



MATANUSKA-SUSITNA BOROUGH

Planning and Land Use Department Planning Division

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Guidelines for the Development or Update of Community Based Comprehensive Plans and SPUDS. Planning Commission Resolution 07-02 (AM)

Request: According to assembly policy, the request for development or update of a community comprehensive plan or Special Use District (SpUD) shall be initiated upon written request by the community council or its equivalent local representative body (for the remainder of this document, community council refers to the local representative body).

Scheduling: Community based planning efforts will be scheduled on an individual case by case basis, and will be undertaken considering staff availability and work load. Efforts should be made to complete the process within twenty-four (24) months of commencement, but may vary depending upon complexity of the issues and the plan.

Commission approval of start-up: Once the request is scheduled, staff assistance for the planning effort and the boundaries of the affected area shall be reviewed and approved by the commission. The boundaries of the affected area should generally be consistent with the community council boundaries (except that the Core Area comprehensive plan boundaries shall generally consist of the communities of Gateway, North and South Lakes, Tanaina, Farm Loop, and those areas generally between the cities of Palmer and Wasilla that are not within any community council).

Guidelines which have been formally adopted by the planning commission shall be utilized for the planning effort.

Notice and planning team appointment: Upon planning commission approval of a planning effort, a general notice will be mailed to the area's property owners and registered voters (if available) notifying them of the planning effort, the proposed schedule, purpose of the effort, request for planning team nominations, and the contact staff person. At the same time an advertisement will be placed in the newspaper of general circulation also requesting nominations for the planning team. The applications for planning team representatives will be reviewed by a subcommittee of the commission, consisting of the commissioner from the subject area, the council chair or designee, and the staff project manager. The subcommittee's recommendations will be forwarded to the commission for review and comment.

A planning team will be formed with the emphasis placed on ensuring a broad range of representation consisting of community representatives (i.e. property owners, local business owner, education/youth, real estate, etc.), borough staff and agency

representatives if needed. The number of community representatives should range between six and 15 individuals unless otherwise approved by the commission. No more than two community council board members may hold both positions of board member and planning team member. No more than one member of a household unit may be on the planning team.

Planning team members shall complete a commitment form, ensuring the following:

- Lives, owns property, owns a business or other community/agency representative within the planning area;
- Will make the voluntary commitment of time to be available for meetings during the planning effort;
- Will consider compromises that will help manage conflict between competing segments of the community;
- Will listen to and consider testimony from the public and other government agencies as it affects the comprehensive plan;
- Will commit to develop a comprehensive plan that will represent the entire planning area;
- Will commit to distribute accurate information to other community members and clarify misunderstandings.

If any appointed member of the planning team fails to meet the commitments outlined above, he/she may be removed by the subcommittee upon written request by a majority of the remaining planning team members.

Planning team meetings and public outreach methods: Once the planning project is underway, borough staff will conduct research, inventory resources, prepare background text, and prepare base maps. This information will be prepared in draft form prior to the first working meetings of the planning team. Once working meetings begin, the planning team will determine which public participation methods will be used (i.e. questionnaires, workshops, etc.) to identify major issues within the planning area.

All planning team meetings and other workshops shall be advertised, at a minimum, in the local newspaper and on the borough web-site. Additional notification efforts such as radio public service announcements, flyers posted at public locations, or other methods may be used.

Planning team meetings will be public meetings held in a facility within the community. They will be facilitated by borough staff and public input will be received at a designated time during the meeting. Decisions will be made by appointed team members only. The intent is to provide a forum in which team members can discuss issues, make decisions and reach consensus as necessary based on their understanding of the wishes of the community.

Workshops will be held at times determined by the planning team throughout the planning process. They will be public meetings in an open house format and will be held in a facility within the community. The workshops will be scheduled over a period of several hours to allow members of the public to stop in at their convenience and talk with team members and borough staff. The intent of the workshops will be to allow the team members to remain abreast of the community on key issues and more importantly to allow community residents to remain informed.

Draft document is produced: Once a draft document is prepared by the planning team, it will be made available at a minimum, at the nearest library and on the borough web-site. A second general notice will be mailed to all property owners and registered voters of the area notifying them and requesting their comments on the draft. A notice will also be advertised in the newspaper of general circulation. At least one public meeting will be held to obtain comments on the draft plan or SpUD.

After the comment period closes on the draft document the planning team will review all comments and make appropriate changes to the plan or SpUD. The team will indicate how comments were either incorporated into the plan or explain why it chose not to incorporate such comments. The team will then forward the planning team approved draft to the community council.

Community council review: The community council shall thoroughly review and make a recommendation to the planning commission, on each specific chapter of the plan or SpUD. At the community council meeting, staff will make the presentation and facilitate discussion, with assistance from the planning team. Recommendations shall be to either forward the chapter to the commission or send back to the planning team for further refinement. The council should work towards a consensus and attempt to minimize voting. If voting occurs, each chapter or section shall be voted on individually, by paper ballot. No proxy or absentee voting is allowed. This is intended to ensure that those who will be making the recommendation have had the benefit of a complete and accurate presentation, and have a clear understanding of the recommendations and components of the document.

Public Hearings: A public hearing will be held by the planning commission prior to making a recommendation to the assembly on a community plan or SpUD. The public hearing is to allow the public the opportunity to voice their support or objections prior to the commission's final decision.

Elevation: From time to time issues will arise that members of the planning team will not be able to agree upon. Due to limited resources it will be necessary to resolve the impasse. Upon reaching impasse, the borough project staff will notify the planning director of such and instruct representatives of each side of the issue to prepare briefing papers describing the issue and supporting their position. The briefing papers will be forwarded to the planning director and a meeting scheduled at which a representative of each side would make a presentation. The planning director will issue a written decision on the issue(s) with supporting rationale. The decision will be forwarded to the planning team and planning commission. The decision will be considered "final" for the purpose of preparing the draft plan: that is, the issue will be open for public comment during the public comment stage of the draft plan and during the planning commission and assembly's public hearing.