

RULES OF PROCEDURE WHITLEY COUNTY ADVISORY PLAN COMMISSION

ARTICLE I: MEMBERS, OFFICERS, AND STAFF

1.1 COMPOSITION OF COMMISSION MEMBERSHIP

Membership on the Columbia City Advisory Plan Commission (“Commission”) shall be in accordance with Indiana Code, which at the time of adoption of these rules is stated in IC 36-7-4-208, is summarized as follows:

- One (1) member appointed by the County Commissioners from its own membership.
- One (1) member appointed by the County Council from its own membership.
- The county surveyor, or the county surveyor’s designee. The county surveyor’s designee must be a resident of the county.
- The county agricultural extension educator. The county agricultural extension educator must be a resident of the county. If not, the county extension board shall select a resident who is a property owner with agricultural interest to serve on the Commission for a term not to exceed one (1) year. In addition, the non-resident county agricultural extension educator shall serve the Commission in a nonvoting advisory capacity.
- Five (5) citizen members appointed by the County Commissioners, of whom not more than three (3) may be of the same political party. Each member must be either a resident of an unincorporated area of the county, or be a resident of the county who also owns real property located in an unincorporated area. At least three (3) members must be residents of the unincorporated area of the county.

Alternate member(s) may be appointed in the same manner and by the same appointing authority as the regular member(s) (IC 36-7-4-220). The alternate member may serve if the regular member is disqualified for a conflict of interest under IC 36-7-4-223. An alternate member does not serve if the regular member is merely unavailable.

IC 36-7-4-213 states that the Commission is to designate non-voting advisory representatives to serve on the municipal plan commissions. The Executive Director of the Columbia City/Whitley County Joint Planning & Building Department (“Department”) is designated as this representative. Additionally, each municipal plan commission is to designate a non-voting representative to serve on the County Plan Commission.

1.2 OFFICERS OF THE PLAN COMMISSION

The President and Vice President shall be elected by the Commission at the first regular meeting held each year. The Department is designated as the Secretary.

1.3 DUTIES OF PRESIDENT AND VICE PRESIDENT

The President supervises the affairs of the Commission and presides at all meetings of the Commission.

The Vice President shall serve in the absence or unavailability of the President.

In the event that both the President and Vice President are absent from a meeting, a temporary President will be elected by those members present.

The President, subject to these rules, decides all points of procedure unless otherwise directed by a majority of the members of the Plan Commission.

1.4 DUTIES OF SECRETARY

The Secretary directs the day-to-day proceedings of the Commission. Subject to the provisions of the Zoning Ordinance, these rules, and the direction of the Plan Commission and its President, the Secretary conducts all correspondence of the Commission; sends out all notices required by these rules and the order of the Commission; attends all meetings of the Commission and all hearings; scrutinizes all applications to see that these rules are

complied with; keeps the dockets and minutes of the Commission's proceedings; compiles all required records; maintains the necessary files and indexes; and generally performs clerical work of the Plan Commission.

The Secretary may demand from an applicant such additional information and data as may be required to fully advise the Plan Commission with reference to an application, whether such information and data are called for by the official forms or not. Any failure or refusal on the part of the applicant to furnish such additional information or data may be grounds for dismissal of the application by the Plan Commission.

1.5 CONFLICT OF INTEREST

Any member who

- has a direct or indirect financial interest in any zoning ordinance or map amendment or adoption; or
- has a direct or indirect financial interest in or is biased or prejudiced or otherwise unable to be impartial regarding any subdivision request or development plan; or
- otherwise meets the requirements defined by I.C. 36-7-4-223 or I.C. 35-44.1-1-4

shall have a conflict of interest. In addition to any statutorily required action, any member having such conflict of interest will announce the conflict at the beginning of the meeting and prior to the introduction of the application which contains said conflict, and shall thereafter recuse himself and refrain from comment, discussion, or participation regarding the request, including voting thereon.

If an alternate member has been duly appointed and is available and qualified, the alternate member will replace the member holding the conflict of interest.

1.6 COMPENSATION

Members are entitled to be compensated for their attendance at regular meetings, special meetings, executive sessions, and training workshops. A member may “attend” by physical presence or by electronic participation, subject to the rules herein. Members may be compensated for attendance even if obligated to recuse themselves due to conflict of interest.

Attendance at committee meetings (including Executive Committee meetings), other training or education opportunities, and other meetings on behalf of the Commission are not compensated.

The amount of compensation is set by the County Council; currently, it is \$75 per meeting attended.

Compensation for travel mileage is not provided at this time.

ARTICLE II: MEETINGS

2.1 MEETINGS GENERALLY

All meetings at which actions are to be taken shall be open to the public. As permissible by the state code, meetings may be considered “public” if broadcast live by electronic means.

Executive sessions may be held to discuss topics as permitted by state code.

2.2 SCHEDULED REGULAR MEETINGS

Regular meetings are held on the third Wednesday of each month, excluding holidays. A calendar of the regular meetings is to be prepared by the Secretary prior to the beginning of each year. Meetings will begin at 7:00 P.M., Eastern Time.

Meetings are held in the Whitley County Government Center, 220 West Van Buren Street, Columbia City, Indiana, unless otherwise announced.

Regular meetings may be cancelled due to a lack of agenda items.

2.3 SPECIAL MEETINGS AND EXECUTIVE SESSIONS

Special meetings and executive sessions may be held upon call of the President, or by written request by two members to the Secretary, or as determined by the Commission at a regular meeting. The Secretary shall send to all members, at least three (3) days in advance of said meeting, a notice fixing the time and place of the meeting. Written notice to members of a special meeting or executive session is not required if the time and place of the meeting has been fixed in a regular meeting. (IC 36-7-4-307)

Only matters included in the call for a special meeting or executive session shall be considered, except by unanimous approval of all members of the Plan Commission.

2.4 QUORUM AND AUTHORIZATION

A majority of the members of the entire Plan Commission constitutes a quorum; this is currently five (5) members. No action shall be official unless authorized by a quorum of members at a regular or properly called special meeting.

No official business shall be authorized at a meeting lacking a quorum, and any items of official business shall be automatically continued to the next regular meeting.

2.5 MINUTES AND RECORDS

The Plan Commission shall keep minutes of its proceedings, keep records of its examinations and other official actions, and shall record the vote on all actions taken.

The Secretary maintains the record of the minutes, in which shall be recorded the decision relating to each application together with the vote of each member of the Commission present, those absent being so marked, together with other actions of the Commission, and including a record of the transactions at hearing.

All minutes and records shall be filed in the office of the Plan Commission and shall be a public record.

Regularly scheduled meetings of the Commission may be recorded. If recorded, the audio or video tapes or digital files of each meeting will be retained for no less than five (5) years from the date of the meeting and shall be a public record.

All exhibits, whether submitted by a petitioner or remonstrator, shall become the property of the Commission and shall remain and become a part of the case in which the exhibits were submitted.

2.6 ORDER OF BUSINESS AT REGULAR MEETINGS

The general order of business at regular meetings of the Plan Commission will be as follows:

- Roll Call
- Election of officers (at the first regular meeting each year or as needed in case of absences)
- Consideration of minutes of previous meeting(s)
- Old business
- New business
- Other business
- Adjournment

The order of business item types will be initially set by the Secretary as follows:

- Zone map amendments (rezonings)
- Subdivisions, with the further categorization as applicable:
 - Minor plats
 - Major primary plats
 - Secondary plats
- Development plans

- Ordinance text amendments
- Comprehensive Plans, resolutions, modifications, etc.

The President may reorder business items as may be necessary to conduct an orderly and efficient meeting.

2.7 ELECTRONIC MEETINGS AND MEMBER PARTICIPATION

The Commission may conduct meetings that include member participation by electronic means, as provided by IC 5-14-1.5-3.5.

All votes taken during a meeting under this section must be taken by roll call vote.

At least fifty percent (50%) of the members of the Commission must be physically present at a meeting.

A member may not attend more than fifty percent (50%) of the Commission's regular meetings in a calendar year by means of electronic communication, unless the member's electronic participation is due to: military service, illness or other medical condition, death of a relative, or an emergency involving actual or threatened injury to persons or property.

A member may not participate in a meeting by electronic communication if the Commission is attempting to take action on:

- a primary plat for a major subdivision;
- a proposed text amendment to a zoning or subdivision ordinance;
- a proposed zoning or subdivision ordinance; or
- a proposed Comprehensive Plan.

A member may attend two (2) consecutive meetings (a set of meetings) by electronic communication. A member shall physically attend at least one (1) meeting between sets of meetings that the member attends by electronic communication, unless the member's absence is due to: military service, illness or other medical condition, death of a relative, or an emergency involving actual or threatened injury to persons or property. Documentation of such cause will be provided to the Secretary and kept as part of the meeting record.

Notice of a member's intention to participate electronically should be given to the Secretary by 3 P.M. on the day of the meeting.

2.8 ELECTRONIC MEETINGS AND PARTICIPATION BY OTHERS

An applicant must physically attend the hearing to provide information and respond to questions about their request. Exception may be made on an individual basis by the President only for good cause shown.

Members of the public may attend and observe an electronic meeting using the technology made available by the Commission. There may be opportunity for members of the public to register comment during public hearings via electronic means. If possible, oral comments will be taken in the same manner as in-person attendees. Otherwise, written comments may be transmitted, which will be entered into the record and treated like any other submitted comment.

2.9 ABSENCES

Members should notify the Secretary if they are not able to attend a meeting in person as soon as practicable, and no later than noon on the day of the meeting, and they should indicate if they intend to participate electronically instead.

Even if not intending to participate electronically, members should attempt to notify the Secretary before the meeting if they will not be present.

2.10 MEETING LENGTH

During any regular meeting, no public hearing will be opened after 9:30 P.M., and any scheduled public hearing items not yet heard will be automatically continued to the next regular meeting.

If a public hearing is already in progress at 9:30 P.M., final action on the petition will be taken no later than 10:00 P.M., or the hearing will be continued.

Regular meetings will adjourn by 10:30 P.M.

ARTICLE III: PETITIONS FOR PUBLIC HEARING

3.1 APPLICATIONS

A petition for any requested action on behalf of the Plan Commission shall be filed on forms made available through the Secretary which shall be completed and submitted along with all other required information, data, and drawings as required by the Zoning Ordinance and/or Subdivision Control Ordinance.

For proposed zone map amendments, the property owner shall be the applicant or shall submit a notarized agent statement permitting the applicant to file on their behalf.

For other types of applications, a notarized agent statement is not required. Other evidence of owner consent may be provided or required.

3.2 FEES

Applications and petitions shall be accompanied by the filing fees as are established by the Department from time to time. Fees shall be paid to the Department.

3.3 DOCKET AND CALENDAR

Each application filed in proper form with the required data shall be numbered serially, docketed, and shall be placed upon the calendar of the Plan Commission by the Secretary. The docket numbers shall begin anew on January first of each year and shall generally be hyphenated with the number of the year in which the application is to be heard, a “W” indicating a Whitley County application, an abbreviation indicating the type of case, and the number of case.

| <u>Petition type</u> | <u>Docket number example</u> |
|---------------------------------------|------------------------------|
| Zone map amendments | 21-W-REZ-1 |
| Zoning ordinance text amendments | 21-W-ZOA-1 |
| Subdivision plat approval | 21-W-SUBD-1 |
| Subdivision ordinance text amendments | 21-W-SOA-1 |
| Development plan approval | 21-W-DEV-1 |
| Plat vacations | 21-W-VAC-1 |
| Commission resolutions | 21-W-RES-1 |

Applications shall be initially submitted no later than the filing deadline designated by the meeting calendar, which shall be approximately twenty-five (25) days prior to the date of the hearing, except for good cause at the discretion of the Secretary or President. All applications docketed will be set for hearing at the regular meeting corresponding to the filing deadline. If an application or the support documents are modified after the application is set for hearing, said amended documents will be provided to the Secretary no later than fourteen (14) days prior to the scheduled hearing date, and if not so provided, the hearing may be rescheduled.

Applications will typically be grouped by type (as indicated in Section 2.6) and in the order in which they were submitted. However, applications may be arranged for efficient processing or for good cause shown. Where all applications cannot be disposed of on the day set, the Plan Commission may adjourn from day to day, or until the next regular or special meeting, as it may order.

No notice is required other than that provided for in these rules or by Ordinance to be given to applicants or others interested in hearings conducted by the Plan Commission.

3.4 INTERESTED PARTIES

Interested parties are defined to be all abutting and adjoining legal landowners within two (2) property ownership depths of the applicant's property, or within 660 feet, whichever is satisfied first.

3.5 NOTICES

For each application, the applicant shall assume the expense of notification and publication of notice as required by these rules, by Ordinance, or by State Statute.

Newspaper notice (publication)

For every application which is to have a public hearing heard by the Plan Commission, notice shall be given by publication per the requirements of IC 5-3-1. Generally, notice will be published in two (2) newspapers of general circulation in Whitley County, Indiana, in the form prescribed by the Secretary, unless otherwise provided for by the statute.

The applicant shall cause the notice to be published no less than ten (10) days prior to the date set for the hearing, and proof of publication must be filed with the Secretary before the hearing.

The public hearing notice shall state, at a minimum:

- The docket number and substance of the petition
- The location by address or other identifiable geographic characteristic of the subject property
- The name of the petitioner
- The time and place of the hearing
- That the petition and file may be examined in the office of the Plan Commission Secretary
- That the legal description of the property is on file in the office of the Plan Commission Secretary

Notice to interested parties (mailed notices)

Notice to interested parties shall be made by certified mail (return receipt requested) or by certificate of mailing no less than ten (10) days before the date of the hearing. The original certified mail return receipts or the original certificate of mailing, along with any returned notices, shall be filed with the Secretary before the hearing.

A copy of the published public hearing notice may be used for the notice, along with any additional maps, plans, text, etc. as may be necessary to adequately, but concisely, describe the application, as may be determined by the Secretary.

Notice to interested parties (on-site signage)

Notice to interested parties shall also be made by placement of a notice on the subject site no less than ten (10) days before the date of the hearing.

The on-site notice consists of a sign to be provided by the Secretary. The sign shall be placed on the subject property, approximately within 5' of the right-of-way line of the street with the most traffic adjacent to the property and outside of any visibility triangle. The sign text must be visible from the street. The Secretary may require additional notices to be posted for properties with greater than 600' of street frontage or for cases consisting of multiple properties.

The notice shall remain on-site until final action on the petition has been taken, including any continuances. Loss of the sign due to weather, vandalism, theft, or similar act outside the control of the applicant does not necessarily constitute notice failure.

The Secretary may vary the requirement for personal notification if a departure from the rules above is justified and the intent of this rule is observed. The Commission may waive or modify a requirement for personal notification if the other personal notice method is achieved.

ARTICLE IV: HEARINGS AND OFFICIAL ACTIONS

4.1 HEARINGS

The Plan Commission shall hold a public hearing on applications in a public meeting at the date, time, and place specified in the notice.

The applicant or other interested persons may appear in person, by attorney, or by representative. In the absence of any appearance on behalf of the applicant, the Commission may, at its discretion, proceed with the hearing or continue the hearing. Failure of the applicant to appear at the hearing two or more times, despite being notified of the need to appear, will be grounds for the Commission to dismiss the application.

At the hearing, the general order of presentation of an application will be as follows:

- Presentation of the Staff Report by the planning staff
- Applicant's initial presentation (maximum 15 minutes)
- Public hearing. Those in favor of the application should speak first and those opposed to the application speak second (maximum 5 minutes per representative of a group or 2 minutes per individual speaker)
- Applicant's rebuttal (maximum 5 minutes)
- Discussion by the Commission
- Motion on the application
- Vote on the motion

The President may waive or alter these time limits or impose other reasonable rules as may be necessary to efficiently hear those wishing to speak on a case.

A party may request additional time for good cause. The President may cut short any presentations that are irrelevant, repetitive, slanderous, offensive, or that are otherwise not conducive to an orderly proceeding, provided that the presenter has been admonished at least once.

All speakers must clearly state their name and address in addition to their testimony. All persons who speak affirm they will be honest and truthful in their presentations and may be liable for false presentations up to the penalty for perjury.

Every person appearing at hearings shall abide by the order and directives of the President. Discourteous, disorderly, or contemptuous conduct shall be regarded as a breach of the privileges of the Commission and shall be dealt with by the President as he or she deems fair and proper. Disregard of the President's directives or other disorderly conduct can result in removal from the meeting.

4.2 ACTION AND DISPOSITION

Following the public hearing, the Plan Commission shall make recommendations, grant or deny requests, transmit reports, or take other necessary action as prescribed by the State Statute, the Zoning Ordinance, or the Subdivision Control Ordinance.

All decisions of the Plan Commission on matters heard in a public hearing shall be by recorded vote. The vote of each member is a permanent record.

4.3 VOTING

Only a motion duly passed by a majority of the Plan Commission members is an official action.

Motions receiving less than the required number of votes, or those having a tie vote, are considered failed motions. In no instance shall an action be assumed by the failure of a motion of an opposing nature.

If official action cannot be taken on an item after three failed motions, the item will be automatically continued to the next regular meeting.

4.4 ABSTENTIONS

Members are to vote on all motions, except when there is a conflict of interest as described in Section 1.5. If an abstention is found to be necessary, it must be accompanied by a statement of the reason the member is abstaining. Abstaining from voting without giving specific grounds could be considered arbitrary and capricious.

4.5 CONTINUANCES

One (1) administrative continuance at the request of the petitioner(s) or the remonstrator(s) will be allowed without need for authorization of the Commission. Such administrative continuance will be announced for the record and benefit of interested parties on the meeting agenda/notice and/or at the meeting.

Additional continuances may be authorized only by action of the Commission.

Continuances may be authorized by the Commission for a period longer than the next regular meeting. New hearing notice shall be given for any continuance period exceeding ninety (90) days.

4.6 WITHDRAWN APPLICATIONS

An application may not be withdrawn by the applicant after the vote has been called for by the President unless a majority of the members of the Commission agree to the withdrawal.

No petition which has been withdrawn by the applicant shall again be placed on the docket for consideration by the Commission within a period of six (6) months from the date of the said withdrawal, except upon the motion of a Plan Commission member, and adopted by the unanimous vote of all Plan Commission members present at a regular or special meeting.

4.7 REHEARINGS

No rehearings shall be entertained after an official action has been taken by the Commission. No additional application to the Plan Commission shall be allowed within the time period prescribed by Ordinance or, if no such time is prescribed, six (6) months from the date of the hearing.

However, a new application for hearing may be made if there is evidence that a substantial change in the circumstances affecting the property occurred since the prior decision relating to said parcel or property.

4.8 EX PARTE CONTACT AND REQUESTS FOR ADVICE

No applicant, person, firm, corporation, public employee, or body politic should contact any member of the Commission in advance of the public hearing on a case pending for decision. Any requests or offers to provide information to members must be made through the Staff in order to maintain record of the communication and to ensure fair dissemination of information among members.

Notwithstanding the above, the Staff may file a Staff Report setting forth facts, interpretations, and opinions on the case five (5) days prior to the hearing date.

Unless otherwise provided for in the Zoning or Subdivision Codes, informal requests for advice, or moot questions, regarding the suitability of potential filings will not be considered by the Commission.

Any advice, opinion, or information given by any Commission member or the Secretary, or any other official or employee of the City of Columbia City, shall not be binding on the Plan Commission as a whole. Because of the inappropriateness caused by individuals appealing personally to members of the Commission, it is declared to be the policy of the Commission to discourage any such personal appeals and to direct questions to the Secretary.

ARTICLE V: DEVELOPMENT PLAN COMMITTEE

5.1 DEVELOPMENT PLAN COMMITTEE

As described in Chapter 7 of the Zoning Code, a Development Plan Committee is established. The Committee is comprised of the members of the Technical Review Committee (as stated in Section 6.2 below); however, other agencies may be invited to review Development Plans.

Development Plan Committee meeting dates and times may be designated on the annual meeting calendar or meetings may be called as necessary in accordance with public meeting notice requirements.

In lieu of attending the meeting, Committee members or other representatives may submit written comments on the application that may be added to the Committee's decision findings.

5.2 DECISIONS AND APPEALS

The Development Plan Committee may approve or disapprove a Development Plan, may waive certain requirements, and may impose conditions of approval. A decision may be authorized by the majority of the Committee members present at the review meeting. The Committee will make findings concerning its decision.

Any decision of the Committee may be appealed to the to the Plan Commission as a whole, as provided in Section 7.12 of the Zoning Code.

ARTICLE VI: TECHNICAL REVIEW COMMITTEE

6.1 TECHNICAL REVIEW

To adequately and efficiently review technical plans that may be required by the Subdivision Ordinance, a Technical Review Committee is authorized to review certain applications for compliance with technical specifications, adequate capacity, public safety, or other specifications.

Applications requiring Technical Review shall be submitted to the Secretary with enough copies to be distributed to the committee members no less than fourteen (14) days prior to the scheduled meeting date.

Regular Technical Review Committee meeting dates and times may be designated on the annual meeting calendar or meetings may be called as necessary in accordance with public meeting notice requirements.

In lieu of attending the meeting, Committee members or other representatives may submit written comments on the application.

6.2 TECHNICAL REVIEW COMMITTEE COMPOSITION

The Technical Review Committee is composed of representatives from the following entities:

- Two (2) members of the Plan Commission, appointed annually
- County Surveyor, or their designee
- Planning department
- Engineering department
- Highway department
- Health department
- Soil & Water Conservation District

Representatives of private utilities, other governmental departments, agencies, or officials, and/or other entities may be invited to participate in the technical review process as may be deemed necessary and appropriate for individual cases.

6.3 APPROVAL AND RELEASE

An application reviewed by the Technical Review Committee must be approved by each member entity for compliance with its applicable ordinances, rules, specifications, and standards. Only upon satisfactory compliance with each entity may an application be authorized to proceed with construction or development.

ARTICLE VII: AMENDMENTS AND SUSPENSIONS

7.1 PRIOR RULES

Any rules setting forth the procedures and duties of the Plan Commission that may have been previously passed are hereby repealed.

7.2 AMENDMENTS

Amendments to these Rules of Procedure may be made by the Plan Commission at any regular or special meeting upon the affirmative vote of a majority of the members of the Commission.

7.3 SUSPENSIONS

The suspension or waiver of any rule of procedure may be ordered at any meeting by unanimous vote of those present.

7.4 SEVERABILITY

Should any provision of these rules be void or unenforceable, such provision shall be deemed omitted, and these rules with such provisions omitted, shall remain in effect.

7.5 EFFECTIVE DATE

These Rules of Procedure are effective _____ after approval by the Plan Commission.

APPROVAL

These Rules of Procedure of the Whitley County Advisory Plan Commission are hereby approved by the affirmative vote of the Commission on the below date.

Whitley County ADVISORY PLAN COMMISSION

SO AMENDED THIS ____ DAY OF _____, 2023.

_____, President

_____, Vice President