



TALBOT COUNTY PLAT/SITE PLAN REVIEW & APPROVAL PROCESS

March 31, 2005

INTRODUCTION

In the past, Talbot County staff has maintained a relatively liberal procedure for the review and approval of plats and site plans. With the exception of Technical Advisory Committee (TAC) and Planning Commission meetings, there is no well defined process for complete review of proposed development projects. In recent years the volume of this work has literally overwhelmed TAC members, resulting in unpredictable project review status and timeframes. The revised process contained herein should reduce or eliminate any confusion concerning the status of development projects under review.

This revised process will empower plat and site plan applicants to assist in facilitating the review of their projects. In the past most applications proceeded through the review process regardless of completeness or accuracy. Unfortunately, this methodology burdened staff, requiring long review periods. This ultimately delays all projects under review, including complete and accurate ones. The revised process will facilitate complete and accurate submissions, while requiring those that are not, to be resubmitted until substantially complete and correct.

DEVELOPMENT REVIEW MEETING PURPOSE/FORMAT

Technical Advisory Committee

This meeting is a staff level review of all plat and site plan applications. The Technical Advisory Committee meeting is a two part effort consisting of a staff only level of review and an applicants/agents meeting, which is open to the public. Although open to the public, there is no opportunity for the general public to comment on project reviews. The committee members include Federal, State and local government representatives as well as quasi government and private entities (e.g. utility, emergency responders, etc.), as appropriate for each project. The purpose of this review is to ensure that the project submissions are complete and accurate meeting all applicable local, State and Federal requirements. Also, this review encompasses format, readability, legibility, general design practices/standards and applicable supporting documentation. Complete and correct major subdivisions, major line revisions and general site plans advance to a subsequent Planning Commission meeting. In the event a project submission is substantially incorrect or incomplete, it must be resubmitted for TAC review before advancing to Planning Commission, as applicable. Approval of minor subdivisions, minor revisions and simplified site plans are typically delegated to the Planning Officer, once all issues/comments are addressed.

Planning Commission

The Planning Commission is appointed by the Talbot County Council. The Planning Commission meetings are open to the public, with an opportunity for public comment. They are responsible for the review and approval of all major subdivisions, major revision plats and general site plans as well as other duties. The Planning Commission is responsible for ensuring that plats and site plans meet criteria set forth in the Talbot County Subdivision and Zoning Ordinances and are consistent with the Comprehensive Plan.

Plats are reviewed at the “sketch,” “preliminary” and “final” stages or milestones. Both plats and site plans may need to repeat Planning Commission review if the Commission requires additional information or modification to a proposed project.

Compliance Review Meeting

This is a staff level meeting consisting of Technical Advisory Committee members. The meeting purpose is to ensure that outstanding comments and conditions, on all projects (**plats and site plans**), have been adequately addressed. Projects reviewed at this meeting have typically received a conditional final approval from the Planning Officer or Planning Commission, as appropriate. The meeting is not open to applicants, agents or the public, since plats and site plans must stand on their own at this stage of review. This format allows staff to evaluate project documents for self sufficiency without additional explanation or input.

MEETING SCHEDULES

Dates and times for the following meetings are established by the Talbot County Planning & Zoning Office. Published schedules should always be used or the Planning & Zoning Office consulted, to confirm actual dates and times. Generally, the meeting schedules are as follows:

Planning Commission-----First Wednesday of the month
Technical Advisory Committee-----Second Wednesday of the month
Compliance Review Meeting -----Fourth Wednesday of the month

MEETING DEADLINES

The following deadlines are for submissions associated with the appropriate commission/committee meetings. Applicants and agents should pay careful attention to the month associated with these deadlines. Most of these deadlines are for meetings of the subsequent month. The application submittal deadlines are as follows:

Technical Advisory Committee-----Noon, Friday after Planning Commission (complete applications will be scheduled for a subsequent month based upon agenda limit)

Planning Commission-----Month following Technical Advisory Committee meeting for substantially correct and complete projects (substantially incorrect or incomplete applications must be resubmitted for TAC review)

Compliance Review Meeting -----Noon, Friday prior to current months Compliance Review Meeting; or as appropriate based upon agenda limits (projects are not eligible for CRM until a final notice to proceed is issued by the Planning Officer or Planning Commission, as appropriate)

ADMINISTRATION

The Talbot County Planning and Zoning Office is the clearing house for all development review submissions. Accordingly, once a project is submitted for TAC review, all contact and submissions should be made directly to this office. The intent of this requirement is to eliminate potential confusion or miscommunication between the reviewing staff and applicants/agents. This policy allows the Planning & Zoning Office to know the status of all projects at any given time. The only exception to this requirement would be construction and/or technical documents associated with certain projects. This information can be submitted directly to the appropriate office(s), such as the Health Department or Public Works. Excepting the aforementioned construction/technical documents, any plat or site plans submitted directly to individual TAC members will not be reviewed. *All plats and site plans shall be submitted through the Planning & Zoning office.*

AGENDA LIMITS

The volume of active development review projects in Talbot County can vary substantially. At the time of this writing there is considerable development pressure as evidenced by the number of projects reviewed by TAC. The quantity of projects that can be reviewed by County staff must be managed. Without agenda limits, a surge in development review projects would require TAC members to set aside their numerous other duties or reduce the ability to thoroughly review development projects. To avoid these undesirable alternatives, the development review agendas will be limited as follows:

TAC AGENDA

A. Weighting System

Site Plans

- Simplified-----1 Point
- General-----2 Point

Plats

Revision

- Minor-----1 Point
- Major-----2 Point

Subdivision

- Minor-----1 Point
- Major-----2 Point

B. Agenda Item Limit

1. The monthly TAC agenda shall be limited to ten (10) points, as defined in the above weighting system.
2. Projects will be considered for the TAC agenda on a first come first served basis.

3. Incomplete submittals may be returned to the applicant and will not be placed in the review queue until such time that a complete package is submitted.
4. If the point total for a specific agenda is nine (9) and the next candidate project is weighted at two points, eleven (11) points will be allowed on that monthly agenda.
5. Submittals which must be resubmitted to TAC, due to substantially incomplete or incorrect status, will be treated as new project submissions and will be considered for an agenda on a first come first served basis.

COMPLIANCE REVIEW MEETING (CRM) AGENDA

A. Weighting System

Site Plans

Simplified-----1 Point

General-----2 Point

Plats

Revision

Minor-----1 Point

Major-----2 Point

Subdivision

Minor-----1 Point

Major-----2 Point

B. Agenda Item Limit

1. The monthly CRM agenda shall be limited to fifteen (15) points, as defined in the above weighting system.
2. Projects will be considered for the CRM agenda on a first come first served basis.
3. Projects requiring Planning Commission approval are not eligible for CRM review until after this approval is obtained.
4. If the point total for a specific agenda is fourteen (14) and the next candidate project is weighted at two points, sixteen (16) points will be allowed on that monthly agenda.
5. Projects that must be resubmitted for the Compliance Review Meeting agenda, due to outstanding issues, will be treated as new project submissions and will be considered for an agenda on a first come first served basis.

In the event an excessive number of projects are in the review queue, the point limitation for TAC and/or CRM agendas may be considered for reevaluation. As necessitated by manpower, workload, submission complexity, etc. the agenda point limits may be adjusted. Any adjustment of the agenda point limit, up or down as appropriate, will be based upon recommendation by TAC and a consensus of the Health Officer, Planning Officer and County Engineer.

SUBMITTAL REQUIREMENTS – TAC & PLANNING COMMISSION

Project submittals shall comply with applicable County, State and Federal Codes, Regulations, Laws and Policies. Although each project is unique and may have specific needs, generally submittal requirements are the same for all classes of projects. A specific application and checklist has been developed for each class of project and for each milestone to ensure that necessary information is provided. Each item on the checklist shall be completely and accurately addressed. Applicant failure to adequately address all application and checklist items may result in a project being considered incomplete or incorrect. Any such deficiencies may result in return of application without proceeding to the next level of review.

Project submissions are subject to multiple reviews, such as “Sketch,” “Preliminary” and “Final.” Subsequent project submittals for a specific project shall include documentation which addresses the elimination and/or change of information from previous submissions. Changes which are considered substantial will require project resubmission.

SUBMITTAL REQUIREMENTS – COMPLIANCE REVIEW MEETING (CRM)

In an effort to foster efficient use of review time, all plats and plans submitted for CRM shall include documentation detailing any and all changes or revisions made to the project. These changes and revisions shall be in direct response to conditions or comments made through the formal development review process. Any additional changes or revisions shall not be made without specific authorization. Undocumented or unauthorized changes/revisions may require the project to be resubmitted for TAC and/or Planning Commission review. This action would provide an appropriate level of review to evaluate the full effect of project impacts resulting from such a change or revision.

PROJECT ACTIVITY

Once a development project has been approved with conditions, twelve months can elapse, with no activity, before it expires and must start anew. In an effort to keep projects from stagnating in the review process and to facilitate project tracking and status, a project must also show activity at no less than three (3) month intervals. Specifically, each individual project or separate phase of a project must remain active with no more than three (3) months of inactivity, as represented in the Planning & Zoning project file. “Activity” is defined as a complete project submission, a status letter (as described below) or other written documentation approved by the Planning & Zoning Office.

Unlike the twelve month activity requirement, failure to meet the three month activity time frame will not result in project expiration. Instead, failure to meet this requirement will result in repeating the most recent TAC milestone review. This TAC requirement is not intended to be punitive, but will allow staff to become current on a specific project that has been stagnant. As with all other development submissions, the project would be put on the TAC agenda at a first come first served basis. The Talbot County Planning & Zoning Office will provide written notice to applicants and/or agents of activity due dates.

Some projects may require extended time periods (greater than three months) for associated improvement designs, permits, tests, etc. For such projects to be considered active, the applicant must submit a project status letter/report to the Planning & Zoning office detailing why the project will be inactive for more than three months (with respect to the County Planning Office files) and when such activity is anticipated to resume. This justification must be valid and not one of convenience. Regardless of future activity projections/expectations, such a status letter or actual activity must be provided to Planning & Zoning at a maximum of three month intervals.

PROJECT STATUS

All proposed development projects, currently under review, will be itemized on the Talbot County web page. This information will be updated at least once each month. The data provided includes, applicant; agent; request type; project type; location; tax map and zoning information; most recent action and the next action. This information is for use by applicants and agents to determine project status and is available to any interested party with access to the internet.

RESUBMISSION

Projects requiring resubmission shall return to the beginning of the review process, unless a more recent level of review is appropriate, as determined by the Technical Advisory Committee.

Project resubmissions shall be placed in queue, at the appropriate level of review, on a first come first served basis, together with other pending projects.

APPEALS PROCESS

Appeals are provided in accordance with existing provisions in applicable County and State Codes and Regulations.

FLOW CHART

The flow chart, on the following page, is included to help interested parties visualize the review and approval process of proposed development projects (plats and site plans).

TALBOT COUNTY PLAT/SITE PLAN REVIEW & APPROVAL PROCESS FLOWCHART

