

# **Zoning Hearing Boards and Planning Commissions are in place to protect the quality of life not to be rubber stamps**

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*(Latest post on neighborhoods and city government)*

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Gadfly,

It is critical that residents be made aware of potential “quality of life” issues in their immediate area, because at some time or another nearly every neighborhood is impacted. Even more important is that members of both the ZHB and Planning Commission listen intently to the concerns being expressed. City officials, both elected and appointed, also need to keep their ears to the ground. First and foremost, zoning is meant to protect and limit, yet the folks who are seeking the kinds of variances sought seem to think the zoning laws are only suggested protections. Individually these variances often don’t seem harmful, and they are granted almost pro forma. For example, a request to allow a setback for a backyard shed to be reduced by 2 feet seems pretty harmless. However, when one begins to take a look at the cumulative affect of variances granted, particularly use variances, you can see that the overall quality of life of a community can be impacted negatively. For those who reside in a municipality over longer periods of time, that

cumulative effect is obvious. ZHBs and Planning Commissions are in place to protect this quality of life, yet many times they come across as rubber stamps because they seldom look at the bigger picture, or put themselves in the place of those who oppose. That is when they fail the community they are supposed to be protecting.

Dana