



Michigan Association of Planning
A Chapter of the American Planning Association

Guidelines for Planning Commissioners, Zoning Board of Appeals, and Elected Officials

1. Zoning administration is not merely the responsibility of the zoning administrator or building official. It is the responsibility of every local official who has a role in local zoning. Therefore, each local official involved in zoning decision making should be well informed about his/her responsibilities in helping to administer the local zoning ordinance.
2. Every new member should be given an orientation to the job before being thrust into a decision making role.
3. If you have a conflict of interest, remove yourself from that portion of the meeting, it is not sufficient to participate in the hearing and merely refrain from voting.
4. When in doubt – check it out, before acting. For guidance, examine the statute, the ordinance and past procedure. Consult your planner or attorney when necessary, but when a decision can be made – don't unnecessarily delay it.
5. Consistency in decision making, fairness and equal treatment of each applicant are essential. But, mistakes should not be perpetuated. If changes in the ordinance or variance procedures are necessary, they should be promptly made.
6. Adopt and adhere to rules of procedure for all public hearings and meetings.
7. Zoning procedures stated in the ordinance and the zoning enabling act must be carefully followed. If a step is missed or notices are deficient, it is generally best to stop the process and begin again.
8. The purpose of public hearings is to provide the opportunity for citizens to be heard. But the decision body should not be swayed by the applause meter. All input should be evaluated from its factual relevance to the issue and the standards required by the ordinance.
9. When a proposed land use meets all the standards stated in the ordinance, approval must be granted.
10. Good record keeping is essential. Every decision must be documented with concrete reasons based on identified facts for the action taken. If facts

Michigan Association of Planning
219 South Main Street, Suite 300 Ann Arbor, Michigan 48104
Phone: 734.913.2000 Fax: 734.913.2061 web: planningmi.org

- demonstrate ordinance standards are or are not met, document those facts as the basis for the conclusions reached.
11. The zoning ordinance should be based upon a realistic and achievable plan for the community's growth and development. Planning and evidence of purposeful, foresighted action are essential to effective local growth management.
 12. Zoning ordinance provisions and zoning administration should be carefully coordinated with other local land development regulations including: subdivision controls, building and housing codes, and health codes.
 13. Stay informed about changes in zoning law, techniques and court decisions through various publications and participation with groups like the Michigan Association of Planning, Michigan Municipal League, Michigan Association of Counties, and the American Planning Association.
 14. Periodically, examine your ordinance for conflicts with state or local laws regulating specific land uses and modify or eliminate unnecessary and overlapping local regulations and requirements.
 15. Monitoring land use changes and pursuing correction of violations is necessary to insure continued ordinance compliance and public confidence in the zoning program.
 16. Undertake a comprehensive review of local community plans and the zoning ordinance at least once every five years.
 17. Examine alternatives to stretch available monetary and manpower resources for operating the zoning program, but be willing to spend the money necessary to get the job done right.
 18. Develop a continuing public information program to educate about the purposes and benefits of local planning and growth management is the best way to develop and solidify public support.
 19. A zoning ordinance is only one of many local "tools" available to implement best practices. Other tools including subdivision regulations, capital improvement programs, tax incentive programs and special purpose ordinances should be developed when needed and coordinated with zoning.