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.