




C H A T H A M C O U N T Y - S A V A N N A H
METROPOLITAN PLANNING COMMISSION

"Planning the Future - Respecting the Past"

M E M O R A N D U M

DATE: June 2, 2009
TO: Metropolitan Planning Commission
FROM: Thomas L. Thomson, Executive Director 
SUBJECT: Proposed Three Week MPC Schedule

Staff is exploring many options to reduce operating expenses in light of the current economic and county-city budget climate.

One option to reduce costs, which is supported by the MPC Finance Committee, is to reduce the number of Planning Commission meetings. Over the last six months the number of applications requiring Board action has been greatly reduced from the months before the economic slowdown hit. In fact the MPC has cancelled two meetings this year and has difficulty maintaining a quorum for the last four Planning meetings.

A Planning Commission three-week (between) meetings schedule will save staff time and costs and yield more time to address the frequently complicated cases that are difficult to address when the meetings are two weeks apart. The staff previously proposed a three-week meeting schedule. The attached staff report from the previous request outlines the benefits of the three-week (between) meetings schedule.

The following would be the schedule for MPC meetings for the remainder of 2009 if the Board moves to a three-week (between) meetings schedule. Note that the three week calendar would officially start in July following a normally scheduled three week break between the second June meeting and the first regularly scheduled meeting in July. Regularly scheduled MPC meetings would be reduced by a total of three for the remainder of the year.

June 2	August 18	November 10
June 16	September 8	December 1
July 7	September 29	December 22
July 28	October 20	

In addition, the function of MPC planning meetings would be integrated into regular meeting agendas and not be held on the second Tuesday every other month. This move will also cut three planning meetings from the existing 2009 calendar.

The July 28th meeting falls on the fourth Tuesday of the month and would present the only conflict with normally scheduled Zoning Board of Appeals (ZBA) hearings. A "December" schedule for that day would be adopted, were the meeting times for the ZBAs are shifted to fit in the MPC meeting. Thus, the County ZBA would meet at the regularly scheduled time of 9:00 a.m. and the City ZBA would move its' meeting to 11:00 a.m.

A change to the three week schedule will entail an amendment to both the MPC Procedural Manual and the MPC By-Laws. The By-Laws state that the same may be amended:

“...by anaffirmative vote of a simple majority of the full membership of the Commission. A By-Laws change shall be presented for consideration at a regular meeting of the Commission but shall not be voted upon until the regular meeting next following the meeting at which the By-Laws change was proposed.”

In order that the proposed change is effective in July, the Planning Commission would need to approve an amendment change in June. Attached are pages that show the necessary By-Laws and Procedural Manual amendments which could be voted on at the June 16th meeting. The wording of the amendment changes the By-Laws to a specific schedule (the Planning Commission meets on the first and third Tuesday), to a general wording (a calendar of meetings will be adopted in December) to allow flexibility on an annual basis to set the meeting frequency and dates.

I believe there is great merit to adopt the three week calendar change, particularly with the slowdown in development activity and budget cutbacks. I urge the Board to initiated the recommended By-Laws and Procedural Manual amendments, so it can be approved by June 16 to transition to the new schedule as noted above.

Attachments

PROCEDURAL MANUAL
AND
BY-LAWS
OF THE
CHATHAM COUNTY-SAVANNAH
METROPOLITAN PLANNING COMMISSION

PROCEDURAL MANUAL: INITIALLY ADOPTED OCTOBER 6, 1998

BY-LAWS: INITIALLY ADOPTED OCTOBER 1, 1974

UNIFIED DOCUMENT ADOPTED MARCH 2, 1999

AMENDED JANUARY 2, 2007

PROCEDURAL MANUAL

FOR

MEETINGS OF THE
CHATHAM COUNTY-SAVANNAH
METROPOLITAN PLANNING COMMISSION

Adopted October 6, 1998
Amended March 2, 1999
Amended January 2, 2007

**PROCEDURAL MANUAL
FOR
MEETINGS OF THE
CHATHAM COUNTY-SAVANNAH
METROPOLITAN PLANNING COMMISSION**

Meetings of the Chatham County-Savannah Metropolitan Planning Commission (hereinafter referred to as the MPC) shall be governed by the following policies. No policy shall be established which is in conflict with a provision of the MPC Bylaws. Where a policy is found to be in conflict, the provisions of the MPC Bylaws shall govern.

I. MEETINGS

The MPC conducts four types of meetings, as follows:

1. Regular Meetings
2. Planning Session Meetings
3. Pre-Meetings
4. Special Called Meetings.

All MPC meetings are held in the offices of the Metropolitan Planning Commission, 112 East State Street, Savannah, Georgia, unless advance notice to the contrary is given. These meetings are described as follows:

1. **Regular Meetings:**

Formal meetings, identified in the Bylaws, *shall, commencing on July 7, 2009, be set for every third Tuesday thereafter in 2009, and as set by the annual calendar approved by the Commission in December of each year.* ~~held the first and third Tuesday of each month~~ Regular meetings will start at 1:30 P.M. in the MPC Mendonsa Hearing Room, for the purpose of conducting the business of the Commission. At such meetings the MPC hears zoning and subdivision issues, site plan reviews, acts on planning reports and conducts the normal business of the Commission. Regular meetings are publicized in accordance with the Georgia Open and Public Meetings law.

2. **Planning Session Meetings:**

Formal meetings, identified in the Bylaws, *will be incorporated into the agendas of regular meetings or will be held as needed at the call of the Chairman. Meetings called by the Chairman will start* ~~held the second Tuesday of every other month~~ at 1:00 P.M. in either the MPC Mendonsa Hearing Room or the MPC Surrency Conference Room, for the purpose of reviewing planning reports, discussing planning issues, and discussing any other issues with which the MPC is concerned.

No development reviews (i.e. zoning petitions, subdivisions, site plans) are heard at Planning Sessions. However, the MPC is not precluded from taking action on other issues at such meetings.

“In preparing Planning Session agendas, staff is charged with giving special emphasis to addressing recurring issues which have occupied inordinate amounts of Board time during regular meetings, or issues which have the potential to do so in the future. Also, there shall be an emphasis on addressing mid-term and long-term planning themes.” Planning Session Meetings are publicized in accordance with the Georgia Open and Public Meetings law.

3. Pre-Meetings:

Informal meetings, not discussed in the Bylaws, held prior to each Regular and Planning Session Meeting at 12:00 Noon in the MPC Conference Room, for the purpose of hearing informal staff presentations on formal agenda items, to ask questions and engage in discussion aimed at expediting the formal meeting and to identify any areas of concern which need to be more fully addressed in the formal meeting. No testimony is taken from applicants, supporters or opponents regarding any item on the Regular Agenda. No votes are taken at Pre-Meetings. Pre-Meetings are publicized in accordance with the Georgia Open and Public Meetings law. The MPC may engage in a light repast in conjunction with such meetings.

BY-LAWS

OF THE

CHATHAM COUNTY - SAVANNAH
METROPOLITAN PLANNING COMMISSION

Adopted October 1, 1974; Amended July 16, 1976;

**Amended March 9, 1982; Amended September 20, 1983;
Amended November 5, 1985; Amended April 19, 1988;
Amended May 16, 1989; Amended June 6, 1989;
Amended December 4, 1990
Amended December 21, 1993
Amended March 21, 1995
Amended May 6, 1997
Amended March 2, 1999
Amended August 15, 2000
Amended January 2, 2001
Amended January 2, 2007**

(4) Treasurer: The powers and duties of the Treasurer shall be:

(a) To chair the Budget and Finance Committee.

(b) To submit quarterly and annual written reports on the finances of the Commission.

E. Oath of Office: Upon their election, new officers shall at the first regular meeting thereafter, be administered the following oath of office:

"Do you solemnly swear that you hold no position of public trust or private interest which places you in a position of conflict of purpose with the charter of the Metropolitan Planning Commission, and that in accordance with the Constitutions of the United States and the State of Georgia, the laws of this state, and all applicable local ordinances you will faithfully discharge your duties as officers of said Commission, deciding each matter that shall come before the Commission on its merits alone, without fear or favor with regard to any affected parties or agencies."

The officers shall state, I do."

The oath shall be administered by a person selected by the Chairman-Elect.

4. Meetings: *Regular meetings shall, commencing on July 7, 2009, be set for every third Tuesday thereafter in 2009, and as set by the annual calendar approved by the Commission in December of each year. Regular meetings will start at 1:30 P.M. in the MPC Mendonsa Hearing Room, for the purpose of conducting the business of the Commission. Planning meetings will be incorporated into the agendas of regular meetings or will be held as needed at the call of the Chairman. The Commission shall meet regularly twice each month, on the first and third Tuesday of the month at 1:30 P.M., for the purpose of conducting the general business of the Commission. In addition, the Commission shall meet every other month beginning in January, March, May, July, September, and November on the second Tuesday at 1:00 P.M. for the purpose of addressing comprehensive planning issues only. No zoning, site plans, subdivisions or other petitions shall be heard at such latter meetings. Special meetings, except for the purpose of considering removal of officers, shall be held when called by the Chairman or by seven or more members of the Commission; provided, however, that not less than 72 hours notice of a special meeting shall be given to each member. Special meetings shall be called for specific purposes and only the items stated in the call shall be discussed at the meeting. All meetings shall be public, except in those instances where closed meetings may be held pursuant to the laws of the State of Georgia.*
 - A. Record of Action Taken: A record shall be kept of all actions of the Commission meeting. Such record shall describe the subject considered, the motion made, a brief summary of discussion on the motion, if any, and the results of the vote on the motion.
 - B. Rule: Except as otherwise provided herein, all meetings of the Commission shall be conducted in accordance with the current edition of "Roberts Rules of Order Newly Revised."
 - C. Agenda: The Executive Director shall prepare an agenda for each meeting listing the items to be considered, information relating to such items, and for each item, when appropriate, the Executive Director's recommendation. The agenda shall include of a Regular Agenda and a Consent Agenda. The Consent Agenda shall include all items for

which there are no known unresolved issues between the Staff and the petitioner/applicant, or for which there are no known controversies with other interested parties. The Chairman shall identify at the beginning of the meeting, for the benefit of the public, each item on the Consent Agenda. An item on the Consent Agenda shall be removed and placed on the Regular Agenda at the request of any Commission member present. Action on the remaining items on the Consent Agenda may be taken through a single motion. The Regular Agenda shall contain all items not on the Consent Agenda.

For regular meetings, the tentative agenda shall be delivered to each member at least four days prior to the meeting. Nothing shall come before the Commission that is not on the final agenda except by an affirmative vote of two-thirds of the members present at the meeting. When such a non-agenda matter is placed before the Commission in this manner the matter may be acted upon at that meeting.