

# **WEST VIRGINIA LEGISLATURE**

## **2025 REGULAR SESSION**

**Enrolled**

**Committee Substitute**

**for**

**Senate Bill 459**

BY SENATORS THORNE, HELTON, HAMILTON, AND WILLIS

[Passed April 7, 2025; in effect 90 days from passage

(July 6, 2025)]



1 AN ACT to amend and reenact §8A-2-3, §8A-2-4, and §8A-2-5 of the Code of West Virginia, 1931,  
2 as amended, relating to requiring that members of municipal, county, and other planning  
3 commissions meet certain residency requirements; mandating that members of municipal  
4 and county planning commissions be West Virginia residents for the three years  
5 immediately preceding the appointment; requiring that such members be residents of the  
6 county or municipality in which the planning commission to which they are appointed is  
7 situated for a certain time period prior to appointment; requiring that members of  
8 multicounty, regional, and joint planning commissions be residents of the jurisdiction of  
9 the planning commission to which they are appointed for at least three years immediately  
10 preceding the appointment; and prohibiting members of planning commissions who do not  
11 meet residency requirements from remaining on the planning commission.

*Be it enacted by the Legislature of West Virginia:*

## **ARTICLE 2. PLANNING COMMISSIONS.**

### **§8A-2-3. Municipal planning commission.**

1 (a) A municipal planning commission in a Class I, II, or III city shall have not less than five  
2 nor more than 15 members, the exact number to be specified in the ordinance creating the  
3 planning commission. A municipal planning commission in a Class IV town or village shall have  
4 not less than three nor more than nine members, the exact number to be specified in the  
5 ordinance creating the planning commission.

6 (b) Each member of a municipal planning commission must be:

7 (1) A West Virginia resident who has maintained continuous West Virginia residency for  
8 the three years immediately preceding his or her appointment;

9 (2) A resident of the municipality for one year immediately preceding his or her  
10 appointment; and

11 (3) Qualified by knowledge and experience in matters pertaining to the development of the  
12 municipality.

13 (c) Any member who does not meet the requirements stated in subsection (b) of this  
14 section may not be grandfathered in, and may not be or remain a member of the planning  
15 commission.

16 (d) At least three fifths of all of the members must have been residents of the municipality  
17 for at least three years prior to nomination or appointment and confirmation.

18 (e) The members of a municipal planning commission must fairly represent different areas  
19 of interest, knowledge, and expertise, including, but not limited to, business, industry, labor,  
20 government, and other relevant disciplines. One member must be a member of the municipal  
21 governing body or a designee and one member must be a member of the administrative  
22 department of the municipality or a designee. The term of membership for these two members is  
23 the same as their term of office.

24 (f) The Legislature finds that there are persons willing to serve on planning commissions  
25 who may also own interests in businesses that regularly conduct business in front of or with  
26 planning commission staff. Such persons may have experience and expertise which would be  
27 valuable assets to a planning commission. For those reasons, notwithstanding any other  
28 provisions in this code to the contrary, any person employed by, owning an interest in, or  
29 otherwise associated with a business that regularly conducts business in front of or with planning  
30 commission staff may also serve as a member of a planning commission and shall not be  
31 disqualified from serving as a member because of a conflict of interest as defined in §61-10-15 of  
32 this code and shall not be subject to prosecution under provisions of that chapter when the  
33 violation is created solely as a result of his or her relationship with the business. This member  
34 must recuse himself or herself from any vote, discussion, participation, or other activity regarding  
35 the conflicting issue.

36 (g) The Legislature finds that there are persons willing to serve on planning commissions  
37 who may also own interests in businesses who regularly conduct business in front of or with  
38 planning commission staff. Such persons may have experience and expertise which would be

valuable assets to a planning commission. For those reasons, notwithstanding any other provisions in this code to the contrary, any person employed by, owning an interest in, or otherwise associated with a business that regularly conducts business in front of or with planning commission staff may also serve as a member of a planning commission and shall not be in violation of §6B-2-5(g) of this code if the member recuses himself or herself from any vote, discussion, participation, or other activity regarding the conflicting issue: *Provided*, That such members do not constitute a majority of the members of the planning commission at the same time.

(h) The remaining members of the municipal planning commission first selected shall serve respectively for terms of one year, two years, and three years, divided equally or as nearly equally as possible between these terms. Thereafter, members shall serve three-year terms. Vacancies shall be filled for the unexpired term and made in the same manner as original selections were made.

(i) The members of a municipal planning commission shall serve without compensation, but shall be reimbursed for all reasonable and necessary expenses actually incurred in the performance of their official duties.

(j) Nominations for municipal planning commission membership shall be made by the administrative authority and confirmed by the governing body when the administrative authority and the governing body are separate, or appointed and confirmed by the governing body where the administrative authority and governing body are the same.

(k) An individual may serve as a member of a municipal planning commission, a county planning commission, a multicounty planning commission, a regional planning commission, or a joint planning commission, at the same time.

(l) The governing body of the municipality may establish procedures for the removal of members of the planning commission for inactivity, neglect of duty, or malfeasance. The

64 procedures must contain provisions requiring that the person to be removed be provided with a  
65 written statement of the reasons for removal and an opportunity to be heard on the matter.

**§8A-2-4. County planning commission.**

1 (a) A county planning commission shall have not less than five nor more than 15 members,  
2 the exact number to be specified in the ordinance creating the planning commission.

3 (b) Each member of a county planning commission must be:

4 (1) A West Virginia resident who has maintained continuous West Virginia residency for  
5 the three years immediately preceding his or her appointment;

6 (2) A resident of the county for one year immediately preceding his or her appointment;  
7 and

8 (3) Qualified by knowledge and experience in matters pertaining to the development of the  
9 county.

10 (c) Any member who does not meet the requirements stated in subsection (b) of this  
11 section may not be grandfathered in, and may not be or remain a member of the planning  
12 commission.

13 (d) At least three fifths of all of the members must have been residents of the county for  
14 at least three years prior to appointment and confirmation by the county commission.

15 (e) The members of a county planning commission must fairly represent different areas of  
16 interest, knowledge, and expertise, including, but not limited to, business, industry, labor, farming,  
17 government, and other relevant disciplines. One member must be a member of the county  
18 commission or a designee. The term of membership for this member is the same as the term of  
19 office.

20 (f) The Legislature finds that there are persons willing to serve on planning commissions  
21 who may also own interests in businesses that regularly conduct business in front of or with  
22 planning commission staff. Such persons may have experience and expertise which would be  
23 valuable assets to a planning commission. For those reasons, notwithstanding any other

provisions in this code to the contrary, any person employed by, owning an interest in, or otherwise associated with a business that regularly conducts business in front of or with planning commission staff may also serve as a member of a planning commission and shall not be disqualified from serving as a member because of a conflict of interest as defined in §61-10-15 of this code and shall not be subject to prosecution under provisions of that chapter when the violation is created solely as a result of his or her relationship with the business. This member must recuse himself or herself from any vote, discussion, participation, or other activity regarding the conflicting issue.

(g) The Legislature finds that there are persons willing to serve on planning commissions who may also own interests in businesses who regularly conduct business in front of or with planning commission staff. Such persons may have experience and expertise which would be valuable assets to a planning commission. For those reasons, notwithstanding any other provisions in this code to the contrary, any person employed by, owning an interest in, or otherwise associated with a business that regularly conducts business in front of or with planning commission staff may also serve as a member of a planning commission and shall not be in violation of §6B-2-5(g) of this code if the member recuses himself or herself from any vote, discussion, participation, or other activity regarding the conflicting issue: *Provided*, That such members do not constitute a majority of the members of the planning commission at the same time.

(h) The remaining members of the county planning commission first selected shall serve respectively for terms of one year, two years, and three years, divided equally or as nearly equally as possible between these terms. Thereafter, members shall serve three-year terms. Vacancies shall be filled for the unexpired term and made in the same manner as original selections were made.

(i) The members of a county planning commission shall serve without compensation, but shall be reimbursed for all reasonable and necessary expenses actually incurred in the performance of their official duties.

(j) Appointments for county planning commission membership shall be made and confirmed by the county commission.

(k) An individual may serve as a member of a municipal planning commission, a county planning commission, a multicounty planning commission, a regional planning commission, or a joint planning commission, at the same time.

(l) The county commission may establish procedures for the removal of members of the planning commission for inactivity, neglect of duty, or malfeasance. The procedures must contain provisions requiring that the person to be removed be provided with a written statement of the reasons for removal and an opportunity to be heard on the matter.

**§8A-2-5. Multicounty planning commission, regional planning commission, or joint planning commission.**

(a) A multicounty planning commission, a regional planning commission, or a joint planning commission shall have not less than five nor more than 15 members, the exact number to be specified in the ordinance creating the planning commission.

(b) Each member of a multicounty planning commission, a regional planning commission, or a joint planning commission must be:

(1) A resident of the jurisdiction of the multicounty planning commission, regional planning commission, or joint planning commission for at least three years immediately preceding his or her appointment; and

(2) Qualified by knowledge and experience in matters pertaining to the development of the jurisdiction.



11 (c) Any member who does not meet the requirements stated in subsection (b) of this  
12 section may not be grandfathered in, and may not be or remain a member of the planning  
13 commission.

14 (d) The members of a multicounty planning commission, a regional planning commission,  
15 or a joint planning commission must equally represent the jurisdictions in the planning  
16 commission.

17 (e) The members of a multicounty planning commission, a regional planning commission,  
18 or a joint planning commission must fairly represent different areas of interest, knowledge, and  
19 expertise, including, but not limited to, business, industry, labor, farming, government, and other  
20 relevant disciplines. Each governing body participating in the planning commission must have  
21 one member from its governing body on the planning commission. The term of membership for  
22 this member is the same as the term of office.

23 (f) The Legislature finds that there are persons willing to serve on planning commissions  
24 who may also own interests in businesses that regularly conduct business in front of or with  
25 planning commission staff. Such persons may have experience and expertise which would be  
26 valuable assets to a planning commission. For those reasons, notwithstanding any other  
27 provisions in this code to the contrary, any person employed by, owning an interest in, or  
28 otherwise associated with a business that regularly conducts business in front of or with planning  
29 commission staff may also serve as a member of a planning commission and shall not be  
30 disqualified from serving as a member because of a conflict of interest as defined in §61-10-15 of  
31 this code and shall not be subject to prosecution under provisions of that chapter when the  
32 violation is created solely as a result of his or her relationship with the business. This member  
33 must recuse himself or herself from any vote, discussion, participation, or other activity regarding  
34 the conflicting issue.

35 (g) The Legislature finds that there are persons willing to serve on planning commissions  
36 who may also own interests in businesses who regularly conduct business in front of or with  
37 planning commission staff. Such persons may have experience and expertise which would be

valuable assets to a planning commission. For those reasons, notwithstanding any other provisions in this code to the contrary, any person employed by, owning an interest in, or otherwise associated with a business that regularly conducts business in front of or with planning commission staff may also serve as a member of a planning commission and shall not be in violation of §6B-2-5(g) of this code if the member recuses himself or herself from any vote, discussion, participation, or other activity regarding the conflicting issue: *Provided*, That such members do not constitute a majority of the members of the planning commission at the same time.

(h) The remaining members of the multicounty planning commission, regional planning commission or joint planning commission first selected shall serve respectively for terms of one year, two years, and three years, divided equally or as nearly equally as possible between these terms. Thereafter, members shall serve three-year terms. Vacancies shall be filled for the unexpired term and made in the same manner as original selections were made.

(i) The members of a multicounty planning commission, a regional planning commission, or a joint planning commission shall serve without compensation, but shall be reimbursed for all reasonable and necessary expenses actually incurred in the performance of their official duties.

(j) Appointments for a multicounty planning commission, a regional planning commission, or a joint planning commission membership shall be made and confirmed by each governing body participating in the planning commission.

(k) An individual may serve as a member of a municipal planning commission, a county planning commission, a multicounty planning commission, a regional planning commission, or a joint planning commission, at the same time.

(l) The governing bodies may establish procedures for the removal of members of the planning commission for inactivity, neglect of duty, or malfeasance. The procedures must contain provisions requiring that the person to be removed be provided with a written statement of the reasons for removal and an opportunity to be heard on the matter.

The Clerk of the Senate and the Clerk of the House of Delegates hereby certify that the foregoing bill is correctly enrolled.

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*Clerk of the Senate*

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*Clerk of the House of Delegates*

Originated in the Senate.

In effect 90 days from passage.

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*President of the Senate*

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*Speaker of the House of Delegates*

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The within is ..... this the.....  
Day of ....., 2025.

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*Governor*