



**Boulder County
Land Use Department
Publications**

Guidelines for Planning Commission Hearings

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Office Hours:

Monday – Friday 8 a.m. to 4:30 p.m.
Closed Tuesdays 8 to 10 a.m.

Guidelines for Planning Commission Hearings

The Planning Commission is a voluntary citizen's group appointed by the Board of County Commissioners (BOCC). Planning Commission members do not represent specific geographic areas of the County or specific disciplines. However, the group usually includes members from a range of communities and backgrounds. While the Planning Commissioners bring a variety of experience to their roles, they all have a common interest in the public planning process.

Planning Commission's Role:

For certain matters that relate to the Boulder County Comprehensive Plan and the Location and Extent review process, the Planning Commission is the final decision maker. In all other matters, the Planning Commission serves as an advisory body that makes recommendations to the Board of County Commissioners. The BOCC, at a subsequent public hearing following the Planning Commission hearing, makes a final (binding) decision.

County Staff's Role:

During a public hearing, the staff will present findings as to whether a proposal meets the requirements of the Land Use Code and any other applicable regulations. In making this determination, all of the information submitted in the application is reviewed and a site visit is conducted. In completing this work, the staff is impartial and objective and is neither an advocate for the applicant nor for anyone in opposition. The Planning Commission relies on, but is not bound by, the professional opinion and recommendation of staff.

Overview of the Public Hearing Process

1. Convening and introduction by the Chair of the Planning Commission
2. Staff Presentation – Basic cases 15 minutes. Involved cases 20-25 minutes
 - a. Questions from the Commission
3. Applicant – 20 minutes (not required, see below)
 - a. Questions from the Commission
4. Public Testimony – 3 minutes per speaker, unless otherwise noted
5. Staff response to issues and questions raised
6. Applicant response
7. Commissioners' discussion and decision

Applicant Presentations

- A presentation by the applicant is not required but is allowed. Applicant presentations should be no longer than 20 minutes. Planners will notify the applicant of this time limitation at the time a docket is scheduled in front of the Planning Commission.
- At the beginning of the meeting, the Chair of the Commission will remind the applicant of the time allotted for the presentation. The presentation may be timed so the applicant knows when time is running out.
- The presentation time does not include any questions from the Commission and the time it takes to answer them. Commissioners will attempt to hold their questions until the applicant has finished presenting.

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Public Hearing

Addressing the Commission

Members of the public are welcome to address the Commission when the presiding officer asks for public testimony. In most hearings there is a sign-up sheet for the public prior to the start of the hearing. The Commission will hear from those on the sign-up sheet first and then from others who wish to speak.

- Comments are generally limited to three minutes, unless otherwise determined.
- Speakers may pool time, up to 10 minutes, if everyone who wishes to pool time is present.
- The presentations will be timed so that the speaker knows when time is running out.

Before the Hearing

- If you have questions about an item on the agenda, feel free to contact the Land Use Department prior to the hearing. Knowing the answers to some of your questions prior to the hearing may help you prepare your response.
- Plan your presentation. If you have handouts or a long document, you can save time by making it available to the Land Use Department staff project manager at least 8 days before the public hearing. This way it can be made available to members of the Planning Commission in their packets, which they read prior to the hearings.
- Determine if others will be addressing the same issues. If so, try to coordinate your presentation before the hearing to avoid duplication.
- Sign the speaker sign-up sheet at the table outside of the hearing room.

At the Hearing

- Be present at the start of the hearing. Presentations by staff may answer some of your questions. Everyone present usually will have an opportunity to speak, but sometimes, because of large turnouts, this is not possible. Of course, there is no requirement to speak. If you prefer, you may choose only to observe the process.
- When you are called to the podium, please give your name and address and whether you are in favor or against the proposal. For example: "I'm John Doppler, my address is 101 Acoustic Way, and I approve of this proposal for the following reasons..." If you are officially representing a group such as the Audubon Society, Chamber of Commerce, homeowner's association, or others, please state that for the record as well.
- For the sake of efficiency, you may want to make a statement such as "I agree with the previous speaker(s)" and then elaborate on any new or additional information you want to provide. Another time-saving measure is to mention that you represent others, and then ask everyone in your group to so indicate by raising their hand.
- Since the official record is the audio recording of the hearing, please ensure that you are adequately heard by adjusting the microphone to your height and speak directly into it.
- Speakers should refrain from reading long documents, which may be submitted in advance and made a part of the public record. Any documents provided during the hearing also become part of the public record.

Decorum

- The Planning Commission understands that hearings about plans that could impact your property or way of life can be very sensitive. However, a public hearing is an official civil proceeding where **it is inappropriate to cheer, boo, talk, or applaud**. Members of the public are not expected to agree on all issues but must make an effort to respect the process so that all viewpoints are heard. All comments should be addressed to the Chair. Questioning and arguing between individuals in the audience is not only inappropriate but is not an effective way to make a case to support your views on an issue.

Submitting Materials

- Please remember that any reports, maps, photos, or other information you provide during the public hearing become part of the public record and cannot be returned unless arrangements are made to duplicate the material at your expense.
- We request that 8-1/2 x 11" copies of oversized materials be provided for filing and storage. Oversized materials that cannot be placed within the file may become damaged and are at risk of losing their association with the file.