

PLANNING COMMISSION MEETING MINUTES



HYBRID/REMOTE AND IN-PERSON AT THE MILL

November 19, 2025

CALL TO ORDER: 6:00 PM by Chair Janice Huxford

MEMBERS PRESENT: Chair Janice Huxford, Vice-Chair Jennifer Davis, Commissioner Mike Duerr, Commissioner Nathan Packard, Commissioner Connor Davis and Council Liaison Ryan Donoghue

MEMBERS ABSENT: Commissioner Morton was absent. Commissioner Connor Davis moved to excuse him, and Commissioner Duerr seconded. The motion passed unanimously.

STAFF PRESENT: Principal Planner David Levitan, Planning Manager Christi Schmidt, Planning Director Russ Wright, Administrative Assistant Dawn Erickson

OTHERS PRESENT: Several members of the public were in the audience.

Chair Huxford called the meeting to order at 6:00 p.m. and led the Pledge of Allegiance.

Roll Call: As noted above.

Guest business: Ray Welk commented on the mixed-use building on 20th St NE and Main St, commenting that he feels this development will add too much traffic to the area, and is not consistent with the Comprehensive Plan.

Approval of Minutes: The November 5, 2025 meeting minutes were unanimously approved as written, with Commissioner Packard moving and Commissioner Connor Davis seconding.

Public Hearing #1: Commissioner Duerr moved to open the public hearing for Phase 1 of the Process Code Amendments, with Commissioner Packard seconding the motion.

Principal Planner Levitan reviewed several pieces of state legislation that updated the Growth Management Act (GMA). An interim ordinance was passed in 2024, but we need to adopt permanent language before the end of the year. Other code changes focus on refining land use permit types, removing subjective code language, and adding and standardizing definition terms to ensure the code reads as clearly as possible, or, in one case, removing duplicate language. Following this presentation, he asked the Planning Commission to open the floor for public comments and then proceed with a discussion and deliberation of the proposed amendments. After no public comments from the audience or online,

There was discussion about leaving in the term “neighborhood character”, which was planned to be stricken to remove any potentially subjective language, and the commissioners decided they would prefer to retain that language. Commissioner Duerr moved, and Commissioner Connor Davis seconded, to close the public hearing. The motion to retain and send forward, made by Commissioner Packard and seconded by Commissioner Duerr, passed unanimously.

Laura Yidis, who had joined the meeting after the Guest Business portion, spoke about TIZ1 and the mixed-use building on 29th St NE & Main St, stating that any growth within TIZ1 affected the traffic in TIZs 2 and 3 as well, since TIZ1 residents would need to travel through TIZs 2 and 3 to get to a main highway. She expressed an interest in how the traffic was being evaluated.

Commissioner Connor Davis moved to open the second public hearing. Commissioner Jennifer Davis seconded, and a unanimous vote opened the public hearing.

Public Hearing #2: Planning Manager Schmidt discussed code amendments for the Concurrency Management System and Traffic Impact Mitigation and said she had highlighted the two areas in each of the code sections that had been changed based on the Commissioners’ comments and staff input. She reviewed the process to date, and stated the amendments are consistent with the transportation and capital facility elements in the Comprehensive Plan.

She stated that the City Council did not have any substantive comments on the code amendments for Chapters 14.08, 14.110, and 14.112, but requested that staff review and verify the methodology used to compile and validate the CFP projects that comprise the total transportation impact fee. Staff will discuss this with the consultant to provide validation and address any necessary clarification.

Director Wright pointed out the distinction between reviewing the code language and the methodology question, stating that the implementation methodology doesn’t affect the code, which stands on its own.

Planning Manager Schmidt discussed (Concurrency Management) some new terminology, exemptions listed within the code, multimodal requirements that have been added, and the level of service to match the comprehensive plan. She then opened it up to the Commissioners.

She summarized, stating that the concurrency standards are compliant with the provisions included in the adopted comprehensive plan and meet the requirements of RCW 36.70A.106. She gave staff’s recommendation to approve amendments to LSMC 14.08, 14.110, and 14.112.

Topics discussed included tracking the cumulative impact of projects to traffic, what constitutes “temporary” regarding construction trailers. A change to traffic impact mitigation for affordable housing, which the City Council is interested in pursuing, was also discussed. The city will need to subsidize these fees. Also, discussed was an offset credit for development activity. The Commissioners then opened the hearing for public comment.

Tom Hanson, with 36 years of experience in the transportation industry, has worked in public transportation, engineering, design, and construction for the same duration. He is a licensed professional civil engineer. He pointed out some minor changes to the code language he would recommend. He also pointed to some perceived deficiencies in the Transpo report. He suggested that Traffic Impact Fees be renamed, since the majority of projects in the report’s Appendix A are active

transportation projects, not traffic projects. He made additional suggestions regarding projects listed in Appendix A, and urged the Commissioners not to move this on to Council without further review of the Transpo report. He supports exerting pressure on WSDOT to address the trestle.

Darren Piper spoke next, asking about being subject to new codes after a permit has been issued, and why there is a need for a developer to maintain a 10-year financial guarantee after a project is completed.

Chair Huxford explained that the Commissioners cannot respond to comments but appreciate all comments from residents.

Laura Yidis spoke again, thanking Tom Hanson for his comments. She also pointed out that traffic also affects pedestrians, those who are disabled and public transportation users.

Commissioner Connor Davis moved, and Commissioner Duerr seconded, a motion to close the public hearing. The motion passed unanimously. Commissioner Connor Davis thanked Mr. Hanson for his comments, noting his background and experience gave his comments additional weight for the Commissioners to consider. Commissioner Duerr agreed. Both Commissioners said they hesitate to forward any recommendation to the City Council without resolving the questions about the Transpo report.

Planning Manager Schmidt noted that these are the issues the Council directed staff to research, validate, and present back to the Council.

Director Wright again emphasized that the report issue is separate from the code amendments themselves. He also pointed out that Level of Service (LOS) descriptions are in the Comprehensive Plan and don't belong in the code. The proposed revisions before the Planning Commission for 14.11-O and 14.112, while related to the Transpo study, are not predicated on the Transpo study.

After the discussion, it was decided to hold it open to the first meeting in December. Then, the Commissioners can review some refined language, and, as a separate item, staff can provide the Commissioners with additional feedback on the actions being taken to make the implementation manuals more straightforward. The vote was unanimous, other than Commissioner Packard, who abstained. It was also confirmed that a quorum will be present for the December 3rd and December 17th meetings.

Discussion Items: Director Wright provided the proposed 2026 Work Plan. The 2025 Work Plan was primarily dominated by state legislation; therefore, next year, staff will focus on completing the remaining items from those initiatives and then tackle some of the projects that the city has long wanted to address, such as the industrial plan. After his presentation, he requested feedback from the Commissioners. No feedback was offered.

Commissioner Reports:

Chair Huxford announced that a case had been made for improvements to the intersection of South Lake Stevens Road and Machias, with the approval of a city engineer. A three-way stop will be installed. She also stated that there are two open positions on the Planning Commission, and she would like to be involved in the interview process. Commissioner Jennifer Davis will sit in her place if needed. She presented Commissioner Packard with a certificate in recognition of his service on the Planning

Commission and wished him success in his new role with the City Council.

Director's Report

Director Wright gave the 3rd quarter report for Planning & Community Development, reviewing permit statistics, staff accomplishments, and project statuses.

Adjourn: Commissioner Packard thanked everyone for the past two years of working together. He then moved to adjourn the meeting, Commissioner Connor Davis seconded, and the meeting was adjourned at 7:52pm.

Respectfully,

Dawn Erickson, Administrative Assistant