

**LA PLATA COUNTY
POSITION DESCRIPTION
VOLUNTEER – PLANNING COMMISSION**

Strategic Plan Alignment: Sustainable Development

Purpose: To act in an advisory capacity to the Board of County Commissioners with respect to land-use planning.

Duties:

- a. Make recommendations to the Board of County Commissioners (BOCC) concerning land use matters and decisions;
 - i. Develop and propose subdivision regulations to the BOCC;
 - ii. Develop, propose and recommend land use and environmental regulations;
 - iii. Review land use requests and subdivision proposals;
- b. Prepare and recommend amendments to the Comprehensive Land Use Plan for the purpose of promoting the public health, safety and general welfare of the unincorporated areas of the County and certify the Plan to the BOCC;
- c. Render decisions regarding development proposals referred to the Planning Commission;
- d. Consult and cooperate with the planning commissions of incorporated municipalities within the County to perform joint planning functions as prescribed by the BOCC or intergovernmental agreements.
- e. Be willing, on a rotating basis, to serve as the Planning Commission representative on either the Board of Adjustment or Joint Planning Commission, if requested.

Full Resolution creating the Planning Commission can be found in the La Plata County Code: Chapter 66, Article III, Sec. 66-41 through 56.

Qualifications:

1. Each member shall be a resident of the County;

Personal Commitments:

1. To attend all meetings of the Planning Commission unless previously excused by the Chair.
 - a. Members appointed as “associate” / alternate members are obligated to attend meetings, and shall serve on the commission at meetings only when requested to do so by the director of the planning department pursuant to La Plata County Code Section 66-46; and
 - b. Failure of a member to attend 75% of the meetings at which attendance is required shall be a basis for removal from the commission by the Board of County Commissioners pursuant to La Plata County Code Section 66-45.
2. To follow the direction and formal guidance of the BOCC;
3. To be well informed and prepared to discuss the proposed issues and business at scheduled meetings, including having read all materials relevant to the topic at hand prior to the meetings;
4. To fully participate in meetings of the Planning Commission;
5. To avoid any conflicts of interest or circumstances which would create a perception of impropriety;
6. To observe local, state and federal laws, particularly open meetings and open records laws;
7. To be willing to attend trainings and conferences in order to gain greater understanding of planning and governmental procedure issues;

8. To cooperatively work with and respect the opinions of other Planning Commission members;
 9. To treat all constituents and staff members with honor, dignity and respect;
 10. To avoid the acceptance of any gifts or favors related to one's service on this commission;
 11. To conduct myself in accordance with the Planning Commission's adopted rules of procedure while representing the Planning Commission;
 12. To honor and comply with the La Plata County Code of Ethics Policy (Attachment A);
 13. To honor and comply with the Planning Commission members duties and responsibilities (Attachment B).
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14. To annually attend the County's Boards and Commissions volunteer orientation and at least three Planning commission training sessions each year.

I understand and agree to abide by these personal commitments.

Name: _____ Date: _____

Signature: _____

Planning Commission Duties and Responsibilities

To Serve the Public Interest

Appointment to the La Plata County Planning Commission (PC) represents a public trust, giving a PC member a responsibility to care for the general welfare of the county and an opportunity to help in shaping the present and future quality of life in La Plata County.

Each PC member's primary responsibility is to represent the best interests of the county as a whole. PC members are therefore expected to keep consideration of the general public interest foremost during their deliberations. They should consider the interests of particular individuals or groups only in the context of their relationship to the general public interest. PC members are also expected to retain an open mind to all viewpoints. They should not act as delegates of the particular municipalities, neighborhoods, occupations, interest groups, or socio-economic groups of which they are a part.

Furthermore, the PC often serves as a public forum for citizen participation and discussion of planning issues important to the community. At such times, the PC should attempt to draw out and clarify the positions of people on all sides of the issue, and to identify the relationship of such positions to the public interest.

To Acquire Adequate Information and Knowledge

Each PC member has the responsibility to acquire whatever information and knowledge is necessary to fully understand and make wise decisions and recommendations in the interest of the County. To this end, a PC member is expected to depend on both his or her own personal background, experience, expertise, and familiarity with the County (especially that part of the County in which he or she resides), as well as the expertise and knowledge of, and information available to, County staff members.

PC members are expected to have a full understanding of the County's Land Use Code and other adopted County policies concerning development. They are expected to be familiar with the general scope, applicability, and organization of the County's zoning and subdivision regulations and review procedures. And they are expected to have a thorough knowledge and understanding of those policies, regulations, and procedures most applicable to the PC's administrative responsibilities. Members are encouraged to expand their knowledge and understanding of planning issues through such means as attending planning workshops and conferences and reading planning-related literature. PC members may join the American Planning Association, which offers a number of workshops and conferences and provides the monthly Planning magazine. And PC members may review books, periodicals, and other documents available through the La Plata County Planning Department.

Members are also encouraged to improve their understanding of current applications and issues by discussing them individually with the relevant staff members, either over the phone or in person. (But PC members should avoid contacting applicants and other interested parties outside

of meetings. : At PC meetings, members have the responsibility to ensure that they are provided (by an applicant, interested party, or the staff) information of sufficient scope and depth to allow them to fully understand the issues before the PC and the alternative actions available to the PC. If the application, staff report, and other documents submitted to the PC regarding a particular item are insufficient to enable a PC member to fully understand the issues immediately before the PC, that PC member has the responsibility to ask questions of, or request additional information from, the applicant, other interested parties, and the staff (as appropriate) to acquire the necessary understanding.

To Be Fair

The PC also has the responsibility to ensure that its decision-making process is fair. This means that persons likely to be interested in a particular subject coming before the PC must be provided adequate and timely notice of the meeting at which the PC will review the subject, an opportunity to attend that meeting and present views and information concerning the subject, and an opportunity to know the information and considerations on which the PC bases its action concerning the subject.

Fairness also requires that PC members avoid any bias or the appearance of any conflict of interest in their decisions, that the PC act in a timely manner, that the PC keep full and accurate records of its proceedings, and that the PC establish and make available the ground rules under which it conducts business.

To Make Rational Decisions

The Planning PC has the responsibility to ensure that the decision-making process it applies to any issue before it is not only rational, but is also perceived as rational. This means the PC's decision should consist of conclusions that are based on findings related to the standards, policies, and considerations applicable to the particular type of decision. Furthermore, such findings should be supported by information available to the PC — that is, information contained in an application, staff report, or other document submitted to the PC, or included in any testimony presented before the PC, or explicitly stated by a PC member from his or her personal observations, knowledge, or experience. Although this responsibility is important to all PC decisions, it is an important legal requirement with administrative decisions concerning preliminary subdivision plans and quasi-judicial decisions concerning requests for hardship variances from Subdivision Ordinance standards.

To Take a Broad Perspective

PC members have the responsibility to recognize the comprehensive and long-range nature of many of the PC's decisions. They must consider, as well as balance and integrate, not only the many physical aspects of the issue being decided, but often also its economic and social aspects. They must consider not only the decision's immediate impacts on those persons most affected, but also its future and secondary impacts on the County as a whole. The PC should thus explicitly evaluate all facts, alternatives, means, and consequences relevant to its decisions.

As the County's body of elected officials, the La Plata County Board of County Commissioners are principally occupied with resolving pressing current problems that usually demand immediate action and that often involve the need to balance competing interests. The County Commissioners, therefore, rely on the PC to give them advice that reflects a broader and longer-range viewpoint than that demanded of them.

