

APA Suncoast Section Expert Witness Seminar

On February 23, 2018, the Suncoast Section of the Florida American Planning Association conducted a half day seminar titled "Serving as an Expert Witness – Strategies and Techniques for Planners." The event was held in the Hillsborough Board of County Commissioners Chambers and was organized and sponsored by Mark Bentley with Johnson Pope.

The seminar included an expert panel of attorneys, planners and hearing officers from Hillsborough, Pinellas and Orange counties who covered preparation tips, legal analysis and recommendations on how planners may prepare their reports, may be deposed, as well as present and testify in administrative and legal proceedings.

The seminar also covered the types of cases in which planners are needed, their roles in mediation and dispute resolution proceedings, and a discussion concerning legal standards and burdens of proof. During the seminar a role play of a planner being questioned during a legal proceeding was conducted by attorneys to demonstrate the proper technique, demeanor and level of preparedness necessary for a planner to serve as an effective expert witness.

Mark Bentley presented the planner's role in an eminent domain case, and administrative proceedings, and Mark also explained the role planners can play in dispute resolution processes, including the "Florida Land Use and Environmental Dispute Resolution Act."

