

PLANNING COMMISSION AGENDA ITEM
CITY OF SHORELINE, WASHINGTON

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| <p>AGENDA TITLE: Condensing Planning Commission Minutes for Study Meetings DEPARTMENT: Planning & Development Services PRESENTED BY: Steven Cohn, Senior Planner</p> |
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PROBLEM/ISSUE STATEMENT:

Over the years, minutes of Planning Commission meetings have provided a greater level of detail and become increasingly lengthy. This was due to concerns over how individuals were being summarized and what was being omitted. As a result, the minutes writer began to report minutes that were longer and more detailed.

BACKGROUND & DISCUSSION:

SMC 2.20.030.C states that “The commission shall adopt such rules and regulations as are necessary for the conduct of its business and shall keep a taped record of its proceedings and such written notes as the commission may from time to time direct. The taped record and any written notes shall be a public record. [Ord. 36 § 3, 1995]”

The Planning Commission adopted Bylaws that states its Clerk shall “record and retain, by electronic means, each meeting for the official record and shall prepare summary minutes for the Commission”.

It appears the intent of the SMC and Bylaws is to have the audio recording be the essential record and the written minutes are intended only to summarize the record.

By definition, minutes are the historical record of an officially convened meeting of an organized decision-making body and focus on decisions and actions taken by the group. The minutes may also convey the thought process that led to decisions.

For several years, Planning & Development Services has hired a minute writer to review audio tapes and draft Planning Commission minutes. With our current detailed minutes, for every hour of a study session meeting it takes three hours to draft the minutes, and for every hour of a public hearing it takes four hours to draft the minutes.

The benefit of detailed minutes is that they reflect the main ideas in a discussion and, in the case of public hearings and the follow up deliberations, help Council understand how the Planning Commission came to its recommendation.

The downside of detailed minutes is that they are expensive and lengthy. They take a lot of staff time to prepare and to review. Having less detailed minutes would free up resources which could be used in other ways.

Given the current attention to budgets, but understanding the usefulness of minutes, particularly as the record of a public hearing, staff is proposing that the Commission keep less detailed minutes for study sessions. Staff will bring an example of “less detailed” minutes to your meeting so the Commissioners can preview what a shorter version would look like.

RECOMMENDATION

Staff is recommending the Planning Commission shorten its meeting minutes for study meetings while keeping the minutes for public hearings detailed. At this time, we are *not proposing* to have “summary” minutes for study sessions, which only report actions and votes; rather we would be providing less detailed minutes that would report the main ideas in the discussion, but will not include each Commissioner’s comments. The minutes for public hearings will be as detailed as they have been in the past.

This would provide a cost savings which will be helpful in the present economic environment. It will also free up some staff time that can be shifted from review of detailed minutes (for study sessions) in order to work on other tasks.

If you have questions or comments about this proposal, please contact Steve Cohn at 801-2511 or scohn@shorelinewa.gov prior to the meeting.