

Role of the Long Range Planning Commission

Background

The “parking lot” issue states:

Discuss the role and charge of the Long Range Planning Commission, how best to use them and what kind of work they can do for the community.

The Long Range Planning Commission (LRPC) exists as a subset of commissioners on the Planning and Zoning Commission (P/Z). The duties and responsibilities of the LRPC are to make recommendations on long range planning issues to the P/Z.

During recent years, the LRPC has worked with the P/Z on two updates to the Longmont Area Comprehensive Plan (LACP), the Land Development Code, and Metro Vision 2020. LRPC has also participated in study committees with other boards and commissions, including the Transportation Advisory Board (TAB). Most of the LRPC’s meetings occur in conjunction with either the P/Z or other boards and commissions. If a project necessitates it, however, the LRPC can meet on its own. This was the case during the 1995 LACP update when the LRPC acted as a sounding board in developing assumptions for use in the transportation model.

The LRPC has held few meetings on its own in recent years. There have been limited opportunities to get involved in a particular issue beyond what has been presented by staff or consultants, and the LRPC’s responsibilities do not extend beyond those of the P/Z. The LRPC’s primary role has been to review and make recommendations on long range projects at the same meeting as the P/Z. Because of this overlap in responsibilities with the P/Z, the current role and charge of the LRPC creates redundancy within the City’s planning process. The following information includes information on long range planning commissions in other communities and options for changes to the LRPC.

Long range planning commissions in other communities

The Planning Advisory Service (PAS), a research arm of the American Planning Association (APA), indicated that it is uncommon for a community to have both a planning and zoning commission and a long range planning commission. At staff’s request, PAS undertook a literature search on the role and charge of long range planning commissions and was unable to find anything specific. However, the literature suggests that many communities use task forces or citizens advisory boards to address long range planning issues as they come up, such as an adoption of a comprehensive plan. An internet search for long range planning commissions produced a list of only five other long range planning commissions across the country.

Options

Options for changes to the LRPC include expanding or decreasing the commission's role in the City's planning process. Pro's and con's are presented for each option.

Option 1 Eliminate the LRPC over time by shifting its members to alternate positions on P/Z and then eliminate the alternate positions as the appointments expire and by attrition. A variation of this option is a P/Z recommendation that LRPC members also become alternates on P/Z without the elimination of these alternate positions over time.

Pro's

- Eliminates redundancy between the P/Z and LRPC
- Allows current members to continue to serve the City

Con's

- The addition of four alternates to P/Z will not provide much, if any, opportunity for these members to serve the City, since alternates are not often needed to achieve a quorum
- The dissolution of the LRPC would eliminate an opportunity for citizens to participate in the City's planning process

Option 2 Combine the LRPC members with the P/Z members, making an 11-member commission. Over time, eliminate these four additional appointments as they expire and by attrition.

Pro's

- Eliminates redundancy between the P/Z and LRPC
- Allows current members to continue to serve the City

Con's

- Eliminates LRPC's role entirely

Option 3 Create a separate long range planning commission that reports directly to Council and would have duties and responsibilities that do not overlap with the P/Z. Some long range planning projects would be reviewed by only the LRPC, while development projects with a long range component would be reviewed by both LRPC and P/Z.

Within this framework, an idea that has been put forth by the LRPC is to have the LRPC work independently on long range planning issues, without staff support (see attached letter).

Pro's

- Eliminates redundancy between the P/Z and LRPC
- Provides the City with an additional group of citizens whose contributions could benefit the City
- Allows current members to continue to serve the City

Con's

- A separate long range commission can overlap and confuse roles between staff, P/Z, and City Council.
- A separate long range commission would add time to the planning process for development projects with a long range component, because there would be an additional meeting
- Citizens interested in a particular development project would need to attend an additional meeting
- A separate long range commission would require staff time completing research, preparing packets and minutes, and other administrative items
- Could be difficult to recruit and retain members on a commission that requires a substantial time commitment to complete research projects
- A commission that does not have staff support would not have ongoing access to information on City procedures, policies, and other related information that may be necessary to complete a successful project
- A commission that does not have staff support may not have continuity of reporting to other affected departments, outside agencies, and boards and commissions

Attachments

1. Letter from the LRPC to the P/Z, dated September 24, 2003
2. Councilman Brown's suggestions for changes to the Long Range Planning Commission