



**County Commissioners:**

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**Boards and Commissions FAQs**

County Commissioners

**Q: Why do the Commissioners approve developments?**

A The Commissioners do not approve developments. Under [Md. Land Use Code Ann. § 2-101](#) and [Md. Land Use Code Ann. § 4-301](#), the County Commissioners establish local land authority that includes the appointment of a planning commission and board of appeals to conduct development review, recommendation, and approval.

**Q: Why do the Commissioners change the laws and allow developers to change the laws?**

A Under [Md. Land Use Code Ann. § 4-101](#), the Commissioners establish planning and zoning controls that include enacting local zoning code authority. This includes updating the local zoning code comprehensively (via County Zoning Code [§ 18:1-216](#)) and by amendment (via County Zoning Code [§ 18:1-218](#)). Amendments may be initiated by the County Commissioners, the Planning Commission, or a property owner. A property owner may file an application for an amendment during the first 10 business days in the month of February of each calendar year.

**Q: Why do some development projects appear on the Commissioners agendas and not others?**

- A Critical Area Growth Allocation is administered by the County Commissioners. Projects which seek to Growth Allocation receive a Concept review and recommendation from the Planning Commission and then are conveyed to the County Commissioner who may impose conditions in accordance with the County's Growth Allocation Policy.
- A The County Commissioners also act as the County Sanitary Commission. When development review projects are located within water and sewer service areas and seek allocations, then in their capacity as the Sanitary Commission, the Commissioners will review requests for water and/or sewer redesignation and allocation. The Sanitary Commission does not review the development but assesses water and sewer capacity as outlined in the County Water and Sewerage Plan.

Planning Commission

**Q: What is the role of the Planning Commission (what do they review)?**

- A The Planning Commission is appointed by the County Commissioners to draft the Comprehensive Plan and Zoning Code and then to implement them. While the Commissioners are the legislative body that enacts the Comprehensive Plan and Zoning Code, you can think of the Planning Commission as the keepers of those documents.
- A The Planning Commission reviews text amendments, map amendments, Critical Area Growth Allocation applications, concept plans, major site plans, sketch plans, and major subdivisions. Additionally, the Planning Commission reviews minor site plans that are visible from Route 50 and minor plans that the Planning Director determines warrants review by the Commission.

**Q: Who is on the Planning Commission? How many members are there, and what are their terms?**

- A As outlined in County Zoning Code [§ 18:1-109](#), the Commission consists of seven members.
- A The current (and historic) list of members can be found on the Planning Commission [website](#). The members are appointed to four-year terms. The dates of the current and historic members' terms can be found on the website.

**Q: When are the Planning Commission meetings?**

- A The Planning Commission meets on the second Thursday of every month and on an as-needed basis for special projects. The meetings begin at 8:45am and are held at 110 Vincit Street, Centreville.
- A Citizens may participate on Zoom using the [link](#) from the website and on the agenda. This option is available ten minutes before the start of each meeting.
- A The meetings are broadcast live on: QACTV, Breezeline cable 7 & 507, streaming live on QACTV Facebook, YouTube and [QACTV.com](#).

**Q: How does a project end up being placed on an agenda?**

- A The County Zoning Code establishes which projects must be reviewed and approved by the Planning Commission and which standards must be met in order to receive an approval.
- A [Article XXV](#) of the Zoning Code establishes site plan standards and [Article XXVI](#) establishes subdivision standards. Major Site Plans and Subdivisions are reviewed by the Planning Commission.
- A The Planning Commission also reviews minor site plans that are visible from Route 50 minor site plans and minor plans that the Planning Director determines warrants review by the Commission.
- A When project applications are submitted and meet the minimum standards outlined above, then the project is placed on a Planning Commission agenda. Some projects require multiple stages of review (concept, preliminary, and final) and are placed on multiple agendas once the minimum standards at each stage of review are met.
- A If a project does not meet the minimum standards set forth in the Zoning Code, it is not placed on an agenda. This can account for the misconception that the Planning Commission “approves everything”. The fact is, the Planning Commission reviews projects that are generally consistent with the Zoning Code.

**Q: Why are some agenda items public hearings?**

- A Most of the projects on the Commission agendas are subject to the standard open meetings act requirements. However, the Code does specify that some types of public reviews must be conducted as public hearings. They include the following applications: mining operations, Critical Area Growth Allocation proposals, Critical Area text amendments, map amendments, and comprehensive rezonings.

**Q: I saw a sign posted on a property. What is going on?**

- A Due notice must be given in advance of a project being discussed on a Planning Commission agenda. The signs are meant to alert the public that a project review is underway. They are not meant to provide a full and complete accounting of the project details.
- A The County [Agenda Center](#) is where the public can really find out “what is going on”. The Planning Commission agendas are posted two weeks before the meeting is held. The staff report, location map, and overall project plan are posted on the agendas. Citizens may sign up for notifications that are sent when agendas are posted to the agenda center.
- A Additionally, the meetings and project information are posted to Threads, X, Nextdoor, Instagram and Facebook and the County website (check the News section).

**Q: Can I speak at a meeting?**

- A Yes. There is a general public comment period at the beginning of the meeting, during each project review, and at the end of the meeting before adjournment.
- A Citizens are limited to three minutes of testimony.
- A The [Planning Commissions Correspondence & Testimony Protocols](#) can be found on the website.
- A In accordance with the protocols noted above, public comments may be submitted in advance of the meetings. Tips on how to do successfully may also be accessed on the County [website](#).

Board of Appeals

**Q: What is the role of the Board of Appeals (what do they review)?**

- A The Board of Appeals is appointed by the County Commissioners to perform the quasi-judicial functions established in [Md. Land Use Code Ann. § 4-305](#).
- A Both the Zoning Code and the Maryland Annotated Code establish the roles of the Board to include hearing appeals of decisions, variance applications, and conditional uses applications.

**Q: Who is on the Board of Appeals? How many members are there and what are their terms?**

- A As outlined in County Zoning Code [§ 18:1-114](#), the Board consists of three members and one alternate member.
- A The current (and historic) list of members can be found on the Board of Appeals [website](#). The members are appointed to two-year terms. The dates of the current and historic members' terms can be found on the website.

**Q: When are the Board meetings?**

- A The Board meets on the third Wednesday of the month. The meetings begin at 5:00 p.m. and are held at 110 Vincit Street, Centreville.

**Q: How does a project end up being placed on an agenda?**

- A The County Zoning Code establishes which projects must be decided by the Board of Appeals and which standards must be met in order to receive an approval.
- A [§ 18:1-119](#) of the Zoning Code establishes the right of appeal of any person aggrieved by any decision of the Planning Commission or Planning Director or seeking a variance from the literal enforcement of the Zoning Code.
- A [§ 18:1-121](#) of the Zoning Code establishes the limitations with respect to variance applications.
- A [§ 18:1-123](#) and [Article XVII](#) of the Zoning Code establish the conditional use procedures and standards.
- A When project applications are submitted and meet the minimum standards for consideration as outlined above, then the project is placed on a Board of Appeals agenda and a public hearing is scheduled.

**Q: I saw a sign posted on a property. What is going on?**

- A Due notice must be given in advance of a public hearing before the Board of Appeals. The signs are meant to alert the public that a project review is underway. They are not meant to provide a full and complete accounting of the project details.
- A The County [Agenda Center](#) is where the public can really find out “what is going on”. The Board of Appeals agendas are posted two weeks before the meeting is held. The staff report, location map, and overall project plan are posted on the agendas.

**Q: Can I speak at a meeting?**

- A Yes. During each public hearing, the Chair will offer an opportunity for members of the public to offer testimony in support or opposition to the project which is the subject of the hearing.
- A Participants must be present in order to offer testimony. Because the Board of Appeals is a quasi-judicial board, written comments and virtual participation are not permissible in the public hearing process. The Board's Rules of Procedure may be found on the Board's [website](#).

Staff Technical Advisory Committee (STAC)

**Q: What is the role of STAC (what do they review)?**

- A STAC is comprised of County, State, Federal, and other technical agencies who review County projects for consistency with all applicable regulations. It is the role of STAC to meet with applicants to discuss the many comments which will assist them to meet all applicable standards so that the projects may move successfully toward approval.
- A Typically, major site and subdivision plans, concept plans, sketch Plans, and Growth Allocation proposals, and text amendments are reviewed by STAC.

**Q: Can I speak at the STAC meeting?**

- A The STAC [Review & Meeting Schedule](#) is available on the Planning and Zoning Website.
- A These meetings are open to the public; however, the intention of these meeting is to provide technical guidance to applicants as they prepare for review before the Planning Commission and Board of Appeals. It is not a meeting in which all standards have been met, and public comment is solicited.
- A Members of the public may attend these meeting for informational purposes.