

Park County Planning Board Subcommittee on Engagement

What Needs to Happen to Make it Easy to Engage With County Issues and to Believe Your Voice Matters?

*Answers from Park County Residents Attending 7 Public Meetings/Listening Sessions, May 4 through July 6, 2023
(Answers are listed multiple times if relevant to more than one category)*

Planning Board/Planning Department/County Commission

Planning Board & County Commission

- A general Planning Board email address that reaches all board members.
- Planning Board and Commission vote with the majority.
- Planning Board be transparent.
- Create Decision Document when decisions are made and get it out widely to the public (not just post on website).
- Follow up with residents consistently.
- Practice active listening.
- Acknowledgement of public emails from county recipients.
- Improve countywide representation on the Planning Board – it should represent the entirety of our county.
- Hold regular transparent conversations between county and city officials to better address issues and areas of interest to both.
- Create a City-County Planning Board to better coordinate between city and county.
- Meet people where they are – travel and listen.
- When a resident asks a board member or commissioner to place an item on the agenda, the board member or commissioner should either do so or provide an explanation directly to the resident.
- Check calendars to ensure meetings don't compete with other events.

Board Meetings

- For major issues, Planning Board members, commissioners, and Planning staff hold public meetings all over the county.
- More discussion at meetings about comments received.
- Feeling safe at board meetings when emotions are high (examples: sheriff deputy present, make and enforce rules governing behavior, have a Meeting Code of Conduct, flowers on table).
- Create psychologically safe meetings.
- Create a mechanism to ensure input is from a valid stakeholder (e.g., resident or registered voter).
- Provide neutral one-page summary level (hard copy and digital) of public concerns and opinions before meeting. This allows focus on most important issues and identification of issues left out.
- Check calendars to ensure meetings don't compete with other events.
- When attendees ask questions at meetings, answer them.
- Transparency re who is providing the public input – e.g., individual resident, NGO, non-local, etc.
- Ensure the narrative is not distorted after the meeting.
- Hold meetings when most convenient for the public.
- Detailed minutes for each meeting.
- Use statistically relevant sentiment analysis reflecting the population. Ensure reliable data and robust data collection. Tease out nuance and content.
- Have the agenda available before the meetings and a hard copy at the meetings.
- Planning staff or Board Chair present a summary of public comments at the beginning of each meeting.
- Practice active listening.
- Planning staff provide verbal summary at the end of public meetings of the issues and general comments (removes emotions and shows that the board and staff were listening).
- Notify public after each meeting with summary and next steps.
- Landowners should be considered 'top of the ladder', have more ability to be heard, and have more influence in decision-making.
- Divide the county into districts. Refer to each district in every agenda – describe news/happenings/issues for each. Include also in minutes. Assign a board member to each district to report out at each meeting.
- Address a specific issue at each meeting and hold the meeting in the county area most affected by that issue.
- Avoid jargon – translate into language novices can understand; applies to agendas also.
- Acknowledgement and appreciation when comments shared.
- State clearly sources of funding for issues under consideration.

- Challenge the assumption people are talking about the same thing.
- Provide background into context at every meeting.
- Clarity about what's included in agenda items.
- Consider different learning styles.
- Explain issues before acting on them.
- Explain processes and procedures

Planning Department Staff

- Make Planning staff recommendations easy to access prior to Commission meetings.
- Follow up with residents consistently.
- Planning staff provide verbal summary at the end of public meetings of the issues and general comments (removes emotions and shows that the board and staff were listening).
- Practice active listening.
- Check calendars to ensure meetings don't compete with other events.
- Acknowledgement of public emails from county recipients.
- Send residents an email to assure them that their communications to the Planning Dept. are forwarded to board members.

Better Use of Technology

- Integrative approach – record meetings, post online, stream meetings, etc., with goal to reach enough residents so opinions are well represented.
- Utilize AI.
- Digital public forum to replace Letters to the Editor.

Remote Accessibility

- Provide an owl to each community.
- Make all meetings remotely accessible, wherever they're held.

Recordings

- Ability to access board meeting recordings the next day.
- Place board members'/commissioners' contact information near meeting recordings so residents can contact them if they have comments or questions.
- Time notations stating where various topics are discussed.

Phones

- Improve county phone system to make it easy to reach the correct people.
- Send updating texts – good for getting word out quickly.

Radio

- Create a regular (monthly?) radio broadcast of county officials discussing/announcing issues and upcoming events.

Website

- Keep website current – residents will use it if they trust it has up-to-date info.
- Update website and make it easy to navigate.
- Post a help number to call when having difficulty navigating site, signing up for notifications, etc.
- Make it simple and reliable to sign up on website for regular notifications.
- Ability to send an email through the website with an opinion on an issue and receive a real (non-automated) response.
- Create Decision Document when decisions are made and get it out widely to the public (not just post on website).
- Clarify on the website each of the county departments, agencies, officials, etc. – what they do, if they are appointed or elected, where board members live, etc.
- Video on website homepage explaining how to navigate the site.
- Have a location on the website with all issues before the county in all departments. Have it front and center.
- Inform public who to contact in county with ideas, requests, issues, etc.
- One-page mechanism to opt into which notifications to receive (e.g., which departments).
- Post meeting times and dates on website – keep the invitation open and transparent.
- FAQ section with 'Hottest Topics' for each county area, with ability for residents in that area to respond.

Social Media (YouTube, Facebook, etc.)

- Post video recordings of meetings you YouTube channel with an invitation for the public to respond
- Stream and archive all meetings on YouTube channel.
- Create a Facebook page for each department and keep them updated (e.g., about road construction).

More & Better Interaction With Public

- Meet people where they are – travel and listen.
- Annual event, e.g., breakfast fundraiser for Fire Dept., attended by Planning Board and commissioners.

- Provide education about what the Planning Board does and issues coming up and what the impact may be.
- For major issues, Planning Board members, commissioners, and Planning staff hold public meetings all over the county.
- Planning Board and Commission hold meetings all over the county.
- Provide a mechanism for conversation and discussion between the public and the Planning Board and Commission – for education and understanding (could be discussion groups, focus groups). Listen to others’ points of view.
- Commissioners attend many community events.
- Booths at events giving people opportunity to sign up.
- Practice active listening.
- Events for civil, honest discourse.
- Send us regular emails or a blog.
- Acknowledge our comments and questions.
- When a resident asks a board member or commissioner to place an item on the agenda, the board member or commissioner should either do so or provide an explanation directly to the resident.
- We need more collaborative decision-making. Consider how to make it easy for all stakeholders to be involved.
- Acknowledgement that our email has been received – a human reply with understanding of issue and assurance it will be brought up at the meeting.
- Knowing where my email goes.

Keep Us Informed

What

- Keep us informed of what are all the issues being addressed and how are they related.
- Regular presentation of board members’ opinions on issues.
- Make Planning staff recommendations easy to access prior to Commission meetings.
- Clarify deadlines for public comment.
- Make public opinion raw data available.
- Inform public who to contact in county with ideas, requests, issues, etc.
- Commissioners clarify at beginning of meetings the intent and what will and won’t be outcomes of public requests at the meeting.
- Fully disclose public comments via documentation for the public so public can understand the various opinions about an issue.
- Clarify to whom we should address questions and comments. Let us know who will see them, where they will be stored, and what will be done with them.
- Create Decision Document when decisions are made and get it out widely to the public (not just post on website).
- Put agenda items in meeting notifications and a ‘heads up’ about what might impact us.
- Clarify who has what jurisdiction.
- Send targeted info from trust source based on individual resident interests.

How

- Simplify our ability to keep up with what’s happening.
- Keep it accurate – we need the truth
- Have the agenda available before the meetings and a hard copy at the meetings.
- Detailed minutes for each meeting.
- Road signs.
- Create a committee of two to three people in each area to attend meetings and spread the word in their area.
- Send meeting schedule with garbage tag – list departments and contact info.
- Provide neutral one-page summary level (hard copy and digital) of public concerns and opinions before meeting. This allows focus on most important issues and identification of issues left out.
- Integrative approach – record meetings, post online, stream meetings, etc, with goal to reach enough residents so opinions are well represented.
- Booths at events giving people opportunity to sign up.
- Segregate email lists by area to reduce emails.
- Various staff accompany commissioners to meetings around the county.
- Notify public after each meeting with a summary and next steps.
- Follow up with residents consistently.
- Keep email lists notified, even if nothing is happening.
- Email addresses and phone numbers for each department on the website.
- “Are You Interested In....?” signup opportunity at entrance of county building.
- Create a mechanism to ensure input is from a valid stakeholder (e.g., resident or registered voter).

- Designate a central record-keeper.
- Create a regular (monthly?) radio broadcast of county officials discussing/announcing issues and upcoming events.
- Give us more input from the county and use a variety of channels to inform us.
- Have a regular communication like Dr. Desnick's update video. Maybe Lawson do it?
- Designate someone to monitor how messages are presented and received – make sure they are unbiased.
- Notify us through multiple channels and multiple times (at least 3 times).
- Send an email about meetings at least one week in advance – timely notification.
- Hold meetings at a consistent day and time – post this on the website and reiterate it.
- Keep invitations to meetings open and transparent.
- Electronic bulletin board signage.
- Social media
- This is Really Livingston
- Shields Valley FB page
- County social media pages
- Direct mail
- Road signs
- Livingston Enterprise
- Private email lists (guest ranches, tourism employees)
- Town crier
- Clarify which parts of the county are affected by meeting decisions.
- Posters (Town & Country, Albertsons, libraries, local store, Chamber of Commerce, community message boards) – colored paper.
- Post signs in 3 to 5 places in each area where residents are most likely to see them (e.g., grocery stores, coffee shops, banks, gas stations, post office).
- Fire District signage
- Spouses, significant others
- Coordinate with public schools
- Collaborative list of all county departments' news and events on website homepage.
- Local coffee with commissioners
- Leaflets at ballgames
- Phone tree (at night)
- Emails with mechanism to show they are not spam
- Have a logical category on the county website homepage with news.
- FFA & 4H project (via MSU Extension)
- Video on website homepage.
- Fix the bulletin board situation in locations where outdated postings not removed, too busy, etc.
- Place county-specific bulletin boards at key locations.
- Community newsletters (Chambers of Commerce, NPOs, churches, private citizens).
- Banners at Green Boxes with large QR code.
- Park County Community Journal.
- Word-of-mouth.
- Dedicated county website page with all the issues and meetings.
- Signage by market and post office.
- Make it simple and reliable to sign up on website for regular notifications.
- Direct mailing with instructions of how to sign up for notifications.
- Encourage newcomers through real estate agents, etc.
- Have a regular communication like Dr. Desnick's update video. Maybe Lawson do it?
- One-page mechanism to opt into which notifications to receive (e.g., which departments).
- Greg Coleman's list – encourage residents to download the app.

Miscellaneous

- Put issues on the ballot
- Allow ETJ residents to suggest a name more tied to their area rather than to Livingston.