

5.5 Ex-parte communications – Commission members shall refrain from ex-parte communication (meaning communication that occurs outside a formal Planning Commission meeting) regarding matters that will likely come before the Commission for decision.

It is important to maintain the impartiality and integrity of the Planning Commission. It is also important that Planning Commission decisions be based solely on information presented in public documents and during open and public meetings **so that all parties receive the same information at the same time**. Receiving communication outside Planning Commission meetings denies participants the opportunity to respond to all information upon which Commission members may base their decisions.

- (a) Ex-parte communication are strickly forbidden when the Commission is adjudicating a matter in its quasi-judicial role, e.g., when it hears zoning map amendment petitions, text amendments and reviews applications and requests under the provision of the Land Use Article.
- (b) Ex-parte communications are discouraged and should, to the extent possible, be avoided when the Commission is acting in its legislative role, e.g., when it participates in plan development and implementation activities or when it reviews items or business not associated with the review or enforcement of the provisions of the Land Use Article.

Planning Commission members receiving ex-parte communications shall advise all Commission members through the Town Planning Administrator's office prior to the next scheduled Planning Commission meeting or make a statement in person at the next meeting. As an alternative to ex-parte communications, the public should be encouraged to provide their request, comment or recommendation in writing to the Town Planning Administrator, or speak publicly at a Planning Commission meeting. In this way, all interested parties, the public and Commission members will all hear the same information at the same time.