

AMERICAN SOCIETY OF PLANNING OFFICIALS
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ADMINISTRATION AND MANAGEMENT IN A PLANNING OFFICE

This is another in the series of Planning Advisory Service Reports on the management aspects of governmental planning. (See Appendix for a list of previous Reports.) There are many factors influencing the success or failure of planning in a community -- proper ordinances, adequate financing, citizen support, etc. -- that are at least equal in importance to the classical background of research and plan preparation. One of these factors is administration of the planning office. This report reflects the concern that a planning agency must get its own house in order -- through good internal administration and organization -- if it is to be effective in the community.

Most of the background to this report is derived from the special administrative studies that the ASPO staff has made of planning administration in a number of cities throughout the nation, particularly in the past 5 years. In addition, we have drawn material from the inquiries to Planning Advisory Service that have come into the office over the past 17 years, from the personal experience of the staff members, and from unnumbered letters and personal conversations with practicing planners. In very few instances are we able to reveal the particular city or agency that we use in an example. But we would still emphasize that the illustrations are drawn from actual experience.

Some of the problems and solutions we discuss are not covered, so far as we know, in any other publication. Some of the problems, however, are common to all kinds of management, private as well as public. We have included in the appendix references to general texts that discuss these problems in greater detail than we have been able to do in the report.

Finally, we cannot hope to cover every management problem that will be encountered in a planning office. This report cannot be encyclopaedic, but it should serve as a partial check list to help planning directors, planning commissioners, and governmental executives appraise the operations of their own planning agency.

LOCATION AND ARRANGEMENT OF OFFICE SPACE

Thirty years ago, before planning was recognized as a legitimate and important function of government, and when most planning agencies were independent of normal governmental operations, the planning staff offices were apt to be stuck in a corner of the city hall basement, in an ex-storeroom, or in converted attic space. While the second-class citizen treatment of planning is uncommon nowadays, there are still many planning offices with unsatisfactory quarters.

The expansion in kinds of government services since the war, coupled with the increase in numbers to be served because of the growth of population, has created office space problems for all government departments, so that it cannot be said that planning is now being singled out for special neglect. But it may be suspected that some of the older line staff departments outrank planning when it comes to allocating scarce space. To be fair, however, it must also be recognized that planning has probably expanded relatively more than the older activities, and it is difficult for the executive to take space from another department to give to the rapidly growing planning operation. Consequently, many planning agencies are still trying to get along with inadequate accommodations. The following are major causes for unsatisfactory quarters.

1. Offices Not in Governmental Headquarters. In the early years it was thought desirable to have planning politically separated from the local government. There was a feeling that the planning commission could better maintain its independence by also being physically separated. With planning now recognized as an essential activity of government, it is important for the planning staff to be housed with other governmental agencies. Physical propinquity will help other city employees to understand planning and will increase the planners' understanding of other governmental operations and problems.

2. Planning Staff in Two Buildings or on Two Floors of the Same Building. In a number of cities the rapid growth of the planning operation has forced the overflow staff to be placed on a separate floor, or even in another building. In every instance of this division of staff that we have observed, there have been serious problems in intra-office communication. (Other aspects of communication are discussed elsewhere in this report.)

When he is forced to divide his staff, the planning director naturally tries to make a logical division. It seems reasonable to send the long-range planning division or the research section to those quarters most remote from the public contact operations of the department, "where they will not be disturbed" by the day-to-day activities. In spite of the logic of such separation, the branch staff is likely to be removed from the reality of government activity and this isolation is apt to be reflected in the quality of its work.

Quite simply, there is no ideal division of activities for a divided staff. The best solution is the integration of all activities in one location.

3. The Office is Inadequate for the Number of Employees. There can be no doubt that insufficient office space reduces the efficiency of the employees. Again, because of the rapid growth of governmental activities, and of the relative difficulty, as compared with private corporations, that cities have in getting new or expanded quarters, planning departments are not necessarily singled out for special maltreatment. Overcrowding may be the lot of the entire city staff. In such circumstances, the solution to the problem for the planning department will depend on finding a solution for the entire governmental housing problem.

Nevertheless, we have observed that the crowding problem in the planning office is often the result of bad office arrangement rather than of actual shortage of floor space. The average floor area per employee in a well designed office layout should be no more than 100 square feet. In an open office, designers consider 80 square feet per person generous.

The greatest thief of office space is the private office. Certainly, the planning director needs the privacy of an enclosed room. After this, the real need for privacy drops off fast. For persons engaged in creative work, insulation in a private office is beneficial. There is need for privacy for interviews and small two-to-four person conferences and meetings. In a large office, the small conference room can be a more efficient use of space than an excessive proliferation of private cubicles.

In all organizations, the private office is a prestige symbol, and in some degree this is not harmful. But the use of the private office primarily to bestow prestige should be limited as much as possible. This should be the last factor considered. In addition to the excessive use of space, the private office also reduces the quality of supervision because it removes the supervisor from direct contact with his subordinates.

It may not always be within the power of the planning director to correct completely a poor office arrangement. It may be simply that the staff has to be housed in an archaic city hall or county court house that is beyond redemption by the ordinary means of knocking out partitions. Nevertheless, if the gross square footage of the office indicates that the area per employee is adequate but the office still seems overcrowded, the planning director should study his floor plan and layout carefully. There may be a number of things that can be done to increase the efficiency of space utilization.

4. Offices Are Dull, Unattractive, and Poorly Arranged. We have mentioned poor arrangement as a thief of office space. But in many planning offices that are not suffering from overcrowding, there is still a very poor, even a haphazard, layout. The employee who has frequent reason to come to the front desk to meet the public may be located far away from the front office. Two employees with complementary assignments may have desks at opposite ends of the building.

Inefficient arrangements not only interfere with work accomplishment, but also depress employee morale. The pre-emption of all outside window space by private offices is a not uncommon defect in office arrangement.

The general appearance of an office is important. The planning department is looked upon as the defender and promoter of civic beauty. If a visitor finds

the department housed in dirty, drab surroundings, he may say, "Physician, first heal thyself!"

There is no excuse for a planning office to look as many of them do look -- slovenly quarters that could house only surly, incompetent employees. It is not necessary to have a Hollywood-type reception room, but the visiting citizen is going to be much more sympathetic to planning if he comes into a clean, well-lighted reception area that has a few decent chairs, some recent reports, and a clean ashtray on a coffee table, and if he sees a reasonable collection of maps or photographs neatly mounted. Nor should the offices behind the reception room give the lie to the facade. A working office cannot be expected to always look like the display window in an office furniture showroom. But it should not look like a neglected trash room with map rolls and charts and file folders and books piled on every horizontal surface and stacked in every corner. Neatness is not only for the benefit of visitors, it is also for the benefit of employees.

PERSONNEL

There is probably no executive who has not said often, "I would really enjoy this job if it weren't for personnel problems!"

Since this report cannot begin to cover all the aspects of personnel administration, we have chosen to discuss only two that seem to be particularly troublesome in planning administration: recruitment and separation.

Recruiting Employees

Among all the kinds of professional persons in public administration, it is probable that planners are relatively the most scarce. Nor is the outlook bright for meeting the demand in the future, in view of the increasing emphasis on planning by the United States government, backed by the ever-growing list of federal grants-in-aid for urban development.

Yet in spite of the shortage, some agencies never have difficulty in filling vacant positions on the planning staff. Some of the factors that make these agencies successful are within the control of the planning commission and director, some can only be affected by action of the city government: the council, the mayor, or city manager. And a few factors are beyond the control of anyone.

Briefly to dispose of those factors about which nothing can be done. These are, in the main, geographic location and climate. The prime location in the eyes of planners seems to be the San Francisco Bay Area. An advertisement for a middle-range job in the Bay Area, at an average salary, can be expected to bring in 30 to 60 applications. The same job advertised from the Upper Great Plains Area would be unusual if it brought in five valid inquiries.

The only course to follow in those agencies that have geographic factors work-

ing against them is to be sure that these are the only handicaps they have. They must try even harder to eliminate the other adverse factors, which are discussed below.

Agencies in cities or states that have a reputation, justified or not, for excessive conservatism can also expect to have difficulty in recruiting planners, as will agencies from cities notorious for incompetent government. Any agency, however, may find that preparing a recruitment brochure to emphasize the advantages and opportunities in working for it will help in staffing.

Low Salaries. Obviously, low salaries create recruitment difficulties. In most planning agencies the salary schedule is established by the local legislative body, so that the planning commission and planning director are limited in their authority to do much about the problem. Their principal tool must be persuasion, backed by facts.

There are two main sources of information on salaries in planning: ASPO's annual study of salaries and expenditures in planning issued in March or April as a Planning Advisory Report, and the semi-monthly listing of positions advertised in Jobs In Planning. An indication of the change in planning salaries can be gathered from the following brief table taken from annual Planning Advisory Service reports.

Table 1

MEDIAN SALARIES OF PLANNING DIRECTORS

Number of Position Levels*	Median Salary		
	1955	1960	1965
One	\$ 5,750	\$ 7,800	\$ 9,744
Five	8,000	11,088	14,962

*The one-level agency is one with only a single planner on the staff. The five-level agency is typical for cities in the 150,000 to 500,000 population group.

Jobs In Planning gives even more current information on the labor market in planning. In addition, a little historical research in back issues can produce quite significant facts.

Another method to get data is to make periodic surveys of salaries paid in nearby communities. One city personnel department makes a biennial survey of planning (and other) salaries in the metropolitan area. Local salaries are then adjusted to equal the upper one-third point of all salaries for the same position in that area. The salaries are changed, of course, only upward. No change would be made if the local schedule was found to be above the one-third point.

There are two weaknesses, however, in such a survey. First, it is difficult to be certain that the positions used to determine the rate are comparable. Thus a "senior planner" in one city might be a middle-level job and in another city a top-level job. The second weakness is that the market for planners is not local or regional; it is national. To be competitive, salaries must be judged by national standards.

Finally, it should be emphasized that salaries alone are not sufficient to attract qualified applicants. One city well-known for its high salary schedule finds it extremely difficult to get competent planners. The other adverse factors in the city far outweigh the advantages of high salaries. In fact, the high salaries have an undesirable effect because incompetent persons on the staff become so wedded to the money that it is difficult to get them out of the agency.

Lack of Fringe Benefits. As with salaries, most fringe benefits are set by municipal policy rather than by the head of the planning agency. The principal benefits are annual leave, sick leave, pensions, and medical insurance.

There are some benefits that the planning director may have authority to grant, or may, as with salaries, be able to persuade the city manager or council to authorize. The following three types of fringe benefits, all of them allowing for professional advancement, are not uncommon in planning agencies: (1) payment of dues in professional organization; (2) expenses and time off to attend meetings and conferences; (3) tuition and time off for in-service training.

How much weight should be given to fringe benefits as an aid to recruitment is not easily determined. When an applicant is trying to decide between two similar jobs, a more liberal fringe benefit policy may be the factor that influences him.

Cost of Interviewing and Moving. While the weight of fringe benefits in recruitment may be doubtful, there is no doubt that payment of travel expenses for the applicant to come in for an interview is most important.

In one city, interview expenses could be paid only by the adoption beforehand of a specific ordinance in council to pay for each person interviewed. The procedure was awkward and time-consuming, and, in addition, the planning director did not see any advantage in asking for travel funds. As a consequence, positions on the staff had remained unfilled for as long as three years. In a reorganization of the agency, a new planning director was appointed. Working with the city attorney, he devised a contract with a consulting firm that authorized the firm to pay interview expenses, on a straight reimbursement basis, for as many candidates as the planning director wanted to see. Within a year the agency had not only filled every position on an expanded staff, but actually had a waiting list of planners wanting to come to work. The expense-paid interview was not the only factor in the improved recruitment situation, but it was the most important factor in getting the positions filled rapidly.

The payment of moving expenses for a new employee is also persuasive. It is most attractive to the junior or middle-level employee, who quite often must borrow money for moving his family to the new job. Even though the new position will probably pay a higher salary than the one he leaves, it may be as

much as two years before he can recover his moving costs and have any benefit from the increase in salary.

The employer is advised to be careful in an offer of moving expenses. In one instance, a planner came from half-way across the continent to a new job. He submitted a bill for over \$2,000. It turned out that the employee was quite incompetent and it was necessary to discharge him at the end of six months.

The employer should set a limit on the amount of money he will pay for moving. The amount need not be the same for every new employee, but can be a reasonable estimate based on the distance traveled and the size of the family. An unmarried man, for example, taking his first job after graduation, should be allowed air or railroad fare plus, perhaps, a week's reasonable living expenses.

Residence and Citizenship Requirements. A few cities still require that new employees be residents of the city at the time they are hired. In view of the extreme shortage of professional planners, such a requirement is practically fatal unless the residence period is nominal -- say 30 days. Even in New York, which until a few years ago required that a planner have been a resident of the city for three years, it was found impossible to recruit enough planners to fill vacancies.

A requirement that the applicant be a resident of the state is only slightly better than requiring city residence. All such requirements must be dropped if a community wishes to have access to the best possible selection of new employees.

According to the records of the American Society of Planning Officials, some 50 public planning agencies in the United States (but a relatively larger group in Canada) do not require national citizenship of their employees. In some other cities, a foreigner may be hired if he can show that he is in the process of getting citizenship. The citizenship requirement is a rule that is not easy to change. However, if a community can hire non-citizens, it will be able to recruit from a growing supply of very well qualified foreign planners.

In a few cities, the employee is permitted to live outside the city limits after he comes to work. In most cases these are unusual communities in which, for one reason or another, the housing supply is limited and such permission is necessary if there are to be any municipal employees. Except in these atypical cases, requiring in-city residence should not be considered a deterrent to recruitment.

Inadequate Checking of References. While reference-checking facilitates recruitment only by helping to avoid spending time on unqualified applicants, it is so important and so frequently done haphazardly that we believe it should be emphasized.

It should be obvious that an applicant's references should be checked before asking him to come from outside the city for an interview, either by asking for a letter of reference or by a phone call. It should be kept in mind that some people are more candid over the phone because of the time involved in



Figure 1

APPLICANT REFERENCE

REQUEST RE: (Applicant) _____

To: _____

From: _____

The applicant has applied for the position of _____

We would appreciate it if you would fill out the following form, which is intended as a guide in evaluating the relative qualifications of candidates for this position. The information will, of course, be kept confidential, and will be used in conjunction with other references, supplemented if possible by a personal interview. Your judgment of the applicant's qualifications will assist us very much in our evaluation. You may prefer to write a letter of reference: if so, we hope this form still may be useful to you in preparing your remarks.

Instructions to Employing Agency. It is important that an accurate account of the job in question be made in order to provide the necessary background for the most pertinent comments on the applicant's qualifications. Because jobs differ in important respects, the employing agency should determine in advance the essential qualities for the specific job and analyze the returned form against this previously determined list.

FOR EMPLOYING AGENCY

The distinguishing features of this position are:

	<u>Commitment of Time</u>		
	<u>Significant</u>	<u>Moderate</u>	<u>Minimal</u>
supervisory duties.	_____	_____	_____
program formulation	_____	_____	_____
review of technical work.	_____	_____	_____
public relations.	_____	_____	_____
research.	_____	_____	_____
analysis.	_____	_____	_____
design.	_____	_____	_____
report writing.	_____	_____	_____
oral presentation	_____	_____	_____
drafting.	_____	_____	_____
attending meetings.	_____	_____	_____
office management	_____	_____	_____
_____	_____	_____	_____
_____	_____	_____	_____
_____	_____	_____	_____

FOR PERSON GIVING REFERENCE

1. During what period (approximately) have you known the applicant? From _____ To _____

2. How well? Very well _____ Moderately well _____ Limited knowledge _____

3. What was (is) your relation to the applicant? Supervisor _____ Fellow worker _____
Teacher _____ Acquaintance _____ Other (specify) _____

	<u>General Qualifications</u>				
	<u>Outstanding</u>	<u>Very Good</u>	<u>Adequate</u>	<u>Unsatisfactory</u>	<u>Unobserved</u>
general knowledge.	_____	_____	_____	_____	_____
knowledge of planning.	_____	_____	_____	_____	_____
quality of work.	_____	_____	_____	_____	_____
work productivity.	_____	_____	_____	_____	_____
work habits.	_____	_____	_____	_____	_____
work interest.	_____	_____	_____	_____	_____
personal relations	_____	_____	_____	_____	_____
leadership ability	_____	_____	_____	_____	_____

FOR PERSON GIVING REFERENCE

5. Work Skills

	<u>Extremely Competent</u>	<u>Competent</u>	<u>Adequate</u>	<u>Unsatisfactory</u>	<u>Unobserved</u>
research and analysis.	_____	_____	_____	_____	_____
design	_____	_____	_____	_____	_____
drafting	_____	_____	_____	_____	_____
report writing	_____	_____	_____	_____	_____
oral presentation. . .	_____	_____	_____	_____	_____

6. Major Areas of Competence (check all applicable items)

land planning_____ zoning_____ subdivision_____ urban renewal_____ transportation_____
 capital programming_____ economic studies_____ site design_____ statistical analysis_____
 social and demographic studies_____ graphic presentation_____ mapping_____ writing_____
 public relations_____ others (list)_____

7. Supervisory and Administrative Qualifications (if applicable)

	<u>Outstanding</u>	<u>Very Good</u>	<u>Adequate</u>	<u>Unsatisfactory</u>	<u>Unobserved</u>
formulating policies and programs.	_____	_____	_____	_____	_____
coordinating work.	_____	_____	_____	_____	_____
accepting responsibility	_____	_____	_____	_____	_____
delegating effectively	_____	_____	_____	_____	_____
training and instructing employees	_____	_____	_____	_____	_____
making sound decisions	_____	_____	_____	_____	_____
handling disciplinary problems	_____	_____	_____	_____	_____
meeting deadlines.	_____	_____	_____	_____	_____

8. Please circle the words that you feel are most descriptive of the applicant's strong points (circle no more than 10 words).

thorough self-reliant probing productive persevering dependable discerning
 good judgment cooperative poised well-liked decisive open-minded creative
 adaptable respected systematic versatile shows initiative alert persuasive
 clear-thinking accurate practical realistic enthusiastic tactful sensitive
 understandable resourceful good potential for professional growth

9. In terms of the position described, if you think there are any characteristics of the applicant that may detract from his capacity to perform satisfactorily, please list below: (e.g., unreliable, uncooperative, overly dependent, indiscreet, lacks initiative, fails to meet deadlines, etc.)

10. Please make any other comments that you feel would be useful to us in evaluating the candidate for the position described. (Attach extra sheet if necessary.)

Signed by: _____
 Address: _____
 Date: _____

writing a letter and the opportunity to expand on points in question. As an initial screening device, ASPO's Applicant Reference Form is suggested.

If the references are bad, the employer saves both time and money where the city pays travel expenses for interviews. Even for in-city applicants, a preliminary reference check is desirable to save time. But in a surprising number of instances, the checking of references is most perfunctory -- a mere gesture. Some observations on references are in order.

Every reference that is submitted should be checked. Naturally, an applicant furnishes only the names of persons whom he believes will give him a good send-off. He is usually right, but occasionally he gets fooled. If he has not already listed them, the applicant's previous employers should be checked. There may be a question as to how far back in his employment history the check should be made. Probably five years is a minimum (if he has worked that long). The value of going back more than 10 years, except for an extremely important or sensitive position, is doubtful. Nor is it probably worthwhile checking on temporary or part-time employment. Work references on newly-graduated planners, except for summer interne jobs, or for older men who returned to school after extensive work experience, are also of doubtful value.

While generalizations are dangerous, employers are apt to be more frank about ex-employees than are the associates that an applicant lists as references. This is not always true, however, as in the case (actual) of an employer who gave a good reference on a very poor employee then on his staff. The employer wanted to get the man out of the office, but could not discharge him easily because of civil service red tape.

Professors and ex-teachers are generally honest about their students, although a little inclined to be more gentle than employers in their appraisal.

Whenever possible, a prospective employer should seek opinions from mature persons who know the applicant and have worked with him, in addition to the employers and references that the applicant names. This is especially important, again, in filling a top position or one that is particularly sensitive because of the relations with top government officials and citizens. In a growing number of communities such jobs are not filled until the personnel director, a city manager, or some such person has personally visited the home city of the prospect and called on key persons who know him.

A few agencies use executive placement agencies to search for top planning personnel. The cost of the service are quite high, considerably more than the city might spend in paying both interview expenses and moving costs for a new employee. It is doubtful that such an agency is any better able to locate potential employees than the city could do for itself through normal channels. The placement agency can, however, relieve the employer of some of the burden of interviewing and of checking references. It can do much of the preliminary screening. Whether this is worth what it costs is a decision that the city alone can make.

Separation of Personnel

Firing an unsatisfactory employee is at best an unpleasant task. Under custo-

mary civil service regulations, it may also be very difficult to accomplish.

It sometimes happens that a new director comes to a fully staffed agency and finds that his predecessor, for one reason or another, has left behind one or more employees who are not able to perform their work properly. How does he weed out the deadwood and re-staff with competent persons?

The worst course for the new director is to act quickly, summon the employee and fire him forthwith. Even if it is possible to do this under local civil service rules it is extremely bad personnel administration.

An experienced planning director should be able to appraise the quality of work done by staff members rather quickly. This is not the same as understanding why an employee performs poorly. It may be because the employee is incapable of better work, but it also may be because of poor supervision, or of an improper assignment, or of a lack of training.

The first rule is to give an employee the benefit of every doubt. Try to determine from the employee's training and past experience what tasks he should be qualified for. Are those tasks part of the responsibility of the planning department, and, if so, are they assigned to this man? Is he capable of reasonably independent work, or does he need close supervision and is he getting it? Is he getting poor supervision, or not enough supervision, or too much supervision? Is the work done poorly because the department has had sloppy routine and archaic methods that should be corrected?

One error that a new planning director may fall into is to equate education with ability or, rather, to equate an absence of formal planning education with a lack of ability. This is especially true if the director himself has an advanced degree in planning and has gained his experience since the war in a large agency with a preponderance on the staff of similarly trained persons. In assessing the capability of his staff, the planning director will certainly study the educational background of his employees, but he should not give this factor undue weight in making his judgments. One staff member in a large city was looked on askance by a new director because he had only a high school education. This employee has since that time been made zoning administrator, a difficult position that he handles extremely well.

In the end, however, the director may come to the decision that a certain staff member is just not able to do what he is supposed to do, in spite of any adjustments that can be made. How best can the director handle this situation with the least injury to the employee?

A not uncommon problem employee is the older man who has performed adequately in the past, but seems to have outlived his usefulness. Questioning may reveal that such a person does have a special knowledge gained from decades of experience in the community, a knowledge which can be valuable. For example, many planning departments are responsible for the mechanics of street-naming and numbering. A man with an intimate knowledge of the city can be very useful in handling this not too difficult, but still necessary, task. In zoning administration there are many routine chores that can be done by an older man, jobs such as receiving and processing applications, answering inquiries, keeping records, preparing maps on appeal board cases, and inspecting for zoning compliance.

For the older employee, the pension question is often critical. What will separation at this particular time mean to him?

Under some retirement plans, there will be both an optional and a mandatory retirement age. An employee may retire at 62, but must retire at 70. If the employee is past the optional age, it should be possible to persuade him to retire before he has reached the mandatory limit.

When an employee still has a few years to serve before he can retire with maximum benefits, the director should consider placing him on a shorter work week at reduced salary so that he can serve out his time. In this case, however, the rules of the pension plan have to be considered. Under the best plans, retirement pay will be calculated on the basis of the employee's three or more highest salary years. Under such a plan, a reduction in pay at the end does not affect his pension. In some plans, however, the retirement benefits are based on the man's earnings during the final years of employment, and a reduction in salary at the end will be against his best interests.

A reasonably painless method of handling the problem, for either an old or young employee, is to transfer him to another city department. This should not be taken as a trick to dump the planning department's troubles on some other department head. It is not unusual to find an established planning department that has too many employees whose training and skills are basically in engineering. Even though they are no longer needed in the planning department, they may be quite useful in public works, or sanitation, or a similar department.

Finally, after exhausting the remedies of reassignment, reduction in hours, retirement, and transfer, there may remain a clearly incompetent employee who must be removed. (This discussion has been written from the viewpoint of problems faced by a new planning director trying to upgrade his staff. The same principles apply, of course, to any planning director who finds an unsatisfactory employee on his staff, be it an old-timer or a recent acquisition.)

An inviolable rule in any of these cases is for the planning director to consult and work closely with the personnel department. He will find that he is not the first department head to have the problem of separating an incompetent employee. The personnel department will advise the planning director on procedure, warn him against mistakes, assist him with transfers. While the personnel officer has a responsibility to protect employees from unfair acts by supervisors, he has an equal responsibility to furnish department heads with the best possible employees.

Different cities will have different rules on these details but in general the procedure for discharging employees will follow the same principles.

Summary dismissal will not be possible except for reasons of morals or honesty. There may also be certain clear regulations on political activity, running for political office, unauthorized moonlighting, or other conflict of interest situations. Even in such cases, dismissal will usually be preceded by a period of suspension to give time for investigation and hearing. And, it must be remembered, action on any of these charges must be based on reliable evidence -- not on rumor or suspicion.

For the less spectacular case of the employee just not able to do the work assigned to him, the planning director must realize that separation will take more time than the director might wish. The employee must be given ample warning. Written records of interviews are vital, since the director must have proof to present to a grievance committee if the employee chooses to fight his dismissal. One method is to give the employee a written order to prepare a report or complete a specific task, with a definite deadline. Then when the work is not completed satisfactorily on time, the employee is called in and has his failure made clear to him -- with a written record of the interview.

The customary employee rating chart may create some problems. Most personnel departments now require supervisors to rate employees annually or semi-annually and to discuss the ratings with the employees. It is important that an unsatisfactory employee be given every opportunity ahead of time to understand that he can expect an unsatisfactory rating. The low rating must not come as a surprise.

The following is typical of the instructions that accompany employee rating forms:

It should be borne in mind that before probationary or permanent employees can be properly released for reasons of unsatisfactory performance, there must be documented evidence of a specific nature. Performance Evaluation Reports are intended to provide a written record of specified deficiencies during and/or at the close of the rating period in which the deficiencies were observed. Employee deficiencies affecting job performance which are not recorded on the Performance Evaluation Report cannot properly be used as a basis for dismissal.

(Emphasis in original. From San Diego City School Department.)

The director should always check on an employee's previous ratings. He may find that earlier ratings have all been favorable, which will make it even more difficult to dismiss the man. Good ratings earlier can mean that the employee has changed recently, or that he is in a new job for which he is not qualified. It also may mean that the previous supervisor has just been a good fellow and not frank in his rating of the employee.

There is one special situation that planning departments seem to have more frequently than most organizations. This is the retention of the previous planning director on the staff after the new one is hired. One city planning department actually had two previous directors serving under the latest one. At best, such a situation is awkward, and it may put the new director in an untenable position.

In these cities, the usual reason the former director remains is because he has tenure under civil service and, although he has been thought to be unsatisfactory, the person who hires has not been able, or willing, to fire. This illustrates one good reason for making the position of planning director exempt from civil service.

Any planner accepting a position which entails keeping the man he succeeds on the staff should be very careful. He should insist that the position of his predecessor be made very clear to the man, and that this be done by the employer, before the new man comes on. Notice of demotion can be a very sticky job, and it is one that the new director should under no circumstances consent to take on. This warning does not apply to an assistant director who might have served as acting director for an interim period while the city sought a new man. Although even here, if the interim period was over three months and the acting director had considered himself as a likely candidate for the permanent job, there may be problems.

There is no wholly satisfactory method of getting around the dilemma of the deposed director. In a few cities, the solution has been to give the former director the title of "consultant" and assign him to some special duty. In one city he has been given liaison duties with state and federal highway officials, a job for which he was well qualified and in which he gave valuable service. In general, the former director should not remain in the chain of command.

The best solution for the situation is to avoid it entirely. The planning director should be in the cabinet of the city's chief executive, appointed by him, and subject to dismissal by him without civil service review.

COMMUNICATIONS

Because the activities of a planning agency are predominantly advisory, communication is of more than ordinary importance to effective functioning. To put it more bluntly, since the planner has no authority to force the acceptance of his ideas, other than to a limited extent in the administration of council-ordained land use controls, he must achieve his ends through persuasion -- which means communication. Of two planning departments with equally competent technical work, the more effective will be the one with the better communications.

The need for adequate communications related to the adoption of a comprehensive plan (where communications go by the name of "citizen participation") is generally recognized, although practiced with varying success. The importance of communications in the many other sectors of planning activity is usually not so well recognized and is often completely neglected.

For this discussion it will be useful to divide the subject into four sections: intra-office, commission and board, intra-government, and public. It has also been convenient to include in this discussion some coverage of what is called "education" on the premise that education is essentially the communication of ideas.

Intra-Office Communications

In a two-man office, unless there is something pathological in the personal relations between the two men, there should be no problems of intra-office

communication. Each man should be as completely aware of the other's activities, projects, and difficulties as he needs to be. Such full information enables each to avoid contradicting or interfering with the other, enables each to help or even substitute for the other. Normally with a two-man staff this mutual exchange of information is done naturally, with no particular conscious effort. But as the size of the staff increases, the complexity of intra-office communication increases even more rapidly. The problem can be illustrated by simple mathematics.

Between two persons, there needs to be only two transmissions of information, A to B, and B to A. Add a third person and the number of transmissions increases to six: A to B, B to A, A to C, C to A, B to C, and C to B. With four persons, the number of transmissions becomes 24, with five persons, it rises to 120. The number of transmissions is proportional to the factorial ($1 \times 2 \times 3 \times 4 \times \dots \times n$) of the number of persons involved.

Of course, it is neither possible, necessary, nor desirable that every person on the staff know all the details of everything that goes on in the department. It is not even appropriate that each person on a large staff be as well informed as each person on a small staff. There will always be a differential in the information possessed by the number two man on the staff and that possessed by the junior planners. But the mathematical analysis does demonstrate that proper intra-office communication in any but the smallest agency cannot be left to chance.

There are many reasons why each member of the staff should have an adequate understanding of the total departmental operation. Sufficient understanding allows one staff member to substitute for another when necessary. The relevance of each man's work is improved if he knows how it fits into the entire scheme. Understanding avoids conflicting courses of action, conflicting statements.

Perhaps the most important function of good intra-office communication is its effect on office morale. Recently a young planner said, "I want to leave because my job seems so futile. I was told to make a certain study. I worked two months on the assignment and turned in what I thought was a reasonably good report. Now, four months later, the report is still sitting on somebody's desk. I haven't the slightest idea whether it is acceptable or not, whether it will be used or not. I am now assigned to something quite different, and the odds are that this will be handled in the same way. I haven't the slightest idea of what goes on, where I fit in. I feel like a charity case. A good salary is not enough to keep me on in this job." This is an extreme case, but the situation exists to some degree in many large planning departments.

Intra-office communication among employees will take place whether or not management aids or guides it. But if there are no official efforts to make the interchange pertinent, it becomes gossip and feeds on rumor. The larger the office, the greater the capacity to produce misinformation.

There follow some suggestions on improving intra-office communication.

Formal Staff Meetings. The staff meeting is probably the single most effective method for improving intra-office communications. In a large office, a meeting of the entire staff should not be necessary oftener than three or four times a

year. Such large meetings should be carefully structured. Although the director should strive to create a feeling of ease and informality, the large meeting should not degenerate into a free-for-all.

General staff meetings in the large office should cover general subjects, the over-all program of the department, progress reports, prospects for new assignments, and so on. These are also the occasions for discussion of personnel policy or problems.

In the large department, discussion of details of a work program will better be left to divisional or sectional staff meetings. In a large corporation there will be three or more levels of staff meetings. As yet there seems to be no planning department so large that there needs to be more than two levels of formal meetings. One objective of the formal staff meeting is to bring top management as close as possible to the most junior employee. The more steps there are between the top and bottom, the less effective is the communication between the two.

Formal staff meetings on the divisional level should not be necessary oftener than monthly. Although we call them "formal," which means that the smaller meeting should also be structured, they can allow for more give-and-take than the general meeting for an entire large staff.

Informal Staff Meetings. Intra-office communication needs cannot be satisfied by the formal staff meetings. There will be need for many other staff meetings and conferences of smaller groups called to discuss or give information on specific topics. It is questionable whether such lower level meetings should be formalized, even to the extent of "every Monday morning at 9:00 a.m." For a few functions of the average planning department, usually in connection with zoning administration, it may be necessary to hold a regular first-of-the-week session to parcel out the assignments for the coming week. For most planning functions, a routine weekly staff meeting is likely to mean that the particular supervisor is playing at being an executive.

This is an appropriate point to caution against too many meetings. It is not possible to give a definite number beyond which meetings become "too many," but the tendency in all professional activities is to proliferate meetings and conferences far beyond the point of diminishing returns. When meetings pass from initial discussion of work problems and agency affairs to bull sessions, the supervisor should call a halt. Bull sessions may be confined to professional talk and can be interesting, stimulating, perhaps even educational. But they are also a method of avoiding work. Perhaps the best time for a bull session is during the lunch hour or after work, with a drink in hand to ease the flow of bull.

Office Memoranda. Management consultants have commented on the tendency of executives and supervisors to call meetings of subordinates more frequently than is necessary. In many cases the supervisor really has only one question to ask, or one item of information to impart. Even if he can confine the meeting to the single subject (which is always difficult) the time required is excessive, and work interruptions costly. The rule is: Never call a meeting if the purpose can be served by sending a written memorandum.

Minor personnel matters can be handled in a memorandum; major personnel announcements, especially those that may evoke questions, will require a staff meeting. (All personnel rules and policies should be put in writing even though they may be announced and explained at a staff meeting.)

Memoranda need not be formal. A slip attached to a letter or report, routed to the proper staff members with a note: "For your information," "Comments?" "Can you answer this?" is often sufficient.

Correspondence and Literature. The routing of correspondence, in and out, to staff members is a simple method to keep the staff informed on what is happening. It is also a practice that must be used with discretion. Each staff member should see all correspondence directly related to his assignment. Staff members should see letters that set forth policy they should be aware of or that they may need to follow. It is neither necessary nor desirable that every staff member see every letter. This practice also can become a great waster of time.

Should the planning director himself see every bit of correspondence that comes into or leaves the department? There are a number of things to be considered. Volume is the primary factor. In the small office with relatively little mail, the load will be minor. The director should certainly see, if not write, every important letter, but if the volume is great, he should not be burdened with minor or routine correspondence.

There is also the related question as to who should sign out-going correspondence. One is reminded of the only partly facetious definition of civil service as a system under which no one signs any letter that he writes, or writes any letter that he signs.

There may be a regulation imposed by the chief executive that all out-going letters must be signed by department heads -- a rule which must, of course, be followed. But if there is no such rule, it is much better for both efficiency and employee morale to authorize senior staff members to sign their own letters. The subterfuge of John Smith signing "for William Jones, Planning Director" is better not used, except for letters that might require this to comply with a law or ordinance.

Office-wide circulation of in-coming books and reports can also get quickly out of hand. The amount of printed matter in the field of planning today is tremendous. It has become almost a full-time job just to scan the material. As a general rule, it is better to send printed material to a library where the employees may periodically check the new acquisitions for anything that may interest them.

Library. Just as you can learn much about the quality of a college by knowing the quality of its library facilities, you can get a good idea of the potential quality of a planning office by looking at the department library. Some planning agencies have no identifiable library. Perhaps there are a few books and reports in the office of the director and a scattering at the desks of staff members, but this cannot be called a library.

Although access to a reasonable selection of current planning literature is not strictly intra-office communication, it is an important part of the job of keeping the planning staff informed, and is of vital importance to the quality of work done by the staff.

The maintenance of a departmental library cannot be fully discussed in this report. It should be emphasized, however, that the library should not be left to chance. Wherever possible, the library should be housed in a separate room (which may also double as a conference room), with one person responsible for acquiring, cataloging, and shelving the books. On the large staff, there is ample work for a full-time professional librarian. On a smaller staff, the responsibility can be given to a clerk or a junior staff member. Regular circulation to the staff of a list of acquisitions is the best way to keep the staff informed. The actual circulation of reports and books can quickly become a major undertaking and an unproductive consumer of working hours.

Commission and Board Communications

The standard pattern of communication between the staff and the planning commission consists of notices and agendas of meetings prepared by the staff, oral reports on staff projects given at the meetings, and minutes of the meetings sent later. Here again, the problem of quantity of communications is not to be ignored. Most planning commissioners are busy laymen who can devote only limited time to their civic duties. If they are constantly deluged with memoranda and draft reports from the staff, they will not read them. At the very least, technical staff reports and memoranda should contain clear and concise summaries. If they are constantly telephoned on minor matters, they will resent the interruption of their regular work. The commissioners have a right to expect that most of the work in planning will be done by the full-time staff. On the other hand, most commissioners want to feel that they are of some value, that they have been appointed because the mayor or council wants to use their experience and benefit from their supposedly good sense and good will.

Typical comments by commissioners have been: "All we do is listen to zoning amendment petitions, harangues by the developer's lawyers, cries of anguish by neighbors. We are not doing planning, never have done any planning since I have been on the commission."

Or: "I would like to know something about planning. All we ever get is a report from the staff which has all the questions answered and which is pitched in such technical language, or gobbledygook, that none of us can understand it."

Or: "We are not children, you know. We all have ideas. Maybe they are good and maybe they are bad, but we would like to discuss them. We never have a chance because there is never time at any meeting."

The problem of meetings loaded with routine work or legally required hearings is not one that can be easily solved by the planning director. If the work has to be done, it has to be done. Some suggestions on reducing the workload are covered in another section of this report. However, something in addition to cutting down the number of cases is indicated.

One way to make better use of the talents of the planning commissioners is to alternate meetings devoted to required hearings with meetings devoted to planning problems. This may mean doubling the number of meetings. If routine matters usually require meetings once a month, the change will call for a meeting every two weeks, which commissioners do not usually consider too frequent. However, it may be difficult for commissioners to attend meetings on a regular schedule oftener than bi-weekly.

The non-hearing meetings may be closed (or unofficial), but this seems hardly necessary and can create bad publicity. Closed meetings of public commissions and bodies are proper only for the consideration of two subjects: personnel problems and some matters relating to prospective land purchase.

Most planning commissioners are receptive to, or even anxious for, education in planning principles. The planning director should be equally interested in seeing that the commissioners get better understanding. The quality of help the commissioners give will be improved, as will the validity of any review of staff work that may be the commissioners' responsibility. A number of planning directors have conducted group training for both staff and commissioners, using the correspondence course in planning administration offered by the International City Managers' Association.

In addition to setting up a formal program to instruct the commissioners, the planning director should encourage commissioners to attend state and national planning conferences. The away-from-home surroundings enable the commissioners to learn more and more rapidly about the solution of planning problems. Equally important, the commissioners always seem to be encouraged after attending a conference because they find that the local situation is not unique, that other planning commissions are struggling with the same problems.

Probably more often than not, the zoning appeal board is the group with which the planning staff has the most difficult problems. In some cities it would seem as though the sole objective of the zoning appeal board were to negate the plan, to undo all the efforts of the planning commission and staff to secure orderly development.

In those communities in which the zoning appeal board is completely separate from planning, with its own staff to process all cases, it can be quite difficult to coordinate the decisions of the zoning appeal board with the general planning objectives and policies. Some planning directors prefer the separation because it frees the planning staff to work on matters they consider more important. However, this should be resolved on the basis of staff. If the planning department were given enough personnel to handle zoning appeals without interfering with the other work of the staff, there are clear advantages in having the zoning appeal board serviced by the planning department.

There can be no doubt that in some cities some of the actions of the zoning appeal board are contrary to the best interests of the city. There are many reasons for this: an out-of-date zoning ordinance, part-time laymen asked to rule on difficult technical and legal questions, poor preparation of cases by the staff, indifferent briefing (or no briefing at all) by the city attorney, undue influence by clever petitioners or by emotional citizens.

Under the heading of communications, there are three ways in which the planning director can work to improve the performance of the zoning appeal board.

First is the improvement of the staff presentation of cases before the board. Where the caseload is small, it is quite advantageous for the board to inspect each case in the field. A planning staff member should accompany the board to explain the details of the case and to point out any relevant planning proposals for the area.

The number of cases may be so great that it is impossible for the board to visit the site of each one. The board, with staff help, may be able to select and inspect the more difficult cases. The board can parcel the field inspection jobs among its members, although this might unbalance the decision by giving undue weight to the opinion of the member who had made the field visit.

A very effective device used in some communities is to have an oblique aerial photograph made of each site about which an important zoning decision is to be made. (Photographs are used for amendments, as well as petitions before the zoning appeal board.) The color slide is projected and available for study during the hearing. It has proved very useful.

As a second device, the state planning agency or a university in some states conducts short courses or institutes on zoning administration. Also, while they are not billed as "training," state and national planning conferences customarily include sessions on zoning administration that are very helpful to appeal board members.

The third method is to hold periodic joint meetings of the zoning appeal board, planning commission, and city council. Although the use of joint meetings is not widespread, it can be very helpful to all bodies. Unquestionably, part of the cause for the divergent decisions on planning and development matters among the council, planning commission, and zoning appeal board is the lack of understanding of each other's objectives, which can be traced to a lack of communications among the three. Periodic joint meetings can do much to improve mutual understanding and to develop a uniform philosophy on development problems.

Intra-Government Communications

Experience has shown that a major weakness of the independent planning commission's staff has been its relative exclusion from regular on-going government operations. But even with planning as a municipal department, it is still important for the director to make a conscious effort to maintain close contact with other departments in the city government. The effect of physical proximity of the planning office to other municipal offices is mentioned elsewhere in this report.

There are several standard operations in planning administration that encourage close working relations between the planning staff and other departments. Obviously, mandatory referral and capital improvement programming bring the operating departments in close contact with planning. In those cities with official map powers, the planning department must work with the public works department.

Most of the local urban development programs using federal grants, such as urban renewal and metropolitan highway planning, are required to have planning department review, which brings the operating departments closer. In the future it

can be expected that more of the federal aid programs will require planning clearance.

Subdivision regulation is another planning staff function that has proved to be effective in promoting inter-departmental communications. While it is not uncommon to have other city agencies review proposed subdivisions for parks, water supply, sanitation, storm water disposal, and street design, in a few cities the subdivisions are reviewed by a technical advisory committee which meets periodically to go over current applications. The detailed technical review of an application is done in the appropriate departments before the committee meets, but the joint discussion in the committee has proved helpful in furthering mutual understanding on development problems.

A problem that can arise with the joint subdivision committee is the delegation of department representation on the committee to a staff member so junior that he is not able to speak for the department he represents -- he can only be an observer. While it is often not possible for department heads to attend committee meetings in person, the department should be represented by a first assistant or a senior employee who can act responsibly and can commit his department in practically all matters. It may require a directive from the mayor or city manager to assure proper representation on the subdivision committee.

The technical advisory committee is also an excellent device to improve communications between the planning staff and local independent governmental agencies. In most communities the school system is operated by an independent school board. There are very few city development actions that do not affect schools. For example, the approval of a new subdivision carries the presumption of added students in a new location. The action is particularly important to the school board in forecasting attendance at existing schools and the need for new schools. Any technical advisory committee reviewing subdivisions should unquestionably have a school board representative. This also applies to sanitary, water, park, and other districts that are established as independent units in many communities.

Furthermore, it is appropriate to include on technical advisory committees representatives of private utilities, such as gas, electricity, and telephone, for those planning and development matters which affect their operations.

Also, there are more and more interagency committees, composed of the heads of key development agencies -- including the planning director -- to help formulate programs that cut across operations of many agencies, like the Community Renewal Program. Another type of interagency committee is the one which prepares or reviews technical studies on proposals like a new expressway or the anti-poverty program.

It cannot be emphasized too strongly that intra-governmental communication cannot be left to chance. The planning director should take the lead in encouraging cooperation, both for the benefit of the other agencies and to improve planning staff understanding of the plans and problems in the totality of local public administration.

Public Communication

Communication between the planning agency and the public should produce a two-way flow of information. The public needs to know what the planners are doing, and why; the planners must know what the public wants and needs.

The methods for getting ideas and reactions from the citizens to the planners are fairly well recognized. The principal device is the public hearing, both the formal hearing required by law, and the informal hearing used to present a plan for public discussion.

There is an increasing use by planners of the technical advisory committee to advise on different aspects of planning programs, such as industrial development, central business district renewal, parks and recreation, and so forth. These committees have been useful not only for educating the planners, but also for educating the citizens and gaining acceptance of planning proposals. They are the most effective way to get "citizen participation" in plan making.

The form in which planning reports and plans are presented is also important. It is not uncommon to prepare two versions of a planning report, one containing all the reasoning and documentation on which the report is based, and a much briefer and simpler presentation for wide distribution. Simplified versions of plans have been distributed with water bills to an entire city. After one such distribution, the city manager directed the rubbish collection department to make a count on the number of planning reports found in the trash cans, but neither the results nor the significance of the count have been reported.

A popular version of a city plan should be prepared as skillfully as possible, and a planning department may wish to get a public relations expert to help on its preparation. At the same time, the advisability of an elaborate publication, using the most advanced Madison Avenue techniques, is questionable. A publication that looks too expensive, especially one that has been financed by taxes, will produce a negative reaction from many citizens.

Maps, photographs, and models displayed in a local museum, in schools, and in department stores or utility office windows are also useful in communicating planning ideas to the public.

The techniques we have just discussed are well known to planners, and they are commonly practiced to the extent that the staff time and budget are available. There are some other aspects of communication with the public that are frequently neglected. They are reviewed briefly below.

Front Desk Operation. The actual amount of time involved in answering questions from citizens is much greater than planners often realize. The workload is particularly heavy for the zoning administration staff. The zoning administrator in one large city found that 30 per cent of staff man-hours were taken up by citizen inquiries at the office and over the telephone. He stated that the staff could profitably have given even more time to such inquiries if there had been any way to do it.

Planning departments with the best records in subdivision regulation find that their effectiveness in getting well designed subdivisions, coordinated with a

comprehensive planning design, is directly in proportion to the amount of staff time that can be spent working with the developer.

The need for competent and adequate staff to handle contacts with the public should not be overlooked. The planning director may be so conscious of the backlog of unfinished work on advance planning that he presses for added budget and staff only for the comprehensive plan. The rapid expansion of sophisticated planning and research techniques will make him even more conscious of the needs in advanced planning. However, if he analyzes his staff problem carefully, he may find that the most effective position for additional staff will be in administrative activities that involve public contact.

Employees who are assigned public contact must be qualified for the job. In some cities, the tendency is to put very junior employees, or even non-technical staff, at the front desk. This is an important spot. Much of the impression that citizens get of the planning operation will be through the manner in which their personal questions are answered. The staff member at the front desk must be knowledgeable, courteous -- and patient, because the irate citizen is often unreasonable.

There is a special problem in handling zoning questions in those cities in which the first contact on zoning matters is with the office of the building commissioner. In most cities the antiquated pattern of making the building commissioner responsible for administration of the zoning ordinance still persists. In cities large enough to have the specialty, the building commissioner may have special zoning inspectors to review applications for zoning compliance. In most places, however, a building inspector whose training, experience, and interests are overwhelmingly in the inspection of construction will be assigned the additional duty of clearing building permit requests for zoning compliance. In spite of the fact that errors, misinformation, and even discourtesy may come from the building commissioner's office, the planning agency will get the blame.

The granting of zoning permits, the explanation of the zoning ordinance, work with the citizens to solve zoning problems -- these are best done by a planning department staff member. If it is necessary to have the employee on the payroll of the building commissioner, he should still be trained by and under the supervision of the planning department. The planning director who wants to avoid the routine of zoning administration is apt to find that his department is blamed for something for which it has not been responsible. He is also apt to find that his planning effectiveness suffers.

Press Relations. In the city where the mayor has a full-time public relations staff, there may be rules on press contacts that inhibit the department heads. However, the planning director is well advised to cultivate friendly relations with the reporters on the city hall beat. Often the planning director can help the reporter find interesting stories, or give him leads to persons able to answer his questions. In return, the reporter can help the planning director by relating public reactions or by pointing out planning problems that the staff may have missed.

The planning department can be a source of many interesting articles about a city. Planning research turns up much information about the community which, although it may not be spectacular, is worth three or four inches in a newspaper.

This should be even more true of the city that is using a data bank. Editors of suburban papers are especially grateful for the type of news and information that a planning agency can generate. Most suburban papers leave national and international news to the metropolitan dailies, concentrating on all aspects of the local scene. The local planning agency can usually furnish specific information that is available from no other place.

Newsletter. Many planning agencies use a newsletter, monthly or bi-monthly, to inform the public on planning matters. The periodical may report progress on planning studies, announce zoning cases and decisions, publish construction and other local economic data, and release local population statistics. Most local planning newsletters contain only four pages. It is better to send out a four-page issue every month, than to publish an eight-page issue every two months.

It is particularly beneficial to a metropolitan planning agency to publish a newsletter. Usually the metropolitan agency is one additional step removed from the citizens and, therefore, has more difficulty in establishing communications and building up public interest.

Speeches. Some planning directors have many invitations to speak before service clubs, women's organizations, and other civic groups -- often more than they can possibly accept. On a small staff, the director may be the only planner who is qualified to speak, but on a medium or large staff, all senior planners should be encouraged to address meetings.

If speech invitations are slow in coming, the planning director should seek out opportunities. Most local groups have a problem in getting speakers for their meetings and will welcome the offer to learn about planning and their own community problems.

An important source of speakers on planning should be, but generally is not, the members of the planning commission. The planning commissioner has the advantage of being a lay citizen himself, so he is not thought of as perhaps having an ax to grind to demonstrate the importance of his job. The obvious disadvantage is that the commissioner usually is not as familiar with department activities as the staff planner will be. This is an added reason for seeing that the planning commission is more than a group set up only to hear requests for zoning amendments.

School Programs. The introduction of planning into junior and senior high school classes is an excellent way to educate the future citizens of a community. (Planning principles have even been introduced successfully to kindergarten pupils.) Social studies teachers are usually anxious to cooperate because planning can be used to bring local government close to the students.

While some benefit will come from a talk by the planner to the class or to the school assembly, the most effective method is to get a short work sequence into the class curriculum, with some sort of field survey and project that the students themselves can carry out. Parking surveys, traffic counts, neighborhood population and migration censuses, shopping surveys, and recreation surveys are all projects that lend themselves to class study and demonstration.

WORK LOAD IN ZONING ADMINISTRATION

In 1965, the American Society of Planning Officials conducted a survey of the distribution of agency time spent on zoning, subdivision control, and other planning functions. It was generally recognized that administration of the zoning ordinances takes a large proportion of the planning commission's time, but the survey indicated that the proportion was even greater than most planners had realized. The ASPO study showed that the average city planning commission spends 48 per cent of its time on zoning matters, 16 per cent on subdivision control, and 36 per cent on all other aspects of planning. Eighty out of the 270 agencies covered in the ASPO survey reported 75 per cent or more of their time taken up with zoning.

Detailed studies of zoning administration made by ASPO in several cities have shown that the work load can be reduced, freeing staff either to work on other planning tasks or, at least, to do a better job of administering the zoning ordinance. The changes suggested below may call for amendments of the ordinance.

An additional incentive for reducing the present work load is the clear trend toward new and more complicated land use control regulations -- the planned unit development, the floating zone, land use intensity ratings, special permits, and development ordinances.

Amendment Petition Spacing. In most cities a petition to amend the zoning ordinance will be processed and acted upon as expeditiously as possible. This may mean that a petition can be scheduled for a hearing before the planning commission if it is submitted as late as only 24 hours before a commission meeting. For a hearing that requires a minimum legal notice period, the petition may be accepted up to the last day that would ensure compliance with the law. The result of this unregulated acceptance of amendment petitions is that the work of the commission, the city council, and the planning staff drags out over the entire year, and is impossible to schedule intelligently. It is a prime cause of the pre-emption of commission time by zoning matters.

It has been found that the efficiency of handling zoning amendments is increased considerably by limiting the hearings to four times each year. Petitions are accepted at any time, but they are heard only at the quarterly meetings. A cut-off date is set for each quarter, and any petitions received after the cut-off date are scheduled for the following quarterly hearing. Usually, the cut-off date is 30 days before the hearing date. Thus, if the hearing dates are set for the first business day of January, April, July, and October, any petition submitted between December 1 and January 1 will not be heard until April 1, any submitted between March 1 and April 1 will not be heard until July 1, and so on.

This limitation is particularly valuable for scheduling staff time. In many communities studies of the petitions and preparation for the hearing can be concentrated in the 30-day period immediately preceding the hearing.

In some communities it has been possible to limit amendment hearings to two each year, and a few agencies have considered reducing the hearings to only one per year.

Limitation on Repeat Petitions. A small percentage of developers will come back again and again after a rezoning petition is denied, on the theory that if they try enough times, the planning commission and the city council will get so fed up with the request that they will grant the zoning change just to get rid of it. This obviously can cause much unnecessary work for the staff, commission, and council.

This repetition can be slowed considerably in two ways.

First, the ordinance can be amended to prohibit a rezoning petition on the same property oftener than once each year. To avoid loopholes that the petitioner might use to get around the ordinance, the prohibition should apply to "all or any part of the property" and to a request for a change "from its present classification to any other classification."

It can happen, of course, that some change takes place within the one-year waiting period which would make a zoning amendment desirable. In this event, the amendment can be initiated by the planning commission -- an option in most zoning ordinances that is available to the planning commission.

The second method to discourage persistent petitions is to set the application fee high enough to discourage speculative or probing petitions.

Rezoning Additional Property. One of the most common causes of extra zoning administration work is the "domino" effect, when the first reclassification is granted in an area. After the first property is reclassified, then a second property owner applies for a rezoning, then a third, and so on. If the staff determines that it will recommend reclassification of the first property, then the study should be expanded to determine whether other property in the area should also be reclassified. If it is possible to extend the boundaries of the first petition to include all property appropriate for rezoning at the same time, the work of processing and hearing later petitions can be eliminated.

Up-Dating the Zoning Ordinance. The older a zoning ordinance is, the more tinkering and adjusting will be required to make it correspond with changed needs and conditions. In a small community it may be possible to completely overhaul the ordinance at about five-year intervals. In a large city, the complete revision itself will require three to five years, or even more. The best procedure in a large city is to have a continuing restudy and appropriate revision of the zoning map, covering sections of the city small enough to be manageable within a reasonable time.

A frequent source of unnecessary zoning work will be sections of the text, not the map, setting requirements that are no longer necessary. For example, in one southern city the zoning ordinance required a variance petition for all encroachments into side yards. The ordinance had been adopted many years earlier before central cooling systems for single-family residences were common. With the upsurge of cooling system installations, there came a steady stream of requests to put the condensing equipment in side yards. The requests were always granted, and properly so, but each request called for all the elaborate machinery of the variance petition, including an advertised public hearing. A simple amendment of the ordinance text to permit placing the cooling devices in side yards, with appropriate placement standards, decreased the variance requests in the city by about 10 per cent.

Constant scrutiny of requests and actions of the zoning appeal board may show a number of simple text amendments that will reduce unnecessary work.

Zoning Administrator. In those states permitting zoning administrators, any city of 50,000 population or more should probably establish the position. Here we refer to the zoning administrator who has some authority to grant variances or special uses, rather than simply the supervisor of a staff handling the mechanics of zoning administration.

The powers given to a zoning administrator vary widely. He may be given no more authority than to "permit side yard and rear yard encroachments no greater than two feet." Or he may, as in Baltimore County, Maryland, be given full authority to grant variances, authorize all special uses, and even to approve map amendments and rezoning.

A full discussion of the position of zoning administrator is not possible in this report. However, it has been clearly demonstrated in a growing number of communities that the trained, professional zoning administrator can do a great deal to reduce the inordinate amount of unnecessary work that is forced on zoning appeal boards and on the staffs that serve the boards.

WORK PROGRAMMING

The modern planning department is quite different from the pre-World War II planning commission staff. Before the end of the war, and especially during the Great Depression, planning was a much more leisurely operation. There was no sense of urgency about preparing a plan because there was comparatively little expansion of urban facilities. Administration of planning controls did not require so much effort because there was practically no private development to control. Under these conditions there seemed to be no great need for sophisticated management tools -- in fact, scientific management itself was not far advanced and not widely known.

But since the end of the war, conditions have changed radically. The modern planning department invariably seems to have more work than it is possible to get done. Under the pressure of private development, public construction, state and federal grants-in-aid, new programs such as urban renewal and the interstate highway program, and new responsibilities assigned to the department, the planning director must use the best management tools available if he would hope to keep up with the demands made on his department. Some of the most often observed management weaknesses are discussed below.

Organization of Department

Planning Advisory Service Report No. 146, Principles of Organization for Planning Agencies, covers in some detail the organization of a planning department, and this report will not repeat that discussion. We will just point out two functions in the planning office that are often shortchanged.

Perhaps the most troublesome problem from the viewpoint of the planning director is the "brush-fire" request. This is the emergency study, the hurry-up job referred to the planning department by the mayor or the city manager or the city council. Many times the work requested is not even remotely related to any regular function of the planning department.

Rather than feeling that the department has been unfairly imposed upon, the planning director should get some satisfaction from knowing that his staff is trusted to help out in an emergency.

Nevertheless, the brush-fire requests can easily get out of hand, particularly if the department has not prepared for them in any way. If at all possible, the department should have a section to which such tasks are assigned, and the staff should be large enough so that the unscheduled emergency jobs can be handled without interfering with other department functions. The "current planning" section is usually the one that gets the emergency jobs. Staff time records on all such work should give the planning director documentation to back up his request for additional personnel at budget-making time.

The second function in the planning department that is often underestimated is the administration of the department itself. On a small staff, the director will have to be responsible for most of the administrative details, such as personnel relations, personnel administration, budget preparation, records management, supplies, purchasing, supervision of clerical staff, scheduling and programming, and so on. At some point, the organization becomes large enough to include an assistant for administration. Roughly, when the staff reaches ten employees, the planning director should consider hiring a full-time administrative assistant, and he should certainly have one by the time the staff reaches 20 employees.

The administrative assistant need not be -- in fact, should not be -- a planner. A senior clerk or an executive secretary can probably fill the position better than a planner. On a large staff, a person trained in public administration or business administration should be sought for the job. On the very large staff, of course, the administrative section will require several employees.

Time Records

Although keeping time sheets may seem a nuisance, especially when they are introduced for the first time, it is necessary to have adequate records if budgeting, staffing, and scheduling in the department is to be more than intuitive. The need for accurate knowledge of time and cost is present for the small staff as well as for the very large staff. Decision on the detail in which time records should be kept must be left to the individual planning director. He needs enough information to enable him to schedule work, to figure costs, and to predict his staff needs. He should beware, however, of asking for too much detail in the breakdown of work done. Keeping and analyzing the time records themselves can easily become a major task, requiring more staff time than it is worth. For a special job, or for a new function, the planning director may want more detailed knowledge for a short period, but the detailed recording should be dropped as soon as the director is satisfied that he understands the special job.

PERT and CMP

Within the past few years operations research has introduced a number of scientific methods into management, one of which is "network analysis." Network analysis is a planning and scheduling technique. In using the technique, managements scientists have developed two systems: PERT (Program Evaluation Review Technique) and CPM (Critical Path Method). The two systems are quite similar and seem to be coming closer together as they are refined and used. PERT, which has been adopted by the United States government for large contracts, is based on constant resources and is used to schedule a program and determine the total time required. CPM calls for varying and shifting resources to complete a project most efficiently in a constant time -- working to a deadline. This oversimplifies the two techniques, but does give an idea of the difference.

Network analysis has proved remarkably successful in aiding the two management problems facing every organization: how best to allocate scarce resources and manpower to get the work done most efficiently and how to program a job in order to meet a deadline.

Although PERT and CPM are quite sophisticated techniques, they are relatively easy to understand and, for most programs in a planning department, are relatively simple to apply. In the highly complex projects for space exploration and defense production, network analysis requires the use of a computer, but for smaller projects, PERT or CPM analysis can be worked out without resort to a computer.

Network analysis has proved especially valuable -- in fact, is now considered indispensable -- in highway and transportation planning and in the preparation of community renewal programs. The techniques are applicable to other planning projects such as comprehensive plan preparation, zoning ordinance revision, and capital improvement programs.

Probably it is safe to say that the most common weakness found in the administration of a planning department is the hit-or-miss scheduling and programming of the work of the office, particularly the work on specific projects and studies. Some planning directors use bar charts for working out project schedules, but these are generally less than effective. The increasing amount of work that will be given to planning agencies in the future makes it imperative that the director use the best available management techniques.

THE USE OF CONSULTANTS

If a planning agency has no staff of its own, and no prospect of funds to employ a full-time staff, then the only option it has, if there is need for technical assistance, is to hire a consultant. However, if the community does have a planning staff, the question of whether or not to use a consultant may arise. While there can be no absolute answers to such a question, we have observed some agencies that use consultants more than seems necessary and other agencies that do not use consultants when they should. The major factors that should be considered are discussed below.

Special Skills and Knowledge

If a project in the planning department requires a skill that is not available on the staff, should the director hire a qualified employee or use the services of a consultant? When the need is for only one man, the decision is usually not difficult and depends on whether there is enough work for a full-time technician. Unless the services of a specialist can be used full time in his specialty, the consultant is the proper choice.

Another possible advantage to the use of a consultant is that the part-time services of an experienced specialist may be much more effective than the full-time services of a less experienced man.

The use of an experienced consultant may also prove valuable by bringing in a person to plan, criticize, and review the work of less experienced personnel on the staff. This applies not only to specialized jobs, but also to the general planning operations. For the small staff working under a relatively inexperienced director, the periodic review of his operations by an older planner can be very helpful.

Temporary Augmentation of Staff

Perhaps the most prevalent use of consulting services comes from the need to increase the staff for a special job of limited duration. The skills necessary to do the work are already on the staff, but it is not possible to fit the job into the work program and still carry on the regular duties. And it is not practical, or even possible, to hire additional employees for the short period necessary to complete the special job. So the city, in effect, contracts for the use of the consulting firm's employees for a particular study.

Temporary special studies in some agencies, however, seem to have a tendency to become permanent. The department ends up by having a continuous series of contracts with the same, or different, consultants so that the program amounts to a perpetual farming-out of work that could be done as well, and much more inexpensively, by staff personnel.

Work Speed-Up

This factor is usually another way of looking at the one discussed above, but illustrates a problem in planning administration. It is not uncommon to find a planning department that is "revising the zoning ordinance" using one man, or "preparing a long-range plan" with a skeleton staff. The work goes on for years. If it ever does come to a conclusion, which is always doubtful, the product will not be of a good quality, if only for the reason that conditions have changed completely during the time the study has been in progress.

These situations are the result of the city not appropriating sufficient funds to hire a staff large enough to carry out the work expeditiously. The lack of funds may be because the planning director has not seen the need for getting the job done properly, or because he has not been able to convince the city council of the need.

It is an interesting characteristic of some city councils, however, that although they will refuse to increase a departmental budget \$25,000 a year, they can be persuaded to spend \$100,000 for a single-shot consulting contract. The financial advantage of federal aid to planning under Section 701 of the Housing Act is also an incentive for the council to use consultants.

The planning director must realize that certain types of planning projects, if they are to be of any value, must be carried to a conclusion as rapidly as possible, and this often requires the use of a consulting firm, even though the director might prefer to make a staff job of it.

Outside Appraisal

One real advantage in using a consultant is that he as an outsider, is presumed to be objective, and will often be heeded where a city employee would not. There is no doubt that an outsider can see problems and deficiencies in planning and planning operations that the person in the center of those operations overlooks. Most planning directors are aware of the value of the fresh look at their department and its work.

At the same time, any consultant who comes into a planning department is also aware that he must lean heavily on the director's own appraisal of problems. In his final report, the consultant may be pointing out the same problems, in slightly different words, that the director has been pointing out for years. Most of the time, however, the consultant will be able to convince the city of the need for reforms that the planning director was never able to do.

Selection of a Consultant

The American Institute of Planners has prepared a very good guide to the selection of planning consultants, and this should be studied and used by any planning agency expecting to employ a consultant. We have four points to bring out.

First, a consultant should not be selected on the basis of price. The consultant is to be looked on as a professional person who makes a "proposal" not as a contractor submitting a "bid." His price is based on an estimate of what it will cost him to do the work, plus a reasonable margin to pay for his own time. Different consultants will arrive at different prices because there are always a number of intangibles to be considered.

Second, in spite of the difference between a "proposal" and a "bid" the city may be presented with prices that are either much higher or much lower than the average. In both instances the proposals should be looked at very carefully. Is the extremely low price quoted because the consultant is incompetent, because he sees it as an opportunity to get his foot in the door for bigger and more lucrative jobs? It is a sad fact of life that all consultants are not equal, either in competence or ethics.

In the case of the extremely high price, is the consultant trying to sell the city a fancier job than it really needs? Is he asking the city to support a particularly luxurious organization or particularly expensive promotional cam-

paign? Does he really want to do the job at all?

The third suggestion of employing a consultant is to go behind the presentation and check the previous work done by the firm. This is always advisable, but is urged as a particular caution to be taken with a firm that makes an elaborate Madison Avenue type of presentation. Check previous jobs. Was the city satisfied? Could they use the plan the firm prepared? If they followed the plan, did it hold up well or were they forced to make drastic revisions? Would that other city hire the same firm again?

Fourth, there is the new consulting firm. A consultant has to get started some way, and until he has completed his first contract he cannot refer the prospective client to any previous job. The city should not, however, automatically eliminate him just because he is starting out. In this case the reference checking has to go to his training, his previous non-consulting experience, and his general character. The new firm is likely to quote a low price, partly because of lack of experience and partly because it is anxious to get the job and is willing to work on a smaller margin. The city should not try to take advantage of the firm that has made a proposal that is obviously too low, but the city should also consider the financial backing of the new firm and not engage a young, small organization to undertake a large job that calls for a big staff and the ability to carry a heavy payroll and expense burden.

APPENDIX

EXTRACT FROM NOMA OFFICE STANDARD -- OFFICE SPACE ASSIGNMENTS*

1. Scope and Purpose

- 1.1 Those standards can be used to determine the number of square feet of office space required for an office layout.

2. Exceptions

- 2.1 The standards mentioned below do not provide for large concentrations of file space, storage space, special equipment, and miscellaneous areas, as well as building services (elevators, stairs, toilets, electrical and service closets, etc.) and building and general corridors.
- 2.2 In new buildings, the Standard for private offices contemplates building column structural bay of 20' x 20', and windows on 10' centers.
- 2.3 In existing buildings, private office allotments might vary with limitations of column spans and window spacing.

3. Office Space Assignment Standards

- 3.1 The following table of allowances will serve for Standard considerations.

3.1.1 General Office Area -- 60-80 sq. ft. per person.

3.1.2 Private Office Area.

3.1.2.1 Executive Private Office -- 500 sq. ft.
(Private Office -- 400 sq. ft.
Corridor -- 100 sq. ft.)

3.1.2.2 Administrative Private Office -- 250 sq. ft.
(Private Office -- 200 sq. ft.
Corridor -- 50 sq. ft.)

- 3.2 The above space allotments provide for occasional accessories, files, coat racks, cabinets, water coolers, and such.

Now, within the ranges quoted for general office standards, which is better, the upper limit or the lower? We generally recommend, whenever it is feasible, that a generous rather than an economical space standard be used. There are three main reasons for this: Use of generous standards gives a company a built-in expansion factor; use of the higher standards improves employee morale and, usually, improves employee efficiency and work output as well.

*Taken from: Rippen, Kenneth H. Office Building and Office Layout Planning. McGraw-Hill, New York. 1960. Pp. 11-12.

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