and relationships, culminating in a Best Practices document (Attachment II). This has helped guide and improve roles and relationships among the Town Council members, Planning Commission and Town Staff as it relates to the conduct of meetings and to the development and interpretation of planning policies and practices.

Nonetheless, it is recognized by all parties that there is always room to build and improve upon past successes and to further enhance the ability of the major players to fulfill their respective roles in the planning process. Some important areas where continued effort would be useful in providing additional guidelines for factual and objective decision-making by the Planning Commission are:

- An improved understanding of roles and relationships of the Council, Commission and staff in land use decisions, the design review process, policy areas, areas in which Planning Commission makes recommendations to Council, rather than making final decisions, etc.;
- Understanding of the process of accepting and weighing evidence;
- Discussing/deliberating efficiently and professionally as a group to reach a clear and rational decision;
- Practicing appropriate and constructive dialog between Commissioners, between Commissioners and applicants, and between Commissioners and staff; and
- Enhanced guidance and recommendations from planning staff and understanding of staff's role in communicating Council's decisions to the Planning Commission.

These specific issues are the basis for developing the next section of this working paper which discusses three overarching topics: Roles and Relationships, Planning Processes and Next Steps

Roles and Relationships

It is not uncommon in cities and counties for differences of opinion to occur between city councils, planning commissions and staff. The key is to understand one another's roles and perspectives. Of course, it is important to remember that a council is the final decision making body, that planning commission is typically a recommending body, usually with limited final authority on planning matters, and that staff's role is to

recommend planning policies to the council and commission and to implement and enforce those policies.

The Town Council and Planning Commission have wisely invested time and effort in conducting Council/Commission retreats over the past six years to clarify and understand their respective roles and relationships. The last retreat in May, 2006, led to a discussion and agreement on a report entitled "Best Practices for Excellent Performance." This report lays out ground rules of conduct and some of the common pitfalls to avoid in conducting the public's business. It should be regularly referred to at Council and Commission meetings, adhered to by staff and annually reviewed and updated at the retreats to ensure that these Best Practices are being followed, because maintaining clear roles and constructive relationships requires continuous nurturing and attention.

Processes

A few recurring themes have arisen based on comments to and the observations of key Town staff.

The Planning Commission should work within a context that allows the Commission as much opportunity as possible to make clear-cut recommendations that are readily understandable by applicants, the public, staff and the Town Council.

In this regard it is important to underscore a contextual framework for how the Commission's deliberations and actions are guided by Town planning policies (in particular the General Plan), ordinances and established practices. Staff must continue to refine and provide clear input to the Planning Commission and Town Council within the context of those policies, ordinances and practices. If such policies are vague or lacking in some respect, then staff needs to give its best guidance and direction based on professional judgment and best practices of other jurisdictions in its staff reports. One example cited where the criteria which served as the basis for staff recommendations could have been more clearly articulated and key issues defined was the 43 Elm Project. This would have allowed for a more factual and objective discussion of the project by the Planning Commission. Planning staff is committed to further improve upon Commission agenda reports to ensure that interpretations of planning policies, alternatives, best practices, and recommendations are explicitly stated.

The Town Council needs to be as clear as possible in advising the Planning Commission and staff regarding its reasoning in making certain planning decisions. For example, in the Vasona land sale and Placer Oaks projects, Council gave clear direction but could have further articulated why the direction was provided in these cases and not others. Sometimes, the Town Council may not feel it is necessary to provide explicit criteria as in the 20 South Santa Cruz Ave. alcohol policy decision and should explain why that is the case so that the Planning Commission and staff understand its reasoning. As much as possible, it is important to explicitly state the reasoning behind decisions so that the Commission and staff will be better informed and guided in future recommendations on similar planning matters.

With respect to this point of the Council being as clear as possible in its decision making process, a few case studies (additional examples are projects at 14350 Suviev and 35 and 27 N Santa Cruz Ave.) might be discussed at the next retreat so the Council can say what guided its decision making and the Commission and staff could explain how it arrived at its recommendations. Another way to help bridge a better understanding between the two bodies could be increased communications between the Commission and Town Council through the current practice of the Mayor meeting with the Chair of the Commission on an ad hoc basis to discuss planning policies and issues and to set annual retreat agendas. Periodic meetings each year (say 3 to 4 a year) should continue to occur to ensure that planning issues are being effectively communicated and understood between these two bodies. Finally, as stated above, another way to improve decision-making processes is to ensure that staff reports are as explicit as possible in expressing staff reasoning for alternatives and recommendations, and any relevant Council direction previously articulated.

Decisions and recommendations should be balanced, objective, and factually based and not subjective judgments, interpretations, opinions, personal values and interests

To avoid subjective decision making processes staff should provide clear, factual analysis, alternatives and recommendations and the Planning Commission should make every effort to use this information as a foundation for its decisions and recommendations.

If planning policies are outdated, undocumented, or don't exist, then the Planning Commission and staff should take action to recommend new written policies as soon as possible. The Planning Commission and staff need to be vigilant in identifying recurring, subjective areas of decision making regarding planning trends and issues that warrant new and revised policies.

Next Steps

Some of the issues identified above could be addressed by the Mayor and Planning Commission Chair -- with input from the Town Manager and appropriate staff—by discussing an agenda for the next annual Council/Commission retreat that include the following items:

- An overview of planning process accomplishments by staff
- A discussion of topics in need of continued dialogue and refinement. This could include some of the points mentioned in this working paper based, in part, on actual project case studies or on hypothetical ones with relevant issues
- Reaffirmation of roles and relationships in the planning process among the Council, Commission and staff. This should include a review of the Best Practices document

- Opportunity for the Council and Commission to discuss the content and format of planning agenda items to ensure that planning projects and issues are addressed with sufficient analysis, alternatives and recommendations

Overall, the planning process in the Town is functioning effectively. There are few disagreements between the Council, Commission and staff when placed in the overall context of the Town's planning activities. The suggestions and considerations identified above are intended to continue to move the Town's planning efforts in a positive direction to maintain and enhance its look, character and "feel" as a beautiful, well designed community.

PLANNING PROCESS ACCOMPLISHMENTS

- Created a “Staff Development Team” to help improve project analysis and coordination between planning, engineering, and building. The Team meets regularly, including off-site retreats.
- Hired consultants in relevant disciplines (i.e. architecture, arborist, geotechnical, environmental, traffic, telecommunications) to review administrative systems and verify information provided by applicants.
- Community Development Department has instituted a “weekly planner roundtable” so that the Director and Assistant Director can offer early input to planning staff in their feedback to applicants. Input from engineering and building is included in this early feedback process.
- The building and engineering inspection teams have been trained to detect and resolve issues in the field to avoid problems later in the process.
- A Council resolution governing the design review process and clarifying the role and responsibilities of the Planning Commission and Consulting Architect.
- The quality of staff reports.
- The performance of planning staff and new hires.
- The increased focus on training Planning Commission members.
- Adopted Formula Retail regulations.
- Adopted Personal Service regulations.
- Adopted Zoning Ordinance Amendments to clarify numerous ambiguous code sections.
- Adopted Hillside Development Standards and Guidelines.
- Adopted Commercial Design Guidelines.
- Adopted policy for Minor Modifications to Commercial Buildings.
- Adopted criteria for Conditional Use Modification.
- Revised application forms.
- Developed new/more accurate public hearing noticing procedures with better mailing lists (i.e. MetroScan and Postal list).
- Developed detailed Town web site information.
- Televised Planning Commission meetings.
- Adopted Best Practices from the May, 2006 joint Council-Planning Commission retreat.
- Adopted Guidelines and Standards for Land Use Near Streams
- Implemented Nonpoint Source Regulations
- In the process of preparing Residential Design Guidelines.

Best Practices for Excellent Performance as a Town Council/Planning Commission Member

The attached list of Best Practices was developed as part of the ongoing and overarching goal of creating a culture of excellence in the way the Town performs its functions and conduct the public's business. The list was discussed and agreed to by the Council and Planning Commission at a joint retreat held on May 24, 2006.

The team responsible for designing the retreat agenda, Mayor Diane McNutt, Planning Commission Chair Phil Micciche, Bud Lortz, Debra Figone, and consultant Shawn Spano, first generated a preliminary list of best practices derived from statements and policies set forth in the Council Code of Conduct and the Planning Commissioner's Handbook. These practices are organized into six categories:

1. Professional
2. Customer service oriented
3. Good judgment
4. Objective/fair
5. Efficient
6. Persuasive

In order to prepare for the retreat, Planning Commissioners and Council members individually reviewed the draft list in advance, and then shared their thoughts, opinions, and perspectives with each other at the retreat. The list was then revised and submitted again to Council members and Planning Commissioners for individual review and comment to staff. The attached document represents the results of the retreat discussion and subsequent review, incorporating the changes, additions, and modifications that were suggested. While this document is certainly open to further refinement, it is important to note that there was consensus among Commission and Council that the list does indeed reflect a set of Best Practices for their performance.

The retreat planning team envisions this document serving as a reference guide for present and future Planning Commissioners and Council members as they evolve in their respective roles. In this regard, the document is intended to help foster awareness and understanding of what constitutes "good practice" in the Town of Los Gatos. At the same time, the document can help Council members and Planning Commissioners gauge and improve their own individual performances. For example, the Chair/Mayor can use the document to help manage public meetings by establishing guidelines for judging the effectiveness and appropriateness of particular comments and behaviors. The question of whether to intervene and curtail comments is often difficult to determine. This document can help all Council members and Commissioners make distinctions between what is effective/appropriate and ineffective/inappropriate.

In the future, staff might consider consulting with Council and Planning Commission on identifying a small set of Best Practices that transcend the six categories. Two potential practices emerged from the May 24 retreat. One is the practice of being consistent and fair in applying standards, codes, and policies. This practice is viewed as contributing to professionalism, customer service orientation, good judgment, etc. A second practice might focus on the role of active and open listening, also construed as a demonstration of professionalism, customer service orientation, good judgment, etc. As these comments indicate, there is some overlap between practices.

1. PROFESSIONAL

In practice, this means...

- Understanding the roles of standards, guidelines and the General Plan in decision-making
- Being prepared
- Offering comments with respect*
- Respecting the role of the Mayor/Chair in running the meeting
- Respecting the contributions of individual Commissioners and Council members.
- Respecting staff and the Town's consultant's recommendation and comments
- Being careful of your comments since they can be taken out of context, misinterpreted and lead to litigation

* The term "respect" is used here and elsewhere to indicate positive regard, consideration, and appreciation for others. Respect does not imply agreement. It does imply mutuality: Those who receive respect also show respect and vice-versa.

And avoiding...

- Sarcastic or condescending remarks
- Comments that discredit the Town or its consultants/staff (e.g. damage the reputation; disgrace, distrust)
- Comments that are inappropriate or that can be taken out of context
- Rambling, pontificating, and speechmaking
- Lecturing a colleague
- Disrespectful mannerisms, tone of voice, and gestures

2. CUSTOMER SERVICE ORIENTED

<i>In practice, this means...</i>	<i>And avoiding...</i>
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Respecting the rights of residents, businesses and property owners to pursue their goals and dreams• Asking questions of applicants during the presentation and rebuttal• Recognizing that the words and decisions used by the PC and TC have tremendous emotional impact on the applicants and their quality of life• Being solution oriented within the framework of the Town's policies and procedures as a way to help the applicant• Recognizing that there are multiple customers	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Raising objections or questions after public hearing is closed• Redesigning from the dais• Trying to convince or persuade the applicant that your point of view is correct• Lecturing an applicant

3. USE GOOD JUDGMENT

<i>In practice, this means...</i>	<i>And avoiding...</i>
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Making decisions by reading the General Plan in context• Granting an exception when the regulation allows for it and if the situation warrants it• Taking issues that are not addressed by regulations “off-line” from the project being considered (e.g. requesting that an issue be agendaized for discussion by TC or PC)	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Focusing on one policy in the General Plan to oppose a project without considering other policies that support the project.• Being overly literal when interpreting policy• Looking for a way to deny a project because it is challenging• Being arbitrary• Continuing a project when a condition of approval will suffice• Holding up a project for an issue that is not specifically addressed by policies and standards

4. OBJECTIVE/FAIR

<i>In practice, this means...</i>	<i>And avoiding...</i>
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Performing your duties and serving in a quasi-judicial manner• Demonstrating fairness• Listening to all evidence and considering all information• Setting aside personal bias• Using existing policies and regulations to evaluate a project.	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Personalizing your decision (i.e., I have a small house...)• Micromanaging an applicant's project• Evaluating a project based on personal experience or expertise.

5. EFFICIENT

<i>In practice, this means...</i>	<i>And avoiding...</i>
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Asking questions of staff prior to the meeting• Identifying ahead of time primary issues or concerns and stay focused on them• Outlining evidence supporting findings as the hearing progresses• Identifying and prioritizing your primary concerns	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Waiting to ask questions at the meeting• Delving into minutia• Waiting to create findings after the close of the hearing• Having so many concerns that you start to dominate the meeting• Duplicating comments already made• Allowing time constraints to trump excellence in planning• Orally listing reasons for opposing a project after the vote (better to state the reasons in writing if there is a personal desire to ensure that they are included in the record)

6. PERSUASIVE

<i>In practice, this means...</i>	<i>And avoiding...</i>
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Respecting the views of your fellow Council/Commission members• Using logic and specific examples to make your case and convince your colleagues	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Dismissing other points of view, making personal attacks, or arguing with your fellow Council/Commission members• Appealing to emotions and feelings• Terms like "I feel" rather than citing codes and policies

Summary of Previous Council/Planning Commission Retreats in Los Gatos

The following information provides a summary of previous retreats and some of the common themes that have been discussed at those retreats. It serves as background information for the 2007 Town Council/Planning Commission retreat.

I. February, 2001 Retreat

Major goals of session: Greater clarity and understanding of issues, constraints and processes among Council, Planning Commission (PC) and staff and articulation of steps and phases in the planning process. The following points were based on an overview of an actual single family home project.

Staff identified issues such as height, compatibility of uses, grading, architectural compatibility, design guidelines, and that there are occasions where subjective judgments will be made. Staff explained that interactions with applicants are governed by giving advice, being neutral and alerting applicants to issues, concerns and problems. Some projects are given to PC without full review in anticipation of PC identifying issues. To move projects to the next level staff will get input from DRC, compile studies and technical information, surface issues and make recommendations. Staff wants the Council and PC to know that they make best recommendations possible, for the Council to be as specific as possible for reasons for denial, to give applicants as many specifics to follow as possible, and to direct when the Council and PC think policies need updating.

Outside observers said there is a need for more specific guidelines, that staff needs to admit mistakes, staff wants to be proactive, Council does not want staff sending incomplete projects to the PC, staff should be consistent in interpreting policies, staff neutrality is important, let PC know the sensitive issues and be sensitive to PC issues and concerns.

PC should anticipate questions they will ask and try to be neutral, work as a team and understand what motivates applicants. In making decisions it should consider background information, staff recommendations, and whether additional information is needed.

Participants in the retreat said the staff report is most helpful when it has solid background information, identifies conflicts, highlights issues, is objective, and has accurate technical information.

The PC considers the following factors in making decisions: Adequacy of information to decide, credibility of applicant, not being subjective, assess long-term impacts of projects, and precedent of project.

The PC indicated that when decision are made by Council they are sometimes surprised, confused, curious, frustrated, seek clarification of policy and the options considered. The Council role was identified as considering staff and PC input, the

fact that by the time it gets to Council it may have received new information, that the PC decision is the most important information to consider, the need to weigh decisions against a set of standards, using the general plan and other Town policies as a guide, and whether there are new issues or “repeat” issues.

Lessons learned from the exercise were:

- set guidelines, rules and processes at beginning of the planning process for all parties
- reports should be more specific in outlining reasons for recommendations
- develop written policies and guidelines that are clear and consistent
- communicate policy guidelines
- assess the how’s and why’s underlying reasons for the Council getting “new information” after a PC decision
- increase the number of options leading up to staff and PC recommendations to Council

Various phases (*seem to be more about roles than phases*) in the planning process were articulated for the staff, PC, and Town Council:

Staff

- give recommendations and advice to applicants and look for red flags and issues with the applicant
- be clear on recommendations to approve, deny or redesign
- avoid subjectivity

PC

- carefully review staff reports and look for inconsistencies, compliance with the general plan, and whether the project is in the “public interest”
- do site visits
- be neutral in assessing projects
- articulate questions and concerns
- decide and move recommendations forward to Council

Town Council

- weigh applicant lobbying against staff and PC recommendations
- what is the basis for PC recommendation
- what are the staff recommendations
- does the applicant address concerns
- it is Council’s job to interpret and decide what is right for the community and in the interest of the Town versus the applicant’s interests
- mediate between PC and applicant

II. June 2002-Retreat Issues and Training

There is a document entitled "2002 Council/Commission Retreat: Issue Matrix" that reports on accomplishments, effective use of peer reviews, improvements in staff reports, a lack of interest in conducting joint TC/PC study sessions on major projects, and other topics. Reference was to clarification of design review process and use of architectural consultants. There was also a document that gave an overview of training for boards and commissions on how to conduct and facilitate meetings and the general role of commissioners.

III. 2003 Retreat Questionnaire

This questionnaire highlighted accomplishments of the past year and future projects for the Commission to undertake. Some major policy issues identified for future discussions of getting input from the Council on its policy interpretations, standardizing the format of PC study sessions, and detailed review of conditions before letters are sent to applicants.

III. June, 2004 Retreat (PC only)

The minutes refer to the Planning Director providing orientation to new members which would include Commission responsibilities, planning policies and codes, a tour of the Town and a review of the general plan, zoning codes, and hillside design guidelines. A mentor would be assigned to a new Commissioner to assist during the first few meetings.

Before PC meetings, commissioners will: Read and analyze the staff report visit the site and ask staff questions, review project plans in detail, review the applicant's letter of justification for the project, identify issues where it appears that policies and standards are lacking, and put on the record any substantive questions between PC members and the applicants or staff at the Commission meeting. The PC also discussed keeping questions concise, write out conditions tied to areas of concern and why actions are recommended that set forth new, stringent conditions. Denial motions should clearly state reasons for denial and underlying policies governing decisions.

Staff reports have improved and should continue to emphasize the big issues, identify policies that underlie issues, provide summaries of other committee's findings, and continue to enhance alternatives and recommendations to the Commission. Individual, substantive questions from individual Commissioners should be communicated to the entire Commission by the staff. Occasionally, staff should recommend study sessions to review major policies with the PC.

IV. April, 2005-Town Council/PC Retreat

This retreat was the result of concerns expressed by the Town Council, PC and public regarding planning processes. There were two broad themes: Internal disagreements and conflicts among Commissioners and the role of the PC particularly its quasi-judicial role versus its technical role. The focus of the retreat was on the latter item of clarifying the role of the PC and developing strategies and actions for improving the quality of PC meetings.

Five critical issues were identified:

1. The role of the consulting architect and the quality of the consultant's reports— Council members felt that the PC should rely on the consultant's reports and not question findings and recommendations in detail.
2. Role of staff and the types of permits and projects that go to PC---Council reaffirmed the status quo, i.e., keeping staff's role intact.
3. PC meeting procedure and role of the chair—only make motions after discussions
4. Consistency of the PC in applying the General Plan and other codes---the PC was encouraged to be consistent in applying Town policies and to use reasonable judgment in interpreting the General Plan and codes.
5. Attitude towards applicants---there were various references to the PC being customer friendly and some references to the role of the PC—this led, in part, to the best practices document.

Action Items from the retreat were:

1. Training for new and current commissioners with staff, consultants, and the DRC
2. Develop a model consulting architect letter to better document findings and recommendations
3. Staff will provide a summary of DRC actions
4. Staff will prepare a set of guidelines on the role of the PC

V. May, 2006 Retreat

This retreat resulted in a set of best practices derived from statements and policies set forth in the Council Code of Conduct and the Planning Commissioner's Handbook.

There are six categories of practices:

- Professional
- Customer-service oriented
- Good judgment
- Objective/fair
- Efficient
- Persuasive

The attached document, "Best Practices for Excellent Performance as a Town Council/Planning Commission Member", represents a consensus of Council and

Commissioners. It was envisioned that this would be used as a reference guide for their roles in the planning process and to improve individual and group performance. Two practices that emerged were (1) consistent and fair application of standards, codes and policies; and, (2) the importance of active and open listening.

Themes of the 2007 Retreat

As noted in some of the themes in the background paper for the 2007 retreat, there are various points from past discussions that recur:

- an improved understanding of roles and relationships of staff, Council and the PC
- understanding the process of weighing evidence
- the need to reach clear and objective decisions by the PC
- practicing constructive dialogue between commissioners and between the Commission and applicants, and the Commission and staff
- enhanced technical information, alternatives and recommendations from the staff to the PC
- better communication by staff of the basis of Council decisions to the Commission
- maximize objectivity
- clarity of reports from staff and consultants
- clarity in explanations of reasons for recommendations and decisions by the PC and Council
- ensuring that the General Plan and Town codes and policies are the underpinning of planning decisions
- treat applicants, fellow commissioners and staff fairly
- follow precepts set forth in Best Practices document

Les White
10/18/07



**TOWN COUNCIL/PLANNING COMMISSION ANNUAL RETREAT
WEDNESDAY, NOVEMBER 7, 2007**

Checklist for Successful Board, Commission, Committee Meetings

- Understand the role and purpose of your board/commission/committee.
 - Ask staff for clarification when needed
 - Put on the agenda a discussion of the role or purpose if not clear
 - Schedule an annual discussion of the work plan
- Plan ahead for meetings.
 - Read all materials in advance
 - Visit any sites or facilities that will help you understand the issues
 - Ask questions of staff before the meeting
 - Show up on time and be ready to work promptly
 - Alert staff liaison if you cannot attend
- Develop positive relationships.
 - With staff
 - With your other advisory body members
 - With the public
 - With the entire Council
- Treat everyone with respect and civility.
 - Be fair and consistent, both with people you know and do not know
 - Pay attention to all speakers
 - Actively listen to what they are saying
 - Ask questions for clarification but don't get into debates or cross-examinations
 - Watch your body language – show you are interested in what each other and the public has to say
- Participate fully.
 - Attend all your meetings
 - Take an active role
 - Be an enthusiastic member of the team
 - Attend meetings of other advisory bodies or the Council to stay current on city issues
 - Volunteer to chair the group or be involved in sub committees
- Keep an open mind.
 - Don't make up your mind before the meeting
 - Listen to all points of view
 - Seek to understand what others are saying
 - State your reasons for voting as you do so that your colleagues, the public and the Council all understand your reasons, whether you are in the majority or minority vote

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Checklist for Successful Board, Commission, Committee Meetings

November 7, 2007

- Respect the role of the Chair, which is to:
 - Ensure the commission stays on track with the topic
 - Call on people to speak
 - State the procedures of the meeting
 - Make sure the commission and audience understand the sequence of discussion and actions on a topic; particularly a complicated topic
 - Ensure respectful behavior of all parties -- and enforce it through breaks when needed, reminding people of the expectations of civility.

- Learn something everyday.
 - Go to workshops sponsored by the League of California Cities
 - Read materials related to the advisory body

- Act with integrity.
 - Hold yourself to a higher standard than is required
 - Openly share information
 - Keep your word
 - Don't accept or solicit gifts
 - Tell the truth

- Have fun!



TOWN COUNCIL/PLANNING COMMISSION ANNUAL RETREAT WEDNESDAY, NOVEMBER 7, 2007

Boards, Commissions and Committees Guidelines for Good Communication

COMMUNICATION STEPS

1. Separate facts from interpretations (feelings, opinions, belief)
2. Accept others' interpretations
3. Focus on positive interpretations
4. Create win/win solutions

BASIC GROUND RULES OF CONDUCT

1. Listen to each other
2. No side conversation
3. Focus on issues, not personalities
4. Be specific and use examples
5. Short relevant information
6. Short, to the point, statement
7. Keep to the point of discussion
8. Focus on interest, not your own position or belief
9. No interruptions, give others a change to talk
10. Okay to disagree – constructively
11. Participate fully
12. Seek first to understand, then to be understood
13. Don't dwell on the past, the "good old days" (or bad)
14. Don't hold a grudge.
14. Keep a positive attitude

BRAINSTORMING

1. Generate as many ideas as possible in a short amount of time
2. Think creatively
3. Build on another's ideas
4. Don't criticize another's ideas

PROBLEM SOLVING STEPS

1. Gather different viewpoints about the problem
2. Get agreement on the real problems
3. Analyze the problem (root causes)
4. Generate a list of possible solutions
5. Assess the solutions – costs/benefits analysis
6. Select the best solutions

7. Identify who, how, and when the solution(s) will be implemented
8. Identify who, how, and when the solution(s) will be evaluated

REACHING CONSENSUS

1. Listen to other's ideas as an ally
2. Be open-minded about other's ideas
3. Strive for ideas that work for the whole group
4. Support ideas that you can live with
5. Commit to the idea agreed to by the whole group

***"Today's problems are yesterday's solutions."
Albert Einstein***