

## HOSTING A SHORT COURSE FOR YOUR COMMUNITY

The “Short Course on Local Planning” is a joint program of the Washington State Department of Commerce (Commerce) and the Planning Association of Washington (PAW). It was created more than 30 years ago to provide basic education about land use planning to the citizens of Washington. A 2009 request from the Washington Cities Insurance Authority (WCIA) for a block of basic Short Courses for their insurance pool member cities, led to the development of an additional partnership. In support of the WCIA’s 2009 COMPACT topic of land use, some courses during 2009 and 2010 are being jointly sponsored by the PAW, Commerce and the WCIA. Presented specifically for regional audiences of WCIA member cities, these are open to attendees from other jurisdictions as well.

Courses are offered throughout the state at the request of counties, cities, towns, or other interested organizations. It usually takes a minimum of ten weeks to set up a course, since all speakers at the courses are volunteers, and the course has limited staff support at Commerce.

The first step in arranging for a Short Course is to contact the Short Course Coordinator at Growth Management Services (GMS) at Commerce (see contact information below). Once three dates that will work for the hosting community are identified, the Coordinator can begin contacting potential speakers. When all speakers are confirmed, the course date is set, and final details are coordinated.

The hosting community arranges for the course site, usually at the city hall, county courthouse, or other community meeting facility. Traditionally, an informal dinner precedes the course at a local restaurant, so that the three speakers can meet informally and off the record with local elected and appointed officials and staff members. The community’s only course-related expenses are hosting the three speakers at this informal dinner, and providing a mid-evening coffee/cookie/pop break. If you have the capacity to video-tape the event, we ask you to consider doing this so that we can post the courses on our web site for those who were unable to attend. We ask that the hosting agency do its best to insure attendance by at least 30 people, and to encourage inviting neighboring jurisdictions or co-hosting a course with another jurisdiction.

The speakers usually include a land use attorney and two planning directors or senior planners. Topics covered in a “Basic Short Course” include an overview of the legal basis of planning in Washington State, an overview of comprehensive planning (and involving citizens in the process), and the tools and techniques available for implementing a comprehensive plan, while maintaining good working relationships among the Planning Commission, local elected officials, and professional staff. Special topics can be covered as well, depending on the community’s needs. Special course topics in recent years have been as diverse as “Establishing and modifying UGAs,” “Sub-area Planning,” and “Historic Preservation Basics.” “Customized Short Courses” may require more time to organize.

The Short Course is generally three hours in duration, typically beginning at 6 or 6:30, with a 15-minute mid-evening coffee break. Daytime courses can also be arranged. Each speaker makes an initial presentation (60 minutes for the legal overview, 30 minutes for each planning presentation) on his or her topic. Although questions are appropriate throughout the course, the final half hour is an open forum for questions to be asked of any or all speakers. The current edition of the “Short Course on Local Planning” manual is available at <http://www.commerce.wa.gov/site/395/default.aspx>, and course attendees will receive handouts prepared by the speakers. There is no charge to attend a short course.

**To arrange a Short Course session for your community**, please contact Janet Rogerson at [janet.rogerson@commerce.wa.gov](mailto:janet.rogerson@commerce.wa.gov) or 360-725-3047. For the current schedule, go to the GMS Web site at [www.commerce.wa.gov/growth](http://www.commerce.wa.gov/growth), and click on Short Course. For more training opportunities, please click on Educational Resources for Planners. Also, visit the Planning Association of Washington Web site at [www.planningpaw.org](http://www.planningpaw.org) and WCIA’s Web site at <http://www.wciapool.org/>