

## PLANNING COMMISSION AND CITY COUNCIL MEETINGS

### The Planning Commission

The Planning Commission usually holds its regularly scheduled monthly meeting on the first Thursday *after* the first Tuesday of each month at 5:30 PM. in the Council Chambers of City Hall (current year schedule attached).

Anyone wishing to speak on a public hearing item is required to sign up at the meeting. Meeting Format:

- The Planning Commission Chair will read a brief description of each public hearing item.
- The Chair will then call on the planning staff to present the item.
- The Chair will call on the applicant or the applicant's representative to present the application. At this time, applicant(s) should explain to the Commission the reasons for the request and give detailed information. The Commissioners will then have the opportunity to ask questions.
- The Chair will then call on others from the public to speak both for and against the request based on the sign-in sheet provided.
- The Chair will give each side a chance for rebuttal.
- After all testimony has been presented, the Commission may ask question of staff, the applicant or others.
- The Commission will close the public hearing. Once this is done no one may speak to the Commission unless the Commission directly asks a question or re-opens the public hearing.
- The Commission will then discuss the application and make a decision to approve in whole or in part, deny, or continue. The Commission's decision may be rendered within 45 days of the hearing, however, it is most often made at the same meeting.
- The decision of the Commission is only a recommendation for those items that automatically go to City Council, such as an Annexation petition.
- The decision of the Commission on items that do not automatically go to City Council is **FINAL, UNLESS:**
  1. It fails to achieve a three-fourths majority vote of the members present whom vote to grant or deny the request; or
  2. If the decision is appealed within 15 days of the Planning Commissions' decision.
- **Appeal forms** may be obtained from the Planning Department staff.

### Time Limitation for Public Hearings (PLANNING COMMISSION)

In order to promote more discussion of topics throughout the Planning Commission agenda the Commission has adopted the following time limitation policy for all zoning hearings:

- The Planning Department Staff will initiate the zoning hearing with a brief description and the recommendation, 10 minutes;
- The Proponents will present their case. Individuals limited to five (5) minutes per person, spokesperson may use all twenty (20) minutes.
- The Opponents will present their case. Individuals limited to five (5) minutes per person, spokesperson may use all twenty (20) minutes.
- A total of five (5) minutes will be allowed to both proponents and opponents for rebuttal.

(Please note that as the Commission asks questions of the speaker, the time clock will be temporarily stopped until the question is answered and the speaker continues his presentation.)

The Planning Commission, following a majority vote, and if it believes that a particular situation warrants it, may extend the time; provided that the extension affords equal time to both sides, or it may waive the rules on time limitations. Prior to the hearing, Planning Department Staff will set up a table for people to make use of a sign-up sheet if they plan to speak on a zoning item. This will give the Chairman an idea of the anticipated number of speakers. Thus, total time and individual times may be adjusted in advance as needed. Failure to sign the sign-up sheet would not preclude someone the right to speak.

### **The City Council**

- If the case proceeds to the City Council, it will be heard at 6:00 P.M. on the third Tuesday of the month **following** the month of the Planning Commission hearing (see attached timetable), at the Public Forum room in the Gaston County Courthouse.
- Persons wanting special notice of the City Council hearing in the event the matter goes to City Council must sign up for notification on a list made available at the Planning Commission meeting.
- The City Council meeting will follow the same format as the Planning Commission meeting. This meeting is televised.
- The decision of the City Council is final.

### **Time Limitation for Public Hearings (CITY COUNCIL)**

In order to promote more opportunity for citizen input of topics throughout the City Council Agenda, the Gastonia City Council has adopted the following time limitation policy for all public hearings:

- The Planning Department Staff will initiate the public hearing, give a brief description of the request, and the provide recommendations of both staff and the Planning Commission (Approximately 10 minutes).
- The Applicant(s) will present their case. (Generally, a total of 12 minutes will be allotted. This time may be allotted to a single spokesperson or may be divided in any manner between multiple speakers. The Applicant(s) should plan ahead as to how the speaking time is to be divided.)
- Proponents or Opponents, if any, will present their case. (Generally, a total of 12 minutes will be allotted. This time may be allotted to a single spokesperson or may be divided in any manner between multiple speakers. The Opponents should plan ahead as to how the speaking time is to be divided.)
- A total of five (5) minutes will be allowed to proponents for rebuttal.
- A total of five (5) minutes will be allowed to opponents for rebuttal.
- The staff will have 3 minutes clarify matters or respond to issues raised in the debate.
- Total potential time - 45 minutes.

At each City Council meeting the Planning Department Staff will have a table at which individuals wishing to speak should sign up. This will give the Mayor an idea of the anticipated number of speakers.

A staff member will indicate to each speaker when they have one minute remaining with a yellow light and when their allotted time has expired with a red light. Each speaker is asked to carefully monitor the signals so as not to infringe on another speaker's time.

\* If a particular situation warrants more time, the City Council, following a majority vote, may extend equal time to both the proponents and opponents.

### **City of Gastonia Continuance Policy**

One continuance per application, which may be granted by the Planning Commission and/or the City Council for a period not to exceed two months unless it is determined that extenuating circumstances, beyond the control of the applicant, warrants the granting of additional time.