



**Town of Westport**  
**Planning and Zoning Commission**  
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## ACTION MINUTES

### Planning and Zoning Commission **Governance Subcommittee**

**October 29, 2019 9:00am Room 201/201A, Town Hall**

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In Attendance:

Danielle Dobin, Subcommittee Chair and Planning and Zoning Commission Vice Chair  
Paul Lebowitz, Subcommittee Member and Planning and Zoning Commission Chair  
Chip Stephens, Planning and Zoning Commission Secretary  
Cathy Walsh, Planning and Zoning Commission Member  
Mary Young, AICP, Planning and Zoning Director  
(No members of the public attended this public meeting)

### AGENDA

#### 1. Review the current Mission Statement.

Danielle Dobin opened the meeting and read the Subcommittee Mission Statement:

***Mission Statement:***

*The mission of the P&Z Governance Sub-Committee will be to recommend changes to the P&Z Bylaws so that the P&Z Commission processes are clear and transparent to the public.*

***Objectives:***

- *To better guide the appointment of New P&Z Commission Members, appointment of Alternates, Schedule for Alternates, process Commission Member resignations.*”

Mary Young identified this was the inaugural meeting of the Subcommittee and recommended the Mission Statement and Subcommittee Objectives be confirmed and/or modified as deemed appropriate.

All Commissioners in attendance confirmed the Mission Statement and Subcommittee Objectives are satisfactory as is.

**2. Discuss and potentially vote on recommended revisions to the existing Planning and Zoning Commission Bylaws. A copy of the Bylaws are available in the P&Z Department, Room 203, Town Hall.**

Ms. Dobin led a discussion on what components of the Bylaws might benefit from improvement. All Commissioners in attendance participated in the discussion and in summary collectively agreed to the following:

**A. Article I (1) Annual Meeting.**

Modifications should be made to existing language to yield more flexibility to the Commission regarding when election of Officers shall occur so that such important decisions are made ideally when all elected members can attend and/or participate by phone. Currently the Bylaws require the Annual Meeting *“shall be held on either the first regular meeting following the inauguration of newly elected members or the first regular meeting in December.”* The word “held” should be replaced with “opened,” thus allowing the Commission to open the Annual Meeting pursuant to the Bylaws schedule, and potentially continue the Annual Meeting until a later date when greater participation can be achieved to address potential absences at the first meeting.

Ms. Dobin agreed to make the change for future review by the full Commission.

**B. Article II(5) Alternate Members and Article II(6) Resignation**

Language should be added to provide clarity and to document past practice regarding how alternates and replacements are solicited and eventually approved to serve. A three-step process was described:

- i. The relevant political party may submit a candidate for consideration to serve as an Alternate and/or to replace a resigning member.
- ii. Such consideration should be given to the sitting members of the same political party who shall agree to this candidate before the process moves forward (whether this be a majority or minority political party). In the event the sitting members do not agree, they may consider and agree upon their own designee.
- iii. Following agreement of the appointment by the sitting members of the same political party, the candidate shall be considered by the full Commission and shall be approved by a simple majority vote.

Ms. Dobin agreed to add this or similar language for future review by the full Commission.

**C. March 17, 2016 Sense of the Meeting**

Mary Young suggested the procedure allowing described in the Sense of the Meeting identifying Alternates shall be allowed to remain seated on an application until a decision is rendered be incorporated into the Bylaws.

Ms. Dobin agreed to add this language to the Bylaws for future review by the full Commission.

**D. Meeting Participation**

Mr. Lebowitz recommended language should be added expressly allowing participation at regular meetings by phone in those cases when a P&Z member cannot physically attend a meeting and securing an Alternate would not be appropriate (such as to vote on amending the Bylaws, or vote on a decision for which an Alternate did not participate during the public hearing).

Mr. Lebowitz offered to draft this language to add to the Bylaws for future review by the full Commission.

Ms. Dobin summarized the results of the meeting and established a target date of November 14, 2019 when a Work Session will be scheduled for the regular P&Z members to vote on potential Amendments to the Bylaws.

The Meeting concluded at 10:05a.m.

Respectfully Submitted by Mary Young on October 29, 2019