



Georgia Planning Officials Newsletter

January/February 2006

Welcome Planning Officials!

This is the first of what will be a bi-monthly newsletter, designed for planning officials (planning commissioners, zoning board members, historic preservation commission members and other citizens appointed to serve in an official capacity in the community planning process) across the state of Georgia. **This newsletter is a service of the Georgia Planning Association intended to serve as a resource through which you can find ideas, best practices and most importantly, learn from the experiences of your peers in Georgia.**

Ultimately, we hope to share with you what you need to know to be an effective and informed member of a planning board. For this newsletter to be the best it can be and to meet your needs, we want and need your feedback. Let us know what type of information you would like featured in future editions. If you have a success story, share it with us, a question- ask us. If you know of other planning officials who should receive this newsletter, please send their names, e-mail address and organization to rhayes@atlantaregional.com

Planning Officials Newsletter Will Include

Feature Articles: Information on topics that affect the day-to-day work of planning officials.

Best Practices: Profiles of planning board best practices in Georgia and across the country.

Commission Profiles: What works and what doesn't for planning boards around the State.

Tools and Techniques: Tips on navigating the processes and functions of a planning board.

Resources: Recommended articles, books, and other resources.

Advice from a Planning Official

Excerpted from American Planning Association's: *Commissioner, Summer 2005 Issue: By Stephen Hulsey; Frisco, Texas, Planning and Zoning Commission Member and Chairman, 1999-2005*

In 1999 when I was appointed a member of the Planning and Zoning Commission in Frisco, I thought I knew everything there was to know about city planning. After all I am an architect by training; my education would substantially benefit the city. I soon came to find out what complex issues were involved in the planning and zoning process and how every decision made will affect the future of the city, forever. Serving on the commission for the fastest growing city (of its size) in Texas is truly a daunting task.

The planning staff led us through the process, and helped us understand the issues and protect the rights of the citizens and landowners. We learned what we could and could not do, how to rewrite and craft ordinances, and how to craft public policy. Watching the staff work through different types of issues with different groups almost every week in order to craft a city plan for the perfect place to live was extremely educational.

I learned that I was appointed to look into and predict the future, and to implement a plan to make Frisco a great place to work and live for everyone, not only for the next five, but for the next 50 years. "Crystal ball gazing" is truly a science and we owe a lot to our staff. We were building a city as we planned and worked through every single zoning case.

As my term on the planning and zoning commission comes to end and other commissioners are appointed, here is my advice.

1. Ask questions and understand the issues. In order to make informed decisions you must know what and how your decision affects the particular property and the neighbor's property, as well as the entire city. Ask your city staff for help.
2. Protect the interests of all: the landowners as well as the citizens. Your duty and responsibility is to represent everyone in the city.
3. Make the hard decisions. Having the courage to make the right decision based on all the facts in the face of adversity is the true test of a leader. Stand true to your convictions.
4. Solicit input from your friends and neighbors and get them involved in the public process. After all, the decisions you will make affect them as much as it affects the landowner or developer.
5. Enjoy the process and the time you are asked to serve your citizens and your city. It is truly educational and inspirational. You should be honored to serve.

Please visit our website at: www.georgiaplanning.org for more information about:

- GPA Forum
- Annual Conference
- GPA eNewsletter
- Quarterly Planners Luncheons

We want to hear from you! Please send us your thoughts, experiences and advice on being a Planning Official. E-mail or fax your submissions to Robbie Hayes at rhayes@atlantaregional.com or 404.463.3105