



CITIZEN PARTICIPATION PLAN

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SECTION I. INTRODUCTION

General

Interest in issues such as air and water pollution, toxic waste dumping, groundwater contamination and the preservation of fragile ecosystems has increased participation of the general public nationwide in comprehensive planning.

Citizen interest varies in Florida on planning issues. This is partially due to such factors as; 1) tourism and seasonal residents, 2) migration and resulting population increase, and 3) multiple changes of residence due to in-state migration. All of these factors relate to frequent, significant changes that affect community ties, since lack of established roots in a community could affect participation in civic endeavors.

As the State experiences continued rapid development, the impact of growth on citizens is more direct and the effects of development become increasingly obvious. Public input is of vital importance to the achievement of growth management that will best serve its citizens.

Terms and Concepts

Advantages and Disadvantages of Citizen Participation.

The citizen participation process is initially costly because it is demanding of staff time. Tapes of meetings must be transcribed and kept on file for public record. Background reports are needed for meetings. Extra time is spent coordinating with other City departments, City Commission members, and representatives of other governmental agencies such as the other incorporated municipalities, Seminole County and the East Central Florida Regional Planning Council, as well as with the media.

However, the time spent in citizen's participation activities can save untold hours and prevent mistakes later on. Feedback from the community keeps the planning effort guided in the right direction. A development plan is of no value unless it is related to real circumstances within the community. The new Comprehensive Plan's development objectives must be related to an achievable capital improvements program. Identification of various infrastructure improvement deficiency corrections and new construction is required.

In the long run, citizen participation in the comprehensive planning process is an advantage. The most important benefit of the citizen participation process is that it provides a means of communication with the public whose interests the plan is intended to serve. Responsiveness of governmental entities is improved through increased involvement with citizens. Public participation can result in improvements in the quality of public services.

Casselberry is a vibrant community and continues to grow via annexation. The provision of public utilities and community facilities will be essential to meet the needs of this population for future development and redevelopment. Citizen participation is a necessary and integral part of providing these facilities.

SECTION II. BACKGROUND

Historical

Casselberry was founded on the basis of citizen participation and has had an active citizenry throughout its history. Its incorporation in 1940 was the result of substantial effort on the part of the community.

In this active little town, citizen participation was the basis for being. A news article released in 1941 presented an overview of town functions. A list of prominent persons and families who were active supporters of the town and of Hibbard Casselberry's management and business practices was included. A spirit of public activism predominated. The town was described as a community where "Everyone works ..., including the founder himself. Even the wives of the packing house workers have been trained... to become efficient stenographers and secretaries." "When a civic project comes up for the benefit of all we pass the hat. If it comes back with sufficient IOU's due over a period of years we get that improvement." By-laws at that time sharply discouraged bonded indebtedness, requiring a ninety percent affirmative vote of registered voters in order to change the by-law forbidding indebtedness. With a population of approximately 300 at the time, 100-150 persons attended the town council meeting- a meeting at which the mayor had no vote and executed decisions made by a vote of the citizens. The "paint-up", an annual event, was described: volunteers worked until every house which needed it received a new coat of paint. Company employees collected garbage for pay during their "off" afternoons, and maintained the park system in their spare time. An architect, James Gamble Rogers II (nephew of James Gamble Rogers creator of Harkness Memorial Hall of Yale University) had been retained for a duration of ten years to design buildings for the town. (*The Man Who Built Himself a Town*, by John Forney Rudy, August 10th, 1941. Orlando Sunday Sentinel Star.)

The town council had widespread notoriety for being vocal and opinionated. During the 1970's and early 1980's, a developer said of the City: "If the Lord had been forced to deal with Casselberry City Council, he would still be trying to create the world". Many developers who ran up against the strong-willed council simply decided to go elsewhere (from an article by Ines Davis Parrish, *Hibbard Casselberry's Town*, Sunday Orlando Sentinel, March 6, 1988.).

Although citizen participation is perhaps not as extensive as was the case earlier in Casselberry's history, there continues to be a network of volunteer civic associations, and activism is prevalent in the city.

Regulatory Framework

Over the past twenty-five years, legislation for growth management has strengthened, and with it legislation for citizen participation as part of the process. Recent federal and state legislation reflects acknowledgement of the importance of public input. The Local Government Planning Act of 1975 mandated at least one public hearing for the first generation of Florida's comprehensive plans. Ten years later the 1985 Act expanded the number of required public hearings. Changes in Growth Management laws in 2005 through 2007 have impacted concurrency for schools, potable water and transportation.

Chapter 163, Florida Statutes, contains general guidelines for public participation in the comprehensive planning process. Local governments are given wide discretion in designing an appropriate citizen participation mechanism and process. Cities and Counties may adopt their own procedures to provide for open discussion and dissemination of materials.

SECTION III. CASSELBERRY CITIZEN PARTICIPATION PLAN

Casselberry Citizen's Participation Initiative

Casselberry has a basic citizen participation process outlined in Section 1-2.6 (D) of the city code.

The code reads:

7. Public Participation

The Planning and Zoning Commission shall provide for effective citizen participation in the comprehensive planning process to the fullest extent possible consistent with *F.S. 163.3181*. These procedures shall include, but are not limited to, the following.

- (a) Broad dissemination of detailed proposals and alternatives.
- (b) The opportunity for written public comments.
- (c) Public meetings after reasonable notice.
- (c) Provisions for open discussion at all meetings.
- (e) Development of communication programs.
- (f) Informational services.
- (g) Reasonable consideration of and response to public input.
- (h) Assurance that real property owners are provided with notice of all official actions which will regulate the use of their property.

The Planning and Zoning Commission/Land Planning Agency

The Casselberry Planning and Zoning Commission/Local Planning Agency is comprised of seven regular members. The City Manager is the Chief administrative officer of the City and recommends members; City Commission members approve the City Manager's recommendation. The Planning and Zoning Commission/Local Planning Agency is the local government planning agency that directs the comprehensive planning program pursuant to *FS 163.3174*, conducts a public hearing to gain citizen input prior to providing a recommendation to the City Commission and monitors the effectiveness of the Comprehensive Plan after its adoption by the City Commission.