Charlotte Planning Commission

Vision Session 2026

Agenda

1. Framing
2. Decorum and Norms
3. Vision for Charlotte
4. Discussion Questions

How the Commission Works Together - *Decorum and Norms* Survey Section

Across the *decorum and norms* questions, respondents are remarkably consistent on core values, with tensions around how firmly to enforce them and how much participation is "enough."

Dominant themes

1. **Civility and respect.**
   - People repeatedly call for respectful tone, no personal attacks, critiquing ideas not individuals, assuming good intentions, and using civil language.
   - Broad agreement that current behavior and culture are falling short of desired norms; the references to disruptive behavior, doubt-seeding, and domination by a few indicate shared recognition of a problem.
   - Strong alignment on a common set of baseline norms: respect, one person speaking at a time, staying focused on the agenda, good preparation, and the chair's role in maintaining order.
2. **Strong structure and facilitation.**
   - There is a clear desire for realistic agendas, staying on topic, respecting start/end times, and the chair firmly managing speaking order, side conversations, and public comment.
   - Shared desire to reduce re-litigation and tangents so the Commission can move work forward with the town's work and respect everyone's time.
3. **Preparation and process.**
   - Respondents emphasize coming prepared, having materials in advance, following agreed procedures (including Robert's Rules), and not re-litigating past decisions.
4. **Accountability for behavior.**
   - Many want explicit expectations that disruptive or uncivil behavior will be addressed in real time and, if persistent, lead to consequences (warnings, removal, or escalation to the Selectboard).
5. **Trust and relationship-building.**
   - Several comments stress the need to work in good faith, build trust, and maintain friendly relationships despite disagreement, including small gestures like check-ins and informal social time.

How the Commission Works Together - *Decorum and Norms* Survey Section

Across the *decorum and norms* questions, respondents are remarkably consistent on core values, with tensions around how firmly to enforce them and how much participation is "enough."

Tensions and Contradictions

1. **Inclusivity vs. efficiency.**
   - Many value broad participation and public input, yet also complain about the audience (vs. commissioners) dominating the discussion, and lack of commissioner-only discussion.
   - This is a live tension between being open and getting work done.
2. **Gentle correction vs. firm enforcement.**
   - Some favor progressive, gentle reminders and opportunities to discuss concerns later; others argue for stronger measures such as warnings, letters to the select board, and removal for repeated violations.
3. **Unanimous consent vs. decisive majority.**
   - There is some praise for striving for unanimous consent, but also frustration with revisiting decisions and calls to "move on when there's a majority of the board" rather than waiting for unanimity, reflecting tension between consensus culture and timely decision-making.
4. **Perceived toxicity vs. desire for camaraderie.**
   - Strong language about bad culture and disruptive members sits alongside aspirational statements about being neighbors, remaining friends, and having trust in each other, showing a gap between the current climate and the desired one.

Open Questions on Decorum and Norms

1. **What decision making model does this commission follow?**

   Major models:

   - Unilateral
     - Urgency, authority, limited consequences
   - Unilateral with discussion
     - Need or want input before unilateral
   - Majority rule
     - Quick, clear majority
   - Consensus
     - Everyone understands and can accept (even if disagrees with) decision

Open Questions on Decorum and Norms, continued…

2. Among respondents, there was unanimous agreement on norms for planning commissioner meeting.
   - Treat all participants with respect; no personal attacks or ridicule
   - One person speaks at a time
   - No interrupting or side conversations
   - Critique ideas and proposals, not individuals
   - Use civil language; rudeness is not acceptable
   - Stay focused on the agenda and the issue at hand
   - Come prepared, having reviewed materials in advance
   - The Chair (or presiding officer) manages the speaking order and may pause discussion when decorum breaks down
   - Assume good intentions
   - Allow space for everyone to share and express themselves
   - Respect the start and end times of the meeting, unless explicitly agreed upon by the commission
   - Regulate public comment to ensure agenda stays on time and on track
   - Respect and uphold commission decisions
   - Communicate absences to the Chair
   - Good commissioner attendance records

   Do we want to officially adopt these norms as commission rules?

3. **How do we want to handle disruptive behavior/not following agreed rules?**

Commissioners' Vision for Charlotte – Survey Results

Across the vision-related questions, respondents share a fairly consistent picture of Charlotte's future, with tension mostly around *how* to achieve it, not *what* it should look like.

Dominant vision themes

1. Rural character and landscape at the core.

- The future town is still defined by its rural setting, working farms, open fields, scenic views, dirt roads, and strong protection of wildlife habitat, and water quality.
- There is strong agreement that the town's natural beauty, agricultural heritage, rural character, and public access to the lake and recreation should be preserved "at all costs."

2. Village-centered, modest growth.

- Growth is "modest, carefully managed," focused on infill in the villages and ADUs rather than rural sprawl, reinforcing a pattern of village areas surrounded by countryside and conserved lands.
- Multiple responses converge on infill in village districts, more density there, and strong resistance to large rural sprawl developments.
- Respondents are not arguing for either no growth or aggressive expansion.

3. Livable for all ages, especially seniors and families.

- A clear vision is to support multiple generations, with repeated emphasis on senior housing, keeping families in town, and avoiding a future where Charlotte is only for the wealthy or the very old.

4. More everyday services and amenities without losing scale.

- People want a few more local amenities (basic medical, small hardware, places to eat, more recreation and indoor space) while still keeping a small-scale, village-oriented town.

5. Balanced planning: housing + conservation.

- There is a strong through-line of using land use regulations and planning tools to support both housing needs and conservation of high-value natural and agricultural resources.
- Respondents consistently point to revising/using land use regulations and the Town Plan (including incentives) as the way to shape the future—supporting ag businesses, housing, and conservation together.

Commissioners' Vision for Charlotte – Survey Results

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Key Tensions and Contradictions

1. **More services vs. minimal government.**
    - Some want more local services, infrastructure for water, expanded recreation, and stronger conservation funding, implying a more active public role.
    - Others explicitly value "minimal municipal government size and scope" and "libertarian land use," creating a tension over how big and interventionist the town should be in pursuing the shared vision.
2. **Change vs. fear of change.**
    - Many see it as necessary to add senior housing, modest amenities, and more flexible development tools so Charlotte doesn't stagnate or become exclusive.
    - At least one respondent sees little risk of radical change and is comfortable with the current trajectory, which contradicts the sense of necessity others express around affordability and demographic change.
- **Preserving rural character vs. enabling development.**
    - People want to preserve views, farmlands, and habitat "at all costs," but also insist the town must "stop making it so hard to build" and must "build for seniors" and add village density.
    - The tension is not *whether* to grow, but in how far to relax barriers and infrastructure constraints without crossing a line that feels like sprawl or over-urbanization.
- **Consensus culture vs. moving forward.**
    - The vision relies on active planning and regulatory change (LURs, conservation tools, village density), but there is frustration with re-litigation and slow progress, even as some value striving for unanimous consent.
    - This points to a tension between a desire for broad buy-in on town direction and the need to make timely decisions to actually realize the shared vision.

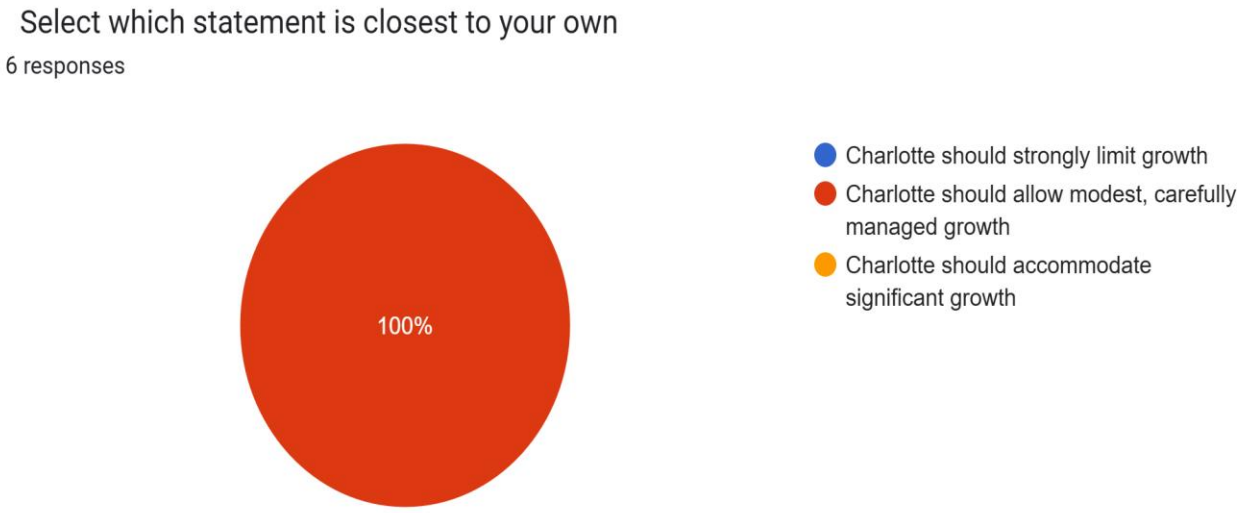
Discussion Questions

1. Why do you think your voice matters?
2. What would break your heart to see disappear?
3. What would make the next generation want to stay—or come back?
4. What do you hope guides this commission going forward?

SURVEY RESPONSES

Survey Responses - Section 1 Your Vision for Charlotte

What do you love about living in Charlotte today?
I love the natural beauty, sense of pride, proximity to Lake and mt philo and being out of Burlington but close enough.
the physical beauty, proximity to the lake and mountains, the people
First, this is Robert Bloch. I do not need this to be anonymous. That's the first thing I love about living here. Beyond that, I appreciate the world class scenery, small community environment and the remarkable percentage of really good people that live here.
I love so many things! Here's a few things. 1. The long family history. 2. The proximity to the world. Go in any direction and I can find or get anything needed. Here in Charlotte, or cities, and everything in between. 3. The foundation of Charlotte history. Always Agriculture! 4. The roadsides that gives a country feel. 5. The school in the middle of 2 Villages. 6. The people, young, old and in between. 7. Covered bridges and dirt roads. 8. The lake and parks. 9. Everything else:)
I love being able to walk out my door and see such a beautiful natural scene, driving on an ever changing dirt road, hearing owls hoot in the night, being around people who are so willing to help neighbors, and seeing people volunteering throughout the years to serve in positions in the town.
Rural landscape, roads, lack of traffic lights, libertarian land use with few public services, great school, great fire and rescue, public accesses to the Lake, great library, wonderful neighbors.

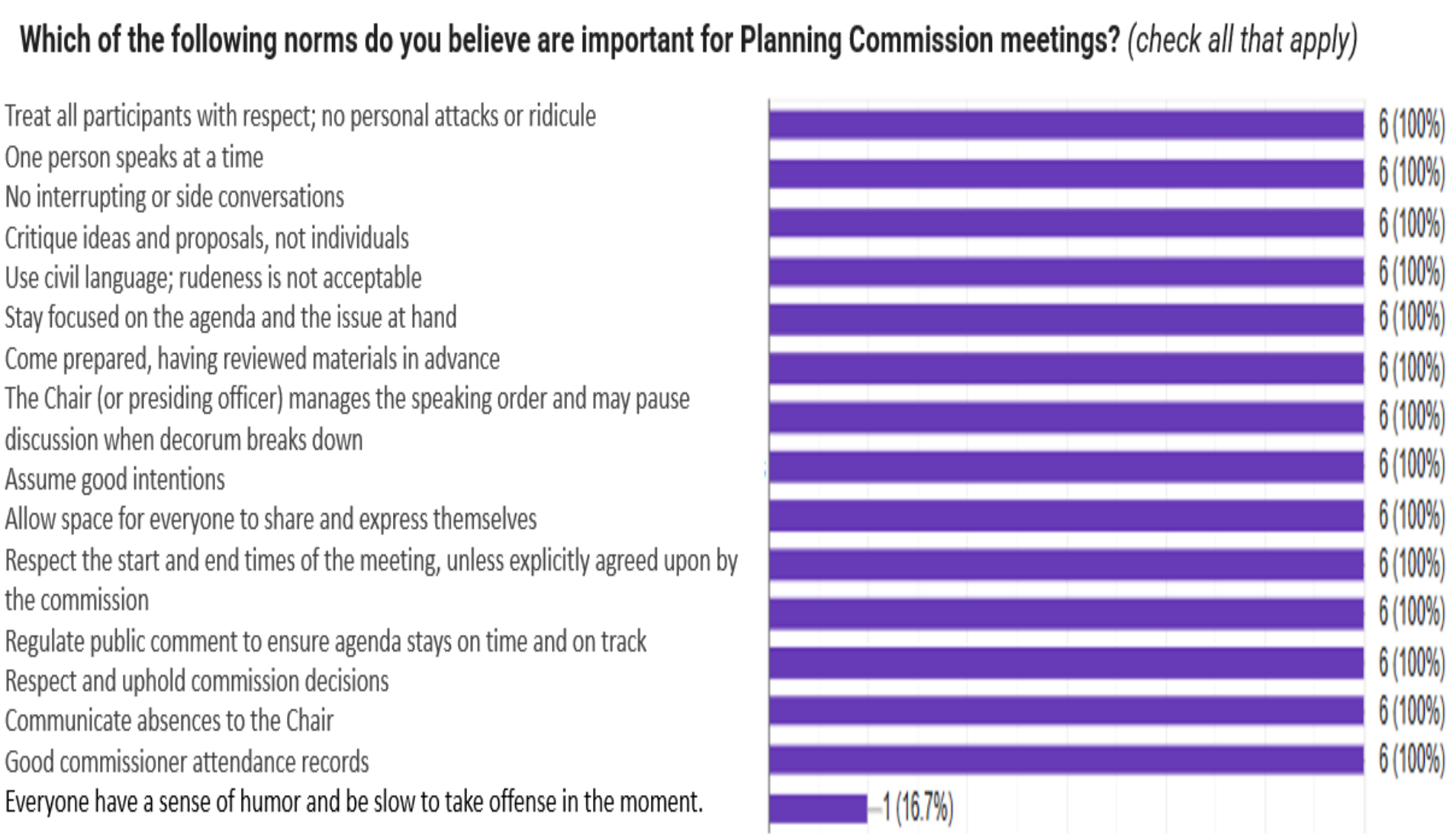


What are your top three priorities for Charlotte's physical development over the next 10-20 years? (For example, housing, transportation, amenities, recreation, services, conservation, climate resilience)	What are your top three concerns or fears about how Charlotte could change in the next 10-15 years?	What is one (or two) thing(s) you believe Charlotte must preserve at all costs over the next 20 years
1. Recreation -I'd like to see more trails developed and the lakefront more optimized. Bathhouse. Better access. And I'd like to see a community center that isn't just for seniors. I'd like to see a more mature Rec program than what we have. 2. Amenities - I'd like to be able to get/do more in charlotte than I can today. Maybe go to a doctor or vet or dentist. Go out for breakfast somewhere. Have a little hardware store. 3. Services - id like to see more done around water resources in charlotte so people aren't relying on wells that can easily dry and/contaminate. CCS run preschool.	1. That it doesn't change at all and we get nothing new in this town, requiring so much driving to do anything. 2. That big developments would in that would change the nature of the community. 3. That families are not able to live in charlotte and it becomes a haven only for the old and rich	The farm sheds and the library
infill in the West Village and preservation of agricultural aesthetic	sprawl in the rural area	farmlands and forest and water quality of the lake
senior housing, trails,	At this point I don't see much risk of radical change over the next 10-15 years. I hope I am right.	See first question plus, willingness of citizens to volunteer for community service.beco
1.Finding 3 places for Senior housing. Make a plan. 2. Build for seniors w the plan. 3. Build around the needs of seniors, planning some services. Any service for older will be needed for the younger as well.	1. Loss of views 2. Loss of agricultural lands 3. Loss of multiple generations	1. Views of the lake 2. Country, rural feel
Modest growth of housing for Sr. Citizens, strong protection of wildlife and habitat, including corridors and forest blocks.	Loss of wildlife habitat, distinctive character ,and becoming too expensive and unaffordable	Rural character, sense of community
Encouraging ADU development on existing single family dwelling lots for conservation of open space benefit, some modest increase in commercial amenities, more recreation infrastructure	Transition to a Public Works Department (water and/or sewer) or Highway Department or Town Manager or Police Department. Large rural sprawl developments.	Open Space (fields for agriculture)...including from neglect which increases the forested areas. Minimal municipal government size and scope. Robust income stream from Thompson's Point. Inexpensive public access to; trails, parks, beaches, library, senior center, etc.

What is one (or two) thing(s) you believe Charlotte must change at all costs over the next 20 years	In the next 2–3 years, what do you think the Planning Commission should focus on to support the long-term vision you described above?
How hard it is to build or develop anything. Solar takes ages. Trails take forever. Rec centers and doctors offices can't move forward. That has to change.	Thinking more deeply about how LURs can promote the type of growth we all want in Vt while keeping away what we don't want.
zoning--needs to be tied to incentives	how LURs can support both housing and conservation; LURs in support of ag accessory business
Nothing really	Becoming more efficient and effective in its work, enabling it to fully engage with its role.
1. Must build for Seniors	Explore the town, where building in 3 areas could happen. Discuss, what ifs, in each area. Create LURs that are clear and not overly costly for anyone. Balance.. Good, honest, truthful, transparent and in person conversations. I love Charlotte. I believe wholeheartedly about the Best interest of all. Balance:) We could take advantage of a few areas here in Charlotte. Build for seniors and in 5- 10 yrs the town will be set for 50 yrs. Agricultural and mostly sustainable;) In my opinion. I have more...the rest in person.
Same as above	Create more opportunities for indoor recreation during the winter months for all age groups.
Increased density in the Village Districts, lower barrier to entry to develop within the village districts, bringing in more families.	Thompson's Point LUR amendments, starting and managing an endowment where income generated from the principal can support local micro-grants to incentivize it's priorities. Convincing the Selectboard to more robustly fund the conservation fund to increase conservation easements.

Section 2- Decorum and Norms

What is one thing the Commission is currently doing well in its meetings?
Pushing LURs and town plan to vote
hearing everyone's opinions
n/a
Having Lindsay and her excellent prep work for us and the community.
The free exchange of opinions and ideas for discussion.
developing agendas together, moving forward on an agreed upon schedule, listening to everyone and striving for unanimous consent.



Are there any additional ground rules or meeting norms you think are necessary for the Commission to work effectively and respectfully?	What helps the Planning Commission do its best work? What gets in the way?	What meeting behaviors make it harder for you to fully participate in the Planning Commission?
I think there needs to be an expectation that if you don't follow the rules you can be kicked off the commission	Helps- Sticking to clear objectives set in the agenda. Modest agendas that allow ample time on a topic. Hurts- when agendas are packed and we can't get through everything or don't have enough time for things. When members of the public take way too much air time. When members revisit past decisions.	Whining of commission members. Not respecting my time via meetings consistently running late and revisiting topics over and over.
ground rules need to be presented at start of every meeting	Seeding doubt in the process and its outcomes gets in the way	individual desires and opinions over the greater good of the twon
no	lack of preparedness; individuals indulging in telling mildly relevant anecdotes	see above, and realize that I have probably done all the things I wish we would do less.
Maybe a quick, 2 sentences, around the table, of something nice that has happened since we saw each other. Maybe w a smile. We are 7 people doing very important work. I believe we should be working together, not against! We have different opinions but we can still be friends. We are neighbors. We are looking at the community as a whole...Our wildlife areas, our children, our elders, the middle, our businesses and all the things Charlotte is blessed with .	Discussion around the history of Charlotte, along side the town plan, Will help us do our best work going forward.	?
work in good faith on the issues	when people work together and agree on process. When people re-litigate issues that were already decided by the commission because they disagreed with it at the time	

What is one thing you hope the commission does more of in the future?	What is one thing you hope the commission does less of in the future?	How would you like the Commission to handle situations when someone violates the agreed-upon norms (e.g., repeated interrupting, personal attacks, rude behavior, frequent absences)?
Stick to agendas and adhere to decisions made. Less engagement from public that what occurs now	Allow some members to set toxic culture and bogart decision. Revisiting decisions.	They should be given two warnings then required to leave.
asks--is this benefitting all Charlotters	caters to disruptors	if behavior happen in the meeting--gentle reminder of agreed upon norms
Cookies and other treats	Meetings with no cookies or treats	The beatings will continue until morale improves.
Relax and trust each other.	Hard question!	Ask them to leave the commission.
Have a preliminary informal opportunity to socialize with one another in advance of the first meeting of the term		Ask them to change their behavior at the time it occurs, and offer a future opportunity to discuss the topic before a final decision is made.
move on when there's a majority of the board and not wait for unanimous consent on everything	distracts topics with tangential conversations	address it at the time and if it is persistent to write a group signed letter to the selectboard