

The Township Guide to Planning & Zoning



Chapter 9

Building a Township Planning and Zoning Team

It may seem at times that the zoning process is cumbersome, especially for first-time applicants or neighboring property owners. Rules, procedures, forms, fees, meetings and delays can create frustration and anxiety for those who must work within the zoning review system. Those who have served a township as an elected official, commission or board member or staff have probably felt the sting of a verbal lashing as a frustrated citizen complained about dealing with the bureaucracy.

Occasionally, the citizen's aggravation may be justified. But for the most part, it usually stems from a lack of understanding of the zoning procedures and laws that a township is required to follow. Procedures that may seem burdensome to some are intended to protect the rights of both property owners and residents.

A fundamental democratic principle is the separation of power among branches of government. This balance of power in local government is also evident in the zoning process. What many people may perceive as a bureaucracy is really a balance of authority designed to ensure fair and impartial consideration of each issue. This chapter explains how each of the individuals or bodies involved in zoning, planning and related aspects of township government coordinate and cooperate.

Township planning and zoning responsibilities are shared by the township board, planning commission, ZBA and other township officials and employees.

Once the zoning board of appeals has made a decision, no appeals are available to the township board or other township body. Someone who is “aggrieved” by a ZBA decision must file an appeal to the circuit court in the county where the property is located. The appeal must be filed within 30 days after the ZBA issues its decision in writing signed by the chairperson or the members of the ZBA, or within 21 days after the board approves the minutes of its decision.

The review by the circuit court is first limited to a review of the record created by the ZBA with the intent of determining if the decision:

- (a) Complies with the constitution and laws of the state.
- (b) Is based upon proper procedure.
- (c) Is supported by competent, material and substantial evidence on the record.
- (d) Represents the reasonable exercise of discretion granted by law to the zoning board of appeals.

Should the court determine that the record is not sufficient to make these findings or finds that additional material evidence exists that with good reason was not presented to the ZBA, the court will allow the matter to be reheard by the ZBA. The ZBA may modify its findings and decision because of the new hearing or it can stand by its first decision. Any additional record of this hearing is submitted to the court. At that point, the court may uphold, reverse or modify the ZBA’s decision. (MCL 125.3606)

A note on granting variances

The ZBA should grant a variance from the township’s zoning laws only after the property in question meets stringent tests described in the zoning ordinance. Only the most unusual situations should qualify for relief from the zoning ordinance’s requirements because the zoning regulations are ultimately intended to protect the *general* health, safety and welfare of the township. Each time a variance from those regulations is granted without meeting the prescribed tests, it erodes the integrity of the township’s zoning regulations and their ability to consistently protect all township residents.

The ZBA is often asked to make tough choices. It is sometimes difficult to remain entirely objective and not allow emotions, compassion and personal preferences to influence a decision. But as a quasi-judicial body, the zoning board of appeals must not be persuaded by likes and dislikes, personalities or personal feelings, an individual applicant’s personal situation, or people attending the meeting. Decisions must be based solely on the applicable provisions of the zoning ordinance and the ability of the applicant’s property to qualify for some relief from those provisions based on the ordinance’s standards and the location’s physical characteristics.

Legislative planning and zoning responsibilities

Elected by the people to govern the township's affairs, the township board consists of a supervisor, clerk, treasurer and two or four trustees. It is the legislative and policymaking body for the township.

The township board is authorized by various statutes to take the following actions that affect township planning and zoning:

1. *Enact laws/adopt master plan.* This includes the exclusive authority of adopting township zoning and non-zoning ordinances and amendments. The MPEA permits the board, through resolution, to elect to be the adopting body for the master plan, rather than the planning commission.
2. *Adopt the budget.* The township board is responsible for controlling the purse strings for all township activities. Through the budgeting process, the board may allocate money to carry out various planning and zoning functions in the community—capital improvements, hiring staff or consultants, preparing plans and ordinances, attending educational seminars and updating the master plan and zoning ordinance.
3. *Appoint boards and commissions.* The machinery that makes township government run is made up of many people who serve on a variety of boards, commissions and special committees. In most cases, appointing members to these bodies requires at least ratification by the township board. The township board is specifically authorized by the Michigan Zoning Enabling Act to appoint the zoning board of appeals. The Michigan Planning Enabling Act requires that the members of a planning commission be appointed by the township supervisor with township board approval.
4. *Exercise other authority granted by the zoning ordinance.* The Michigan Zoning Enabling Act gives townships significant latitude to perform administrative zoning actions, such as site plan review, special land use and planned unit development approvals. Depending on how the zoning ordinance is written, the township board may have a role in these actions and may delegate authority for these duties to others or retain final decision-making power.

Zoning Separation of Powers

Township Board Legislative Functions	Planning Commission Zoning Administrator Administrative Functions	Zoning Board of Appeals Quasi-Judicial Functions
Ordinance Adoption Budget Approvals Zoning Approvals	Ordinance Recommendations Budget Requests Zoning Approvals/Recommendations	Ordinance Interpretation Appeals Variances Other Duties

The supervisor may not be a member of the planning commission

Attorney General Opinion No. 6834 of 1995 states that township supervisors may not serve on the planning commission because they are in a position to appoint and to remove members. This may create a potential conflict under certain circumstances.

Township board members should not attempt to influence planning commissioners or zoning board of appeals members

Planning commission and zoning board of appeals members are either appointed or confirmed by the township board. Once the appointments are made, individual township board members, including the supervisor, should not be involved in or attempt to influence the decisions of the planning commission or zoning board of appeals. If the township board is displeased with the decisions being made, especially if the ZBA or commission is not following proper procedures by failing to properly support their decisions with the ordinance's review standards, it may first attempt to provide additional education for its planning commissioners and ZBA members. Should this fail to correct the problem, the township board may appoint new members when the terms of those members who may be acting inappropriately expire. Appointing officials may attend planning commission and ZBA meetings, and may comment on individual cases, but only to represent the views of the township and not to protect their own interests. (*Department of Transportation vs. Township of Kochville and Board of Zoning Appeals*, Michigan Court of Appeals unpublished opinion, February 5, 2004)

Administrative planning and zoning responsibilities

Most zoning functions are considered administrative rather than legislative. Obviously, the day-to-day zoning enforcement activities such as issuing permits, answering questions and citing violations are administrative. Site plan reviews, special land use approvals, planned unit developments (if not a separate zoning district) and similar activities are also considered administrative functions and may be performed by the planning commission or any individual or body of the township designated by the zoning ordinance. For example, the zoning administrator could be charged with the responsibility for site plan review or the planning commission may have sole authority to act on special land use requests. Because these functions are administrative, the township board can delegate responsibility for them through the zoning ordinance.

Specific duties reserved for the planning commission include conducting public hearings, recommending zoning ordinances and amendments to the township board, and preparing a master plan.

Quasi-judicial planning and zoning responsibilities

The ZBA has the quasi-judicial function of interpreting and implementing the legislative intent of zoning regulations. No other body or individual office in the township has the power to vary the zoning ordinance's requirements.

Responsibilities of Township Planning and Zoning Bodies

Township Board

- Establishes and confirms supervisor's appointments to planning commission (MCL 125.3815(1))
- Appoints zoning board of appeals (ZBA) (MCL 125.3601)
- Recommends for distribution and/or adopts master plan (after adoption of a resolution) (MCLs 125.3841(1) and 125.3843(3))
- Adopts and amends zoning ordinance (MCL 125.3201)
- May review and approve special land use permits, if designated by zoning ordinance (MCL 125.3502)
- May review and approve planned unit developments, if designated by zoning ordinance (MCL 125.3503)
- May review and approve site plans, if designated by zoning ordinance (MCL 125.3501)
- Adopts and amends purchase of development rights ordinance (MCL 125.3507)
- Approves subdivision plats (MCL 560.101, *et seq*)
- Adopts and amends subdivision ordinance (MCL 560.101, *et seq*)
- Adopts and amends land division ordinance (MCL 560.101, *et seq*)

Planning Commission

- Develops, adopts (if not adopted by the township board) and implements master plan (MCL 125.3843(2)(3))
- Submits proposed master plan or amendments to county planning commission, if any, or regional planning commission, if any, for review and approval (MCL 125.3841(2))
- Reviews and approves certain public works (MCLs 125.3861 and 125.3863)
- May assist township board in developing capital improvement plans (MCL 125.3865)
- Makes recommendations to township board on zoning ordinance adoption and amendments, and rezonings (MCL 125.3305)
- May review and approve special land use permits, if designated by zoning ordinance (MCL 125.3502)
- May review and approve planned unit developments, if designated by zoning ordinance (MCL 125.3503)
- May review and approve site plans, if designated by zoning ordinance (MCL 125.3501)
- Makes recommendations on planning and zoning policies, including subdivision and land division ordinances (MCL 125.3871(1))
- Makes recommendations to township board on subdivision plats (MCL 125.3871(4))
- Provides information on zoning regulations for the public (MCL 125.3825)
- Consults with the county planning commission, incorporated municipalities within the township and the regional planning commission, if any (MCL 125.3831(2))
- Promotes public information and understanding of the master plan, and publicizes the plan (MCL 125.3851(1))

Cooperation is the key

Sometimes the lines of authority may become blurred between legislative, administrative and quasi-judicial zoning functions. For example, in some cases, the ZBA may ask the planning commission for an opinion or recommendation about an application it is considering, such as those regarding use variances. Typically, however, the commission should not be regularly consulted regarding recommendations for variances or other ZBA actions. As permitted by the MZEA, some zoning ordinances allow appeals to the ZBA regarding special land use and planned unit development decisions; others give final authority over those decisions to the township board or planning commission.

The zoning process is intended to require cooperation between the township board, planning commission and ZBA. The process begins with a cooperative effort between the planning commission and township board with respect to the adoption of the master plan, and continues into the zoning process.

The planning commission must carefully apply the zoning ordinance's standards to their decisions and act to conform with the master plan and consider the best interests of the entire township.

Responsibilities of Township Planning and Zoning Bodies

Zoning Administrator

- May administer and enforce zoning ordinance, and issue permits and performance bonds, if designated by zoning ordinance or township board (MCLs 125.3301, 125.3407 and 125.3505)
- May review and approve special land use permits, if designated by zoning ordinance (MCL 125.3502)
- May review and approve planned unit developments, if designated by zoning ordinance (MCL 125.3503)
- May review and approve site plans, if designated by zoning ordinance (MCL 125.3501)
- Provides information on zoning regulations
- Coordinates information between township planning and zoning bodies
- May make recommendations on planning and zoning policies, including master plan, zoning ordinance, rezonings, subdivisions, planned unit developments and variances to township board, planning commission or ZBA

Zoning Board of Appeals

- Reviews and acts on zoning ordinance variance requests (MCL 125.3604)
- Hears appeals of zoning actions. Special land use and planned unit development decision appeals may be taken to the ZBA only if such appeals are provided for in the zoning ordinance. (MCL 125.3603)
- Interprets the zoning ordinance text and map (MCL 125.3603)
- May classify uses not listed in zoning ordinance (MCLs 125.3208 and 125.3603)
- ZBA decisions are final; the ZBA does not have authority to reconsider any matter, unless provided in the zoning ordinance. An appeal from a ZBA decision shall be filed within 30 days after the board issues its decision in writing signed by the chairperson, if there is a chairperson, or signed by the members of the zoning board of appeals, if there is no chairperson, or within 21 days after the zoning board of appeals approves the minutes of its decision. (MCL 125.3606(3))

The township board should not reject the recommendations of the planning commission without substantial justification if it is clear that the commission carefully and appropriately considered all of the requirements and standards of the ordinance.

Similarly, the ZBA, which is not part of the process of writing and adopting a zoning ordinance, cannot simply choose to ignore a zoning ordinance provision and grant variances without following the standards of review applicable to individual applications. If the ZBA disagrees with a specific zoning ordinance provision, it should communicate its concerns to the planning commission and request a review and possible amendment of the ordinance. If the planning commission and township board decide that a review is warranted, but the provision remains unchanged, the ZBA should consider that a zoning policy decision and not attempt to alter it on an application-by-application basis.

Each planning and zoning body, including the board, should meet together on a regular basis to discuss common issues and concerns. This should include dedicating at least one meeting a year as a joint session to discuss township planning issues. Cooperation is the key to achieving the township's vision. **OMA**

Zoning administrator

Poor zoning enforcement and administration can be the weak link within any community's zoning process. The most conscientious boards and commissions, working with the best ordinances, cannot make up for lax implementation and enforcement of the zoning ordinance provisions. Denying a request or attaching conditions to an approval have little effect if violations are ignored or overlooked by the zoning administrator.

While many formal zoning decisions are performed by elected and appointed bodies, front-line zoning enforcement and administration activities are performed by the zoning administrator. The zoning administrator is vested with police powers to enforce the zoning ordinance, including issuing citations or other enforcement action.

The zoning administrator may be directly involved in the zoning process by working with the township board, planning commission and ZBA. The zoning administrator may be the liaison between these bodies, attending their meetings, providing information about requests that come before them and making recommendations.

The zoning administrator's relationship with the ZBA, in particular, may occur on other levels as well. Any person aggrieved by a decision of the zoning administrator may appeal that decision to the ZBA. The ZBA is permitted to review the zoning administrator's actions and reverse that decision if it finds that the zoning administrator acted in a manner contrary to the requirements of the ordinance. Absent an appeal, the zoning administrator's decision is

usually final, and the ZBA should not overturn that decision simply if it disagrees with the action taken.

Zoning administration may be handled differently depending on the township's size and volume of activity. Some of the most common approaches include zoning administration provided by one of the following:

- full- or part-time zoning administrator,
- building inspector/zoning administrator,
- zoning administrator employed jointly with other townships or by the county, or
- a contract with an outside inspection service.

The zoning administrator must perform a wide range of zoning enforcement activities. The job involves public contact, field work and a thorough working knowledge of both the township zoning ordinance, zoning statutes and general zoning policies. The zoning administrator must be able to:

- respond to requests for information,
- respond to ordinance violation complaints,
- accept complete applications for zoning reviews,
- review plans and applications,
- conduct field inspections,
- issue permits and citations,
- identify nonconformities,
- maintain records,
- enforce all regulations, and
- monitor compliance.

Beyond a basic knowledge of zoning, the administrator must have excellent interpersonal skills. Much as a police officer, the zoning administrator must be tactful and polite, but firm and confident. The most desirable qualities for a zoning administrator include:

- working knowledge of building and zoning,
- ability to withstand public pressure,
- patience and understanding,
- common sense,
- commitment to public service,
- firm resolve,
- organizational skills, and
- public relations skills.

The township supervisor should not serve as zoning administrator

A number of townships permit the township supervisor to act as the zoning administrator as an extra duty. While not prohibited by statute, the township should consider some of the implications: The supervisor may not be viewed by the public as a neutral or unbiased individual assisting someone through the zoning process, particularly if the supervisor will have to vote

on the proposal if it comes before the township board. The supervisor appoints the planning commission members with township board approval, and as a township board member, appoints the ZBA members. As a result, the supervisor may appear to have undue influence on the decision-making process of those bodies, although this is not generally an issue as long as the supervisor clearly represents only the interests of the township.

Building officials

Other staff resources may be employed to assist the township in carrying out its zoning functions. The extent to which additional help is used depends on the level of building and zoning activity within the community, its population and budget.

The duties of the building inspector and zoning administrator are sometimes performed by the same person because building inspection and zoning functions involve many of the same activities, including plan review, site visits and issuing permits. Combining the two positions can improve efficiency and save money, provided the volume of work can be handled by one person without compromising the responsibilities of each position. However, in rapidly growing or heavily urbanized communities, the jobs may have to be separated to ensure that both get the attention each deserves. In any event, there should be close coordination between the persons responsible for the building and zoning functions.

However, it is important that the zoning ordinance and the building code be enforced separately. These are two distinct regulations, serving different purposes. Building regulations do not belong in the zoning ordinance and zoning requirements have no place in the building code.

Planning staff

Some townships employ a planner or planning staff. Often, the planner takes on the responsibilities for zoning administration and may share duties with the building inspector. The planner is an effective choice to handle these administrative functions, since he or she must be familiar with the process of developing the zoning ordinance and the relationship between zoning and planning.

When a full-time planner is part of the township staff, this person typically acts as liaison to the planning commission, zoning board of appeals and township board on all zoning matters. The township may also have a private consultant or shared planner for this function. Their duties may include meeting with applicants, preparing informational background materials, submitting recommendations and providing educational materials to elected and appointed members.

Board and commission members often wrestle with how much weight they should give to the recommendations of planning staff or consultants. The recommendations of these trained professional planners should be specific

to the standards and requirements of the zoning ordinance. As such, the recommendation should be taken seriously, but not blindly.

Ultimately, the township board and planning commission's decisions are the only ones that count. As long as those decisions are based on reasonable evidence and evaluated on the basis of the zoning ordinance's standards, they are valid.

Consultants

Some communities use private planning firms instead of or in addition to township staff to perform building inspection and plan review services. These consultants also may perform some or all of the duties of the building inspector/zoning administrator on a contractual basis. Using a planning firm can be less expensive than hiring a full-time person, and the community has access to qualified specialist when needed.

Consultants are frequently hired by townships to work directly with the planning commission to provide professional guidance on a longer-term contract for services. The consultant may review plans and other development requests, attend meetings, advise the commission and the zoning administrator, and make recommendations. Even townships with full-time planning and zoning staff may use consultants to assist with long-range planning functions such as developing or updating the master plan, drafting the zoning ordinance or performing special studies.

Many professional planners practicing in Michigan are certified by either the State of Michigan or the American Institute of Certified Planners. Michigan certified planners can use the title Professional Community Planner. Nationally certified planners can use the initials AICP after their name.

Michigan law does not require competitive price selection for professional services, including planning, engineering or architecture, regardless of the amount.

How to select a planning consultant

The following recommendations were developed by the Michigan Association of Planning (the Michigan chapter of the American Planning Association):

■ *Decide if the township should use a competitive selection process.* A competitive process is most appropriate for new work, large projects or when selecting a firm to provide general planning services. If the township prefers to use a particular consultant, the project or general service contract should be made noncompetitive and awarded to the preferred consultant. If consultants are to be selected from a particular geographic area, this fact should be clearly stated.

■ **Define the type of planning work the township needs.** For example, does your job involve zoning, master planning, economic analysis or transportation, environmental or other planning subjects?

■ **Identify those planning consultants that are the most appropriate for the job.** Consult the Michigan Association of Planning, obtain suggestions from communities involved in similar projects and advertise the work by publishing a request for qualifications. Initially, ask only for letters of interest with statements of qualifications, including past experience on similar projects. From these letters and documents, determine which firms to invite to submit detailed proposals. Some federally funded programs require that all firms interested in submitting proposals be allowed to do so. In that case, you may still invite proposals, but cannot refuse to review those that are not specifically invited.

■ **Research typical planning consultant fees before preparing a budget.** The budget for the project should be realistic in terms of the level of effort needed to satisfactorily complete the project. The township must understand the fee arrangements and cost basis for the work. Arrangements include paying time charges with or without a maximum, or a fixed fee.

■ **Prepare a Request for Proposal.** The RFP will be the basis for consultants to prepare proposals. Be clear in the RFP about what the final product or result should be. Have all groups interested in and affected by the planning work review the RFP. Limit the number of invited proposals to the five or six who have the best qualifications to perform the work.

Include at a minimum the following items in the RFP, as applicable to the specific project:

- Statement of the problem (why is the township doing this project),
- Planning objective (how is the township going to use the results of this project),
- Particular issues on which the township wants recommendations as a result of the work,
- Constraints to resolve these issues,
- Level of effort envisioned in terms of budget and/or professional person-hours, including other firms that may be involved,
- Essential background information,
- Meetings expected during the work process,
- Date, time and place of informational meeting,
- Specifications for the proposals including number of copies required, any page limits, and mailing and delivery addresses,
- Deadline for submittal,
- Description of evaluation criteria (weighted if possible) and the RFP evaluation process with intended dates for every major step, and
- Key contact persons for further information about the RFP (and relevant information regarding the firm with similar related projects and key personnel if an RFQ process was not used), and
- A note indicating that the township has the right to reject any proposal at its discretion.

■ ***Hold one informational meeting with all parties to explain the project and answer questions.*** Individual telephone conversations or information meetings with each consultant are also acceptable, but time-consuming. Questions asked and answered for one consultant should be provided to all.

■ ***Ensure that senior-level people who are familiar with the project and its aims read and evaluate the proposals.***

■ ***Prepare a "short list" of finalists for interviews.*** Final selection should be based on both the written proposals and an interview. It is best to interview no more than three finalists.

■ ***Establish evaluation criteria prior to the first interview.*** The selection team should follow the criteria and may want to assign weights to the different factors. Some of the criteria that should guide the selection are:

- Qualifications and experience of key project staff, including other firms, if any,
- Consultant's understanding of the project and the proposed approach,
- Quality of work for similar projects,
- Value of services and products proposed for available budget,
- Timeliness and compatibility of consultant team, and
- Intangible factors such as "chemistry" between consultant and client.

■ ***Organize a format for the interviews.*** Develop a standard set of questions that will be asked of all finalists. Decide whether the interviews will be public or private. **OMA & ADA** Under Michigan law, if a quorum of the decision-making body is present, the meeting must be public. During interviews, other applicants should be asked to wait in a place where the interviewing consultants cannot be heard.

Inform the finalists of the interview format, who will be present, who the other finalists are and what material you expect them to bring. Give each finalist approximately 45 minutes to one hour for presentation and questions.

Concentrate on the substance of the work during the interview. Consider qualifications, project understanding and approach, quality of work, personnel, and other objective factors. Do not change the interview process once the interviews have begun.

■ ***A courtesy letter informing each planning firm of the outcome of the selection process is strongly recommended.*** The opportunity for unsuccessful candidates to review the winning proposal and discuss reasons for the selection outcome should be offered.

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Township attorney

A township attorney may serve in a variety of planning and zoning capacities. Some townships rely on their attorney much as they would a township planner, consultant or similar professional advisor, having him or her attend some or all township board, planning commission and ZBA meetings. The extent of the attorney's knowledge and experience in land use and zoning, budget limitations, and board preference determines how often the township attorney participates in the planning and zoning process.

While not necessarily needed at every planning commission or ZBA meeting, at a minimum, the township attorney should be consulted whenever the potential exists for an especially controversial or complex zoning issue, or when enforcement actions prove initially unsuccessful. In these instances, the township board may wish to have the attorney review procedures to ensure that an adequate record is being kept of the enforcement or appeal proceedings and the township's decisions are based on sound criteria. Such precautions under the watchful eye of a knowledgeable attorney early in a review and enforcement process can be very important if the matter subsequently goes to court.

Building a planning and zoning team

Success in finding motivated, dedicated people to serve on planning commissions and ZBAs differs from one township to another. Some townships have a waiting list of people who want to serve; others never seem to have enough people and call on those who volunteer to serve in more than one position. However, because of the importance of their decisions, planning commission and ZBA members should be selected using a consistent and thorough process.

Following are steps for recruiting interested volunteers:

Step 1—Determine potential members.

The first step in selecting the right people is to get the word out that the township is seeking people to serve. Several sources may be used to accomplish this.

- *Current members*—Ask current members to suggest people who may be interested in serving.
- *Activists*—Past zoning controversies may have brought some people to the township's attention. Do not overlook these individuals, particularly if they were able to express themselves well and were effective in their presentations, even if they were opposed to the township's actions.
- *Advertising*—A well-placed news article or public notice may generate some applicants. If available, a township website, social media outlets and the township newsletter should also be used. A notice should be posted in the township

hall. Radio and television stations, including cable access channels, may also be requested to run the notice as a public service announcement, which is generally free.

- *Civic groups*—The township should solicit names from civic groups, neighborhood associations, lake associations, churches and other community organizations.

Step Two—*Narrow the field.*

Once a sufficiently large list of potential members is developed, the township supervisor may wish to narrow the field to a few, well-qualified candidates. This may include using such factors as looking for candidates with previous experience in serving in other communities, selecting candidates that represent interests in the community that are currently not addressed, or finding candidate residences that can provide a more geographically balanced body.

Step 3—*Interview candidates.*

Candidate interviews may be conducted in a variety of ways. For example, the supervisor may elect to do a private interview with potential planning commission members or the entire township board may be involved. The planning commission or ZBA may also be part of the interview process. It should be noted, however, that if a quorum of any of these bodies is present for an interview, the rules of the Open Meetings Act apply. **OMA & ADA**

Regardless of who is involved, the interview process should not be used to quiz potential members on specific projects or to discuss how they might vote on particular issues. Rather, the interview should be used to bring out the candidate's related activities in other communities where they may have previously lived, determine the quality of their previous experience, or to gauge their commitment. The interview should also be used to ensure the applicant clearly understands the expectations of the community, the nature of the job and the amount of preparation needed, and to determine the overall commitment that the candidate is willing to put forth.

Step 4—*Select and appoint members.*

Although the township supervisor selects the candidates for appointment to the planning commission, the township board's approval is required. The supervisor should forward relevant information about the planning commission candidate to the township board, along with a recommendation by the planning commission, if one was provided. The term of the appointment should also be made clear, particularly if the member is replacing a member who left before the term expired.

The township board as a body appoints ZBA members.

Step 5—*Orient and train members.*

Too often, new members are thrown into the first meeting with little understanding of what is expected of them. Once a new member is appointed, it is important that he or she receive some basic information, including copies of the township's zoning ordinance, master plan, subdivision ordinance, bylaws and any other relevant documents. Copies of meeting minutes covering the prior six to 12 months may also be helpful. (Providing of copy of this publication should also be considered.)

It is advisable to have the zoning administrator, township attorney or township planner spend some time with the new member and go over his or her basic duties and responsibilities, including a review of the plans and ordinances that he or she will be using, general meeting procedures, conflict of interest procedures, and other related activities (such as site visit practices).

New and veteran members should be encouraged to attend training programs conducted by various organizations throughout the year. Some communities have adopted a policy that requires members to attend at least one training session per year (or one for each year of their terms) as a condition of reappointment. Appendix A lists selected organizations that offer resources, training and publications to help commission members do their jobs more effectively.