

**9J-5.004 PUBLIC PARTICIPATION PROCEDURES**

**WASHINGTON COUNTY, CARYVILLE, EBRO, VERNON, AND WAUSAU  
COMPREHENSIVE PLAN**

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**FUTURE LAND USE ELEMENT  
WASHINGTON COUNTY COMPREHENSIVE PLAN**

**Section J**

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**I. PURPOSE**

The purpose of this section of the Comprehensive Plan is to present the procedures formally adopted by the Local Governing Bodies to provide for and encourage public participation in the planning process.

The following Public Participation Procedures were adopted by the Washington County Commissioners as well as by the Washington County Planning Commission (the LPA) and the governing bodies of the municipalities of Caryville, Ebro, Vernon, and Wausau. A sample copy of the adopting resolution as well as the procedures themselves follows.

**II. INTRODUCTION**

By statute, the governing bodies of each municipality and county in Florida and their designated Local Planning Agency (LPA) are required to adopt citizen participation procedures. These procedures must provide for and encourage public participation in the planning process, including consideration of amendments to the Comprehensive Plan and Evaluation Appraisal Reports (EAR's). Minimum statutory requirements include the following local provisions:

- Assure notice to real property owners
- Keep the general public informed
- Assure opportunities for the public to provide written comments
- Assure consideration of and response to public comments.

Additionally, both the Governing Body and the LPA are required to hold public hearings, with due public notice, at various stages of the plan development, adoption process, plan amendments and preparation of the EAR. ~~as well as when plan amendments are considered, and when EAR's are prepared.~~

**III. PUBLIC PARTICIPATION**

Aside from the State legal requirements for citizen participation, the Washington County Commission has expressed a desire to develop procedures for citizen participation which will best serve the interest of local citizens and which will produce and maintain a quality local government Comprehensive Plan. Citizen participation for purposes of these procedures is defined ~~as follows:~~ ~~Citizen participation is as the interactive involvement of citizens with the government in the design,~~

development, implementation, and evaluation of the plans, policies, strategies, and programs that are related to sustaining or improving the physical, social, economic, or political conditions that have an impact on the total quality of life of a community.

A. Role of Public Participation in Comprehensive Planning

Public participation plays an essential role in the Comprehensive Planning progress for the following reasons:

1. It provides an essential vehicle for identifying the important questions that must be answered by the physical, sociological and economic that is collected and analyzed.
2. It is an effective method for identifying and articulating community aspirations.
3. It helps to build a consensus on and constituency for, the Comprehensive Plan as it develops.

B. Public Participation Pursuant to Florida Law

Both Florida statutory law and the Florida Administrative Code require public participation in the comprehensive planning process. Section 163.3181 of the comprehensive planning statute states:

*It is the intent of the Legislature that the public participate in the comprehensive planning process to the fullest extent possible (emphasis added). Towards this end, local planning agencies and local governmental units are directed to adopt procedures designed to provide effective public participation in the comprehensive planning process and to provide real property owners with notice of all official actions which will regulate the use of their property.*

The statute also requires that during consideration of a "...proposed plan or amendments thereto by the local planning agency or by the local governing body..." provision shall be made for:

1. Broad dissemination of proposals and alternatives
2. Receipt of written comments from the public
3. Public hearings
4. Open discussions
5. Communication programs
6. Information dissemination programs
7. Consideration of public comments
8. Response to public comments.

Rule 9J-5.004 of the Florida Administrative Code requires that communities adopt procedures to ensure compliance with statutory requirements for public participation. Therefore, the adopted Comprehensive Plan must provide procedures that ensure public participation in compliance with the administrative code and the statute.

#### **IV. LOCAL PLANNING AGENCY**

Florida Law requires that designation of a Local Planning Agency (LPA). The LPA is responsible for preparation of the Comprehensive Plan. In preparing the plan, the LPA may utilize whatever professional help is appropriate, but the final recommendation of a plan for enactment by the Governing Body is the responsibility of the LPA.

#### **V. COMPREHENSIVE PLAN, AMENDMENT, AND EVALUATION AND APPRAISAL PREPARATION PROCEDURE**

The purpose of these Public Participation Procedures are to provide the Washington County Commission and all interested parties with a description of the various mechanisms by which all functions required of these Public Participation Procedures (by state law rules), will be achieved throughout the process of preparing, making periodic revisions to, or the consideration of proposed amendments to the Comprehensive Plan. As utilized throughout this section, "revision" of the Comprehensive Plan shall mean any changes to the Comprehensive Plan proposed or adopted as a result of the periodic reevaluation of the entire Comprehensive Plan as required by Section 163.3191, F.S. (i.e. EAR's). "Amendment" of the Comprehensive Plan shall mean those changes to the Comprehensive Plan that may be considered, or are proposed or adopted on a more regular basis, as specified under Section 163.3187, F.S. In order to meet the public participation requirements specified in the preceding sections, the following procedures shall be utilized during Comprehensive Plan preparation, revision, and/or amendment.

##### **A. Newspaper Advertising**

For all regular meetings and workshops of the full LPA, and Governing Body, where preparation, revision, and/or amendments to the Comprehensive Plan will be discussed, an advertisement shall be published in a newspaper of general circulation. The advertisement shall be of sufficient size and design (within reasonable budgetary limitations) so as to be readily noticed by interested citizens. The advertisement shall include the purpose, date, time and location of the meeting, and it shall offer citizens and real property owners the opportunity to attain additional information, and to be placed on a mailing list for future meeting notices if they so choose. Furthermore, each such newspaper advertisement shall contain the following:

- A headline entitled "Official Actions Will Affect and Regulate Use of Real Property in Unincorporated Washington County, and the municipalities of Caryville, Ebro, Vernon, and Wausau - Notice to Real Property Owners and General Public," or similar title.

- A statement indicating that the meeting or workshop is being held in connection with activities concerning the preparation, revision, or amendment of the Comprehensive Plan for Unincorporated Washington County and the municipalities of Caryville, Ebro, Vemon, and Wausau.
- Additional information may include a geographic location map indicating any subareas under consideration.
- All formal public hearings leading toward plan submittal and adoption, shall be advertised in accordance with the provisions of Chapter 163, Florida Statutes and Florida Administrative code (whichever is applicable), relating to advertisement size, print size, advertisement location, content of advertisement, and dates of publication. This shall pertain to all hearing held in connection with plan preparation, revision, and amendment.

B. Notice to Real Property Owners

It will be assured that real property owners will be put on notice as to official actions that will regulate the use of their property (required by Section 163.3181 (1) F.S. and Section 9J-5.004 F.A.C.) through the publication of the newspaper advertisements in accordance with the preceding Section V.A. of these Public Participation Procedures.

C. Mailing List

All interested individuals shall be afforded the opportunity (through advertising and other techniques) to have their name placed on a mailing list to receive written notice of meetings, workshops, seminars, and public hearings related to preparation, revision, and/or amendment of the Comprehensive Plan.

D. Free Publicity

Advantage should be taken of any free publicity opportunities that may be available. Notices of meetings should be submitted to the media for inclusion in periodic community service listings or announcements of meetings. Other low cost techniques such as media releases, public service announcements, and presentations to community groups should also be utilized when appropriate in order to provide information to the public and to receive their comments.

E. Community Meetings

All meetings relating to the preparation, revision, and/or amendment of the Comprehensive Plan shall be public meetings. At strategic points in the planning process, these meetings shall be conducted on a geographically dispersed basis to encourage participation by citizens who may be disinclined to attend meetings in a more formal setting. These community-level meetings should be

oriented toward discussion of substantive material that might be of community interest or concern (e.g., avoid "abstract" meetings that would focus on general administrative or legal process). Community meetings shall be advertised and advantage taken of other publicity techniques, such as media interviews, group presentations, personal contacts, and public meeting announcements. Citizens should be have the opportunity to comment at all meetings related to the Comprehensive Plan, within the constraints of time and relevancy as determined by the chairperson of the LPA and/or Governing Body.

F. Information Depositories

Relevant planning information, reports, and documents shall be available at the County Commission Offices and should be provided (where applicable) to public libraries and other suitable information depositories in the community in order to make the information readily available to interested citizens.

G. Format for Public Inquiries, Comments, and Requests

Florida Law requires that local governments provide members of the public an opportunity to submit written inquiries and comments on the Comprehensive Plan and the planning process (Section 163.3181, F.S.). The public should be encouraged to prepare written comments and suggestions in order to enhance the planning process. Opportunities for written comments will occur throughout the planning process and will be specifically solicited upon publication of plan-related notices, at public hearings, at community meetings, at regular Local Planning Agency and County Commission meetings, in press releases, and by direct invitation.

1. Methods. Any interested person may submit an inquiry, comment, or request regarding the Comprehensive Plan at any time. Such requests shall be addressed to:

Washington County Commission  
Attn: Planning Office  
1331 South Boulevard, Suite 209  
Chipley, Florida 32428

Comment forms should be available at all public hearings and other meetings to facilitate written comments from the public.

2. Official Record. In order to ensure that relevant public comments, requests, and inquiries concerning preparation, revision, and/or amendment of the Comprehensive Plan are recorded, considered, and provided a response, a form shall be completed by the staff of the Washington County Commission for each public comment and such forms shall constitute an official public record of any such public comments received. Comments, inquiries, and requests that are presented verbally during public workshops and hearings may also be transcribed onto such forms to constitute a formal record of public comment, and to assure that a response is made to each such comment. However, a person's written transmittal shall remain the principal instrument of public comment.

3. Official Response. After due consideration of each relevant public comment, inquiry, or request, an official response may be made on the form containing record of the comment, inquiry, or request. This response would record the recommend disposition of a public comment or request, or record any action taken to answer a public inquiry. Responses may also be reflected in subsequent proposals, verbal answers, or presentations at public meetings. Whenever appropriate, a summary response may represent the consideration of several comments.

#### H. Public Hearings

Public hearings are required by Florida law prior to the submittal and adoption of a local Comprehensive Plan as well as prior to the submittal and adoption of amendments and revisions to the plan. Hearings must be held by both the LPA and the Washington County Commission. Notice of hearings is also required. At least one hearing must be held by the LPA prior to making a recommendation to the Washington County Commission. The Washington County Commission must hold public hearings prior to transmitting plan or plan amendments to the Florida Department of Community Affairs (DCA) for review and/or prior to adoption of the plan or plan amendments.

These hearings will be advertised and held in accordance with Florida Statutes and Florida Administrative Code (as amended).

#### I. Citizen Task Force

Citizen task forces should be organized. Depending on the number of task forces that are needed, names of potential task force members could be derived from elected commissions from LPA members themselves, or individuals solicited through other techniques, such as newspaper advertising, or by nomination. To provide expertise in the planning process, citizen task force meetings should involve at least one member of the LPA.

#### J. Workshop Sessions

Workshop sessions (involving the LPA and/or the Governing Body), should be appropriately advertised, and other techniques should be utilized, as appropriate, to notify the public of the workshops. Workshops should be held at a time and location accessible to the public. Workshop sessions should be less formal than regularly scheduled meetings and public hearings in order to encourage a more spontaneous flow of discussion among participants. Such workshops can be geographically or issue based, depending on the need.

#### K. Communications Facilitator

A Washington County Commission staff member, who is familiar with the comprehensive planning process, shall be identified by name to serve as a communications facilitator (or public contact person). The intent is to identify a central conduit for information flow about the plan and the planning process. Responsibilities of this individual should include being available to the media and

to the general citizenry in order to provide information, to respond to requests for information, and to disseminate public meeting notices.

L. Posting of Property

The property that is the subject of the Plan Amendment or Special Exception process shall be posted on a white placard sign not less than 2 x 3 feet. The sign will be placed on the property adjacent but not on the roadway and will be clearly visible to all passing traffic. The sign will be posted ten days prior to the date of the scheduled hearing and will remain in place until after the final hearing before the governing authority.

**VI. PLAN AMENDMENT AND PLAN EVALUATION**

A. Plan Amendment

Once the plan is prepared and adopted, consideration of amendments will be limited to two times per calendar year, except as exempted by State Statute. Public participation in this process will be assured through conformance with Sections V.A. through K. of these Public Participation Procedures.

B. Plan Evaluation

The Comprehensive Plan must be evaluated at least once every five years, with an Evaluation and Appraisal Report (EAR) being prepared, adopted, and submitted to the state land-planning agency. The exception to this requirement is the Capital Improvements Element, which must be reviewed and updated annually. Public Participation in the EAR preparation and adoption process shall be assured through conformance with paragraphs A – L of Section V of these Public Participation Procedures.

