



LEAGUE OF  
**CALIFORNIA**  
**CITIES**

**125** / **YEARS**  
1898-2023

# Planning Commissioners **ACADEMY**

March 6-8, 2024  
Long Beach, CA



# WEDNESDAY, MARCH 6

9:00 a.m. - 5:30 p.m.

Registration Open  
Promenade

10:00 a.m. - noon

Understanding Public Service Ethics Laws and Principles (AB 1234)  
International Ballroom

*Sign-in will begin 30 minutes prior to the session and you must be present for the full two hours to receive the certification of attendance. Entry will be prohibited once the session begins.*

State law requires elected and appointed officials to receive two hours of training in specified ethics laws and principles every two years. Newly elected and appointed officials must receive this training within one year of becoming a public servant. Join us to learn from an expert on how to navigate ethics laws and principles.

*The Institute for Local Government is a State Bar of California minimum continuing legal education (MCLE) approved provider and certifies this activity meets the standards for MCLE credit by the State Bar of California in the total amount of two hours (general credits). Provider #13881*

**Speakers:** Aleks Giragosian, Senior Counsel, Colantuono, Highsmith & Whatley, PC  
Matthew C. Slentz, Senior Counsel, Colantuono, Highsmith & Whatley, PC

noon - 1:00 p.m.

Lunch on Your Own

1:00 - 2:30 p.m.

Opening General Session  
International Ballroom



## Zap Negativity and Ignite Your Life

In the dynamic landscape of work and life, the principles of fair play are in constant flux, often leaving individuals feeling depleted. The ever-shifting rules create a breeding ground for negativity, a trap that many easily fall into. Barbara, however, is here to guide you out of this trap and unveil proven techniques for cultivating a rewarding and positive environment. Embark on a laugh-filled, fast-paced, and motivating journey as Barbara shares insights on building a robust foundation for success both at work and at home. She will impart strategies for fostering a resilient "Get over it and get on with it" attitude, steering clear of the emotional negativity projected by others, and discovering and igniting your enthusiasm.

**Opening Remarks:** Benjamin Yee, President, Planning and Community Development Department and Planning Commissioner, Fremont

**Keynote Speaker:** Barbara Khozam, Customer Service Speaker, Trainer, Author, Consultant

Find session materials online at  
[www.calcities.org/PCA](http://www.calcities.org/PCA)

**WiFi Network:** Hilton Honors Meeting  
**Passcode:** Planners2024

# WEDNESDAY, MARCH 6

## *Fundamentals*

2:45 - 4:00 p.m.  
Concurrent Session

### **CEQA: Basics** International Ballroom

Hear an introduction about the role of the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA) and join us as we pull back the curtain on parts of the process, including the types of documents you will see, how environmental decisions are made, and the responsibilities of staff and the commission at each stage in the process. The tools and approaches taken by those who prepare the documents for your review will also be discussed.

**Moderator and Speaker:** Mark Teague, Managing Principal, PlaceWorks

**Speaker:** Shannon George, Vice President/Principal, David J. Powers & Associates

## *Emerging Issues*

2:45 - 4:00 p.m.  
Concurrent Session

### **Managing Public Meetings in a Contentious Era** Gallerie

Public meetings influence how the planning commission is perceived by your residents. Meeting management strategies can make commission meetings more effective and promote an image of efficiency and transparency. In this session, a community development director, a city attorney, and a planning commissioner will share tips for minimizing disruptions, facilitating public participation, and fostering a thoughtful-yet-convivial atmosphere during planning commission meetings.

**Moderator:** Debbie Chamberlain, Immediate Past President, Planning and Community Development Department and Community Development Director, San Ramon

**Speakers:** Brendan Kearns, Deputy City Attorney, Los Angeles

Larry J. Koman, Second Vice President, Planning and Community Development Department and Planning Commissioner, Bakersfield

Talyn Mirzakhanian, Community Development Director, Manhattan Beach

## *Fundamentals*

4:15 - 5:30 p.m.  
Concurrent Session

### **Planning Commission 101: The Nuts and Bolts of Planning** International Ballroom

Commissioners will learn the basics about planning laws, typical planning documents, and how they fit together. Speakers who have worked as planning staff, planning commissioners, and consultants will introduce the nuts and bolts of General Plans, Housing Elements, Specific Plans, zoning codes, subdivision ordinances, design review, the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA), and will walk commissioners through typical project review and decision-making processes. Participants will also learn how plans, codes and regulations can be written to ensure that principles of sustainability, equity and community-building are incorporated in new development.

**Moderator and Speaker:** David Early, Senior Advisor, PlaceWorks

**Speakers:** Julia Malisos, Principal - Planning/Community Design, WHA - Architects, Planners, Designers  
Marc Roberts, Member, California Planning Roundtable

## WEDNESDAY, MARCH 6

### *Emerging Issues*

4:15 - 5:30 p.m.

#### Extended Speed Sessions Gallerie

**Moderator:** *Larry J. Koman, Second Vice President, Planning and Community Development Department and Planning Commissioner, Bakersfield*

##### **A Planning Commissioner's Guide to Cal Cities** (4:15 - 4:50 p.m.)

Ever wonder exactly how and why Cal Cities takes a position on a bill? Or maybe you're curious about the resources available to you as a planning commissioner. In this session, members of Cal Cities staff will discuss the process by which Cal Cities policy is developed. On Friday, you'll have a chance to hear about some of the latest bills affecting planning commissioners in the Legislative Update. Staff will also provide resources and ways for you to get more involved and get the most out of your membership in the organization and the planning and community development department.

**Speakers:** *Kristine Guerrero, Regional Public Affairs Manager/Los Angeles County Division Legislative Director, League of California Cities*  
*Meghan McKelvey, Department and Member Services Senior Manager, League of California Cities*

##### **Burning Questions, No Judgment** (4:55 - 5:30 p.m.)

Have a question that you are afraid to ask in a public meeting, or feel that you should already know the answer to? Join us in a safe environment and receive answers to your most burning questions.

**Speakers:** *Debbie Chamberlain, Immediate Past President, Planning and Community Development Department and Community Development Director, San Ramon*  
*Robert Combs, Planning Commissioner, Danville*

5:30 - 6:30 p.m.

#### Networking Reception Catalina

Make new friends and catch up with old ones while enjoying delicious appetizers and tasty beverages during the evening networking reception. It's the perfect opportunity to form support networks inside your profession.

## 2023 - 2024 Planning and Community Development Department Officers

*President, Benjamin Yee, Planning Commissioner, Fremont*

*First Vice President, Anita D. Gutierrez, AICP, City Manager, Pomona*

*Second Vice President, Larry J. Koman, Planning Commissioner, Bakersfield*

*Department Director, Eric A. Nelson, Planning Commissioner, Dana Point*

*Immediate Past President, Debbie Chamberlain, Community Development Director, San Ramon*

# THURSDAY, MARCH 7

7:30 a.m. - 4:30 p.m.	<b>Registration Open</b> Promenade
7:45 - 8:45 a.m.	<b>Networking Breakfast</b> Catalina
8:00 a.m. - 5:30 p.m.	<b>Elite Sponsor Tables Open</b> Promenade
9:00 - 10:15 a.m.	<b>How has the Recent Streamlining of Housing Laws Redefined the Role of Planning Commissioner?</b> International Ballroom <p>Since the passage of recent bills streamlining housing applications, the role of planning commissioner has undergone significant changes. The bills include SB35 and SB 330, as well as changes to the Density Bonus Laws, and amendments to the Housing Accountability Act. These new laws restrict the commission's discretion and impose subjective standards and conditions of approval. Is the General Plan still the constitution for development and how does the commission currently apply it, along with the zoning code, to housing projects affected by these laws? Additionally, explore the resurgence of interest in Builder's Remedy, despite its inception in 1990. Learn how this part of the Housing Accountability Act has been used in jurisdictions without a certified Housing Element.</p> <p><b>Moderator:</b> Eric A. Nelson, Department Director, Planning and Community Development Department and Planning Commissioner, Dana Point <b>Speakers:</b> Patricia Curtin, Public Agency/Land Use Attorney, Fennemore Wendel Barbara Ehrlich Kautz, Partner, Goldfarb &amp; Lipman LLP Amara Morrison, Director, Fennemore Wendel</p>
	<i>Fundamentals</i>
10:30 - 11:45 a.m. Concurrent Session	<b>Relationship Between Planning Commission, City Council, and Planning Staff</b> International Ballroom <p>As a city official, there will be various competing values and priorities that drive you and your colleagues within your city. Your success on the planning commission requires an effective relationship with your planning staff and city council, where everyone's values are respected and represented. Learn how to work together while cultivating each of your diverse roles.</p> <p><b>Moderator:</b> Meghan McKelvey, Department and Member Services Senior Manager, League of California Cities <b>Speakers:</b> Debbie Chamberlain, Immediate Past President, Planning and Community Development Department and Community Development Director, San Ramon Lily Mei, Mayor, Fremont Eric A. Nelson, Department Director, Planning and Community Development Department and Planning Commissioner, Dana Point</p>
	<i>Emerging Issues</i>
10:30 - 11:45 a.m. Concurrent Session	<b>CEQA: Advanced</b> Gallerie <p>This session assumes some familiarity with the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA). Hear an in-depth discussion on crafting mitigation measures, long- and short-term impacts, and how the CEQA landscape changes with legislation, court decisions, and agency preferences. Dive into why CEQA documents look the way they do, the role of findings, and what to do with late-hit letters. Finally, some of the more technical sections of the document will be demystified.</p> <p><b>Moderator and Speaker:</b> Mark Teague, Managing Principal, PlaceWorks <b>Speaker:</b> Shannon George, Vice President/Principal, David J. Powers &amp; Associates</p>

# THURSDAY, MARCH 7

11:45 a.m. - 1:00 p.m.

## Networking Lunch

Catalina (overflow seating in International Ballroom)

1:15 - 2:30 p.m.

## Planning Commissioner Jeopardy

International Ballroom

The session will run in a game show format similar to Jeopardy. Attendees will be presented with an answer and will be given an opportunity to respond in a question. The Jeopardy hosts will work through five different categories with difficulty ranging from 100 to 500 points. Categories will include: Brown Act (with emphasis placed on Social Media), Conflicts of Interest, Housing, Parliamentary Procedure, and Constitutional Issues. Winning participants will be eligible for prizes!

**Moderator:** Joel Rojas, Development Services Director, San Juan Capistrano

**Facilitators:** Henry Castillo, Associate, Best Best & Krieger LLP

Albert J. Maldonado, Associate, Best Best & Krieger LLP

## Fundamentals

2:45 - 4:00 p.m.

Concurrent Session

## Becoming an Effective Commissioner: Navigating Staff Relations and Approaches to Policy Implementation and Decision-Making

International Ballroom

Planning commissions play a pivotal role in shaping the future of communities. Their decisions influence land use, development, infrastructure, and policies that impact the quality of life for residents. To be an effective Planning Commissioner, it is crucial to understand the intricacies of the role, responsibilities, and restrictions that come with it. This session aims to provide comprehensive insights and guidance to current and aspiring commissioners, helping them make informed and impactful decisions while fostering strong staff relations and effectively implementing policies.

**Moderator:** Anita D. Gutierrez, First Vice President, Planning and Community Development Department and City Manager, Pomona

**Speakers:** Henry Castillo, Associate, Best Best & Krieger LLP

Larissa De La Cruz, Director of Community Development, Lancaster

### Save The Dates:

2024 ANNUAL CONFERENCE AND EXPO

OCT. 16-18 | LONG BEACH CONVENTION CENTER

2025 PLANNING COMMISSIONERS ACADEMY

MARCH 5-7 | HYATT REGENCY SONOMA, SANTA ROSA

# THURSDAY, MARCH 7

## *Emerging Issues*

2:45 - 4:00 p.m.  
Concurrent Session

### The Tip of the Iceberg: Everything that Happens Before the Public Hearing Gallerie

Ever wonder what's beneath the surface of a staff report? This session pulls back the curtain on the extensive groundwork that goes into entitlement projects—long before they reach the public hearing stage. Designed specifically for commissioners, this session aims to deepen your understanding of the intricate planning process that precedes the meeting. Attendees will gain a comprehensive overview of the discretionary planning journey, from initial application to final design. Learn how projects transform and adapt as a result of applying engineering, building, design, and other city standards. The panel of veteran city planners will demystify the entitlement process, tackle frequently asked questions, and offer actionable insights on how commissioners can proactively collaborate with staff to stay in the loop before a project hits the public hearing.

**Moderator:** *Stephanie Tomaino, CEO & Managing Principal, City Advisors*

**Speakers:** *Katie L. Crockett, Planning Manager, Laguna Niguel*  
*Gustavo Gonzalez, Community Development Director, Eastvale*  
*Sean Nicholas, Principal Planner, Anaheim*

4:15 - 5:30 p.m.

### How to Apply Objective Standards to Comply with State Law and Retain Local Control

International Ballroom

State housing legislation requires that cities review certain housing projects solely against "objective zoning standards," "objective subdivision standards" and "objective design standards." Consequently, cities can only use objective standards to deny or adjust the density of certain housing projects. This session will explain the state requirements regarding the utilization of objective standards, identifying the types of objective standards cities can employ to comply with state law while ensuring that new developments align with the jurisdiction's vision. Explore techniques for objectively evaluating design, distinguishing between design guidelines and standards, and applying various approaches to develop standards that are both measurable and verifiable. This session will expand on last year's objective standards session.

**Moderator:** *Joel Rojas, Development Services Director, San Juan Capistrano*

**Speakers:** *Julia Malisos, Principal - Planning/Community Design, WHA - Architects, Planners, Designers*  
*Ricardo Soto, Principal Planner, Santa Ana*

# FRIDAY, MARCH 8

7:45 - 10:00 a.m.	<b>Registration Open</b> Promenade
7:45 - 8:45 a.m.	<b>Networking Breakfast</b> Catalina
8:45 - 10:00 a.m.	<b>Legislative Update</b> International Ballroom Learn about recent bills that have passed, as well as top issues that are trending in the legislature, and their significance for planning commissioners. <b>Closing Remarks:</b> Anita D. Gutierrez, First Vice President, Planning and Community Development Department and City Manager, Pomona <b>Speaker:</b> Brady Guertin, Legislative Representative, Housing, Community, and Economic Development, League of California Cities
10:15 a.m. - 12:15 p.m.	<b>Harassment Prevention Training for Supervisors and Officials (AB 1661)</b> International Ballroom Sign-in will begin 30 minutes prior to the session and you must be present for the full two hours to receive the certification of attendance. Entry will be prohibited once the session begins. This informational and interactive workplace harassment prevention training will focus on current and emerging issues, and teach officials and supervisors how to identify, prevent, and properly respond to workplace harassment, discrimination, retaliation, and abusive conduct in order to avoid personal and agency liability in compliance with AB 1825, AB 2053, AB 1661, and SB 396. The Institute for Local Government is a State Bar of California minimum continuing legal education (MCLE) approved provider and certifies this activity meets the standards for MCLE credit by the State Bar of California in the total amount of two hours (general credits). Provider #13881 <b>Speaker:</b> Jacqueline Wade, Attorney, Best Best & Krieger LLP

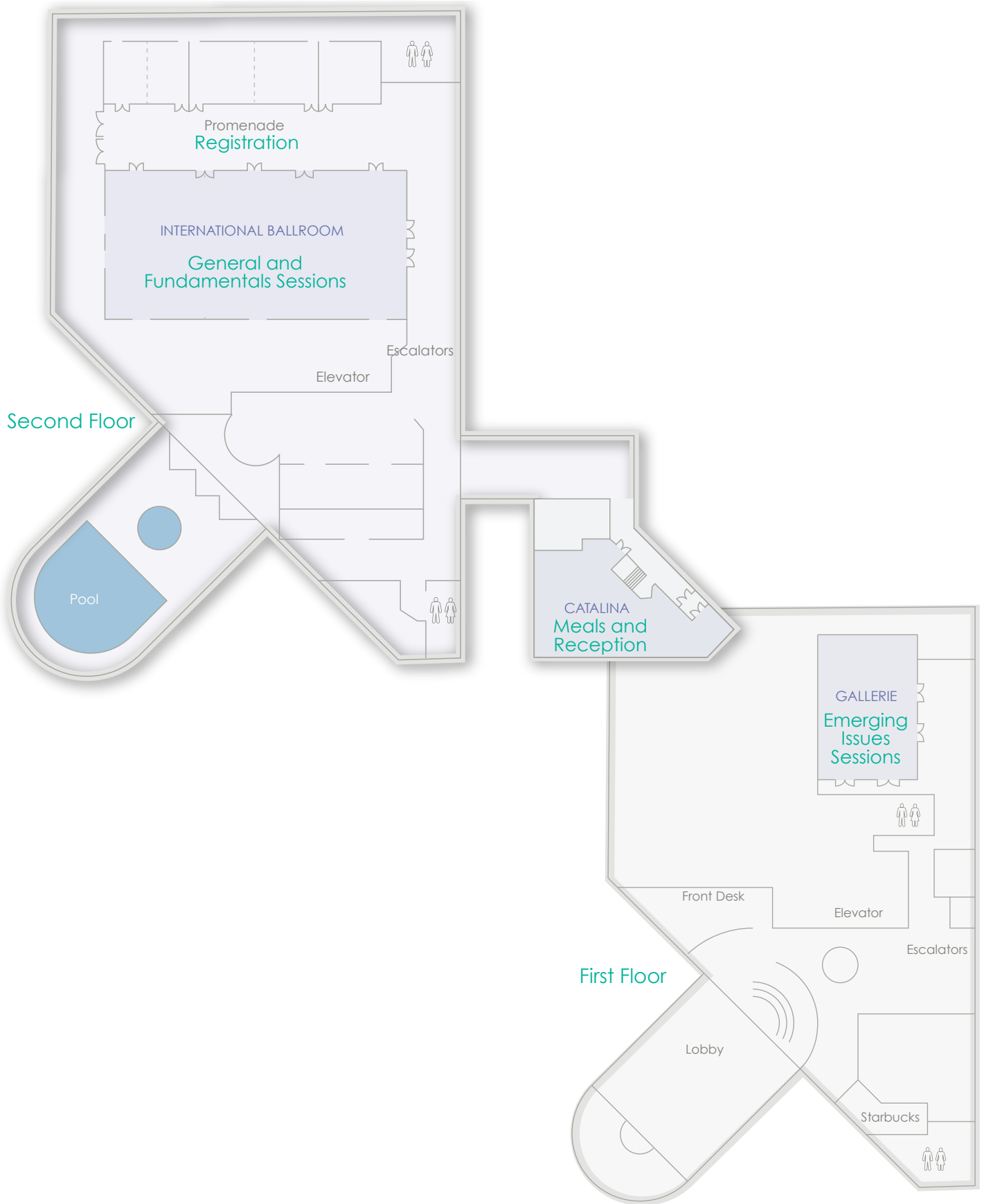
## SHARE YOUR THOUGHTS!

Send us your [feedback](#) on the academy by scanning this QR code.





# FLOOR PLAN



125 / YEARS  
1898-2023

Strengthening California Cities  
through **Advocacy** and **Education**