

FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS -- PLANNING & ZONING COMMISSION

1. WHO IS THE PLANNING AND ZONING COMMISSION?

The City of Casper's Planning and Zoning Commission is comprised of seven, unpaid, Casper residents who serve as its Commissioners. The Mayor appoints Planning and Zoning Commissioners to three year terms, with the consent of City Council. Planning and Zoning Commissioners are passionate about serving their community. They want to help Casper become a better place tomorrow than it is today.

2. WHAT DOES THE PLANNING AND ZONING COMMISSION DO?

In some cases, such as conditional use permits, variances, exceptions, and site plans of a certain size, the Planning and Zoning Commission serves in a quasi-judicial role, and is the final decision-maker in the case.

In other instances, such as platting, zone changes, annexations, subdivisions, text amendments to the Municipal Code, and site plans of a certain size, the Planning and Zoning Commission serves as an advisor to the City Council. When the Planning and Zoning Commission acts in an advisory role, the City Council is the final decision-maker in the case.

3. HOW DOES THE COMMISSION REACH ITS DECISIONS?

The Casper Municipal Code, the Comprehensive Land Use Plan, and other evidence presented at the hearing are the items that assist the Planning and Zoning Commission in their decision-making. Federal, state and other law may also apply in helping the Planning and Zoning Commission reach a decision.

The Municipal Code is binding law. The Comprehensive Land Use Plan is the "policy" (as adopted by the City Council) that deals with land use in the Casper Area. The Comprehensive Land Use Plan is a culmination of extensive public involvement to determine how the citizens of Casper want to see their community grow and develop in the future.

When a land use proposal comes before the Planning and Zoning Commission, often times the decision is difficult. Many times, there are competing policies, plans and laws. The Planning and Zoning Commission is charged with hearing the cases, and applying the law and policies appropriately to the facts of a case in reaching its decision.

4. WHY CAN'T I TALK TO THE COMMISSIONERS BEFORE THE HEARING?

Imagine that you are in the middle of a lawsuit, and the judge in your case holds a private meeting with the opposing side before trial. Not fair, right? The Judge should make the decision based on evidence presented at trial, where all of the parties are present to hear and discuss the evidence.

Planning and Zoning Commissioners have a quasi-judicial role. So, they do not meet with or discuss a case with the parties before the hearing. They make their decision on evidence presented at the hearing. In that way, the fairness and the integrity of the process are maintained.

5. WHY WON'T THE COMMISSION JUST CHANGE THE LAW OR POLICY TO HELP ME OUT?

Unlike City Council, the *Planning and Zoning Commission is not an elected, political body that makes law or policy.* Instead, it functions more like a “court” (quasi-judicial), in that it must work within the boundaries of the City’s laws and policies adopted by the City Council. The Planning and Zoning Commission values public input, and takes it into consideration when making their decision, but may not use it to make a decision that is contrary to the law and policies of the City Council.