

## The Planning Commission of Kutztown Borough

Every municipality must use and protect its land and other natural resources in the most reasonable, economical, and equitable manner possible. Local planning commissions are established to guide this land use and development at the municipal level in accordance with their community's wishes and needs. By identifying, analyzing, and balancing the different needs and resources, the local planning commission will evaluate how to best promote proper use of land, provide for the efficient movement of people and goods, guide the growth of municipal services and public improvements, and achieve the most appropriate and economical use of their natural and human resources.

The local planning commission does play a crucial role in the need to balance a variety of public and private interests in the development process. The local planning commission also plays an important role in providing information to the residents about the different issues and engaging them in the decision-making process of planning for the future of their own community.

The Borough of Kutztown established a Planning Commission in 1965. Our Planning Commission acts as an independent advisory board to the community's governing body, i.e., the Kutztown Borough Council. For our Planning Commissioners, the responsibilities are considerable, the consequences are important, and the tangible rewards for providing such service are usually difficult to identify. However, we have always had Borough residents who are willing to volunteer their time and expertise as Planning Commissioners in order to serve their community.

### Defined Powers & Duties

The Planning Commission's primary responsibilities are: to address the community's wishes and needs through the development and implementation of a Comprehensive Plan and to review the proposals for new developments and public projects in their community. Also, the Planning Commission is empowered to perform the following functions:

1. make recommendations to Borough Council concerning the adoption or amendment of an official map.
2. prepare and present to Borough Council a zoning ordinance and make recommendations on proposed amendments to it.
3. prepare, recommend, and administer subdivision and land/residential development regulations.
4. prepare and present to Borough Council a building and housing code and make recommendations on proposed amendments to it.

5. do such other acts or make studies as may be necessary to fulfill the duties and obligations imposed by the PA Municipalities Planning Code (Act 247 of 1968).
6. prepare and present to Borough Council an environmental study.
7. submit to Borough Council a recommended capital improvements program.
8. prepare and present to Borough Council a water survey, which shall be consistent with the State Water Plan and any applicable water resources plan adopted by a river basin commission. The water survey shall be conducted in consultation with any public water supplier in the area to be surveyed.
9. promote public interest in, and understanding of, the Comprehensive Plan and the planning process.
10. make recommendation to governmental, civic, and private agencies and individuals as to the effectiveness of the proposals of such agencies and individuals.
11. hold public hearings and meetings.
12. present testimony before any board.
13. require from other departments and bodies of the Borough such available information as relates to the work of the Planning Commission.
14. in the performance of its functions, enter upon any land to make examination and land surveys with the consent of the owner.
15. prepare and present to the Borough Council a study regarding the feasibility and practicability of using renewable energy sources in specific areas within the Borough.
16. review the zoning ordinance, subdivision and land development ordinance, official map, provisions for planned residential development, and such other ordinances and regulations governing the development of land no less frequently than it reviews the Comprehensive Plan.
17. keep full public records of all its actions and ensure that all records become the property of the Borough.
18. All meetings of the Planning Commission must be scheduled and conducted consistent with the requirements of the Sunshine Act. These formal meetings of the Planning Commission are scheduled for the second Monday evening of each month. (Work sessions regarding the Comprehensive Plan are scheduled as needed for the fourth Monday evening of the month.)

(Note: All powers and duties, whether mandatory or optional, are undertaken only at the request of Borough Council.)

## Planning Commissioners

1. Planning Commissioners function as public officials and deal with matters of importance and concern to their community.
2. As representatives of their community, Planning Commissioners must remember to act with deliberateness and discretion in their official role and must abide by standards of ethical conduct.
3. The Kutztown Planning Commission is composed of four to seven residents who serve as voting Commissioners.
4. Planning Commissioners have continual expert support from the Borough's Community Development Director, an engineering advisor, and a recording secretary. (Additional resources/consultations may be requested as needed.)
5. Planning Commissioners must be residents of the Kutztown Borough.
6. Planning Commissioners are appointed for a four year term of office.
7. Planning Commissioners cannot serve concurrently on the Borough's Zoning Hearing Board.
8. Planning Commissioners elect the following officers: Chair, Vice-Chair, and Secretary.
9. Planning Commissioners are not compensated for their work.
10. Planning Commissioners are encouraged to increase their own level of planning education. Reimbursement for allowable expenses, such as a conference or workshop registration fee, will be provided by the Borough.
11. Planning Commissioners should be provided with a packet containing basic information to assist with their "on-the-job " training. This packet should include the following items: the *PA Municipalities Planning Code*, *The Subdivision and Land Development Ordinance*, the Comprehensive Plan, the zoning ordinance, the 537 Sewage Facilities Plan, Uniform Construction Code (Act 45), and other pertinent materials.
12. Planning Commissioners should review applicant's qualifications when there is a vacancy and make candidate recommendations to the Borough Council.
13. Applicants for Planning Commissioner should be selected from diverse backgrounds with different areas of expertise whenever possible.
14. Applicants for Planning Commissioner must disclose any possible conflict-of-interest of a financial nature and/or of a close personal/business relationship.

This material was taken from: The Pennsylvania Planning Series #2 entitled, *The Planning Commission in Pennsylvania* (July 2006). For more detailed information on the purpose and operation of the Planning Commission, please refer to this publication.

As an applicant for Planning Commissioner, please describe any possible conflict-of-interest of a financial nature and/or of a personal/business relationship:

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Signature and Date