

City of Capitola

Planning Commission Meeting Minutes

Thursday, February 05, 2026 – 6:00 PM



City Council Chambers

420 Capitola Avenue, Capitola, CA 95010

Chairperson: Courtney Christiansen

Vice Chair: Nathan Kieu

Commissioners: Paul Estey, Matthew Howard, TJ Welch

1. **Roll Call and Pledge of Allegiance** - *The meeting was called to order at 6:00 PM. In attendance: Commissioners Estey, Howard, Welch, Vice Chair Kieu, Chair Christiansen.*

2. **Additions and Deletions to the Agenda** - *The Deputy City Clerk announced that one staff memorandum and three emails had been received as additional materials for Item 6A.*

3. **Oral Communications**

- Goran Klepic
- Terre Thomas
- Katie Gurnsey

4. **Planning Commission/Staff Comments** - *None*

5. **Consent Calendar**

A. **Approval of January 15, 2026 Planning Commission Minutes**

Motion to approve Item 5A: Vice Chair Kieu

Second: Commissioner Estey

Voting Yea: 5-0

6. **Public Hearings**

A. **Capitola Mall Zoning Code Amendments for Housing Element Implementation**

Project Description: Amendments to Capitola Municipal Code Title 17 Zoning for Capitola Mall properties located between Clares Street, 41st Avenue and Capitola Road. The proposed amendments implement the 6th Cycle Housing Element of the General Plan to facilitate residential development on Capitola Mall. The proposed amendments include changes to Zoning Code Chapter 17.24 (Commercial and Industrial Zoning Districts), Chapter 17.76 (Parking and Loading), Chapter 17.82 (Objective Standards for Multifamily and Mixed-Use Residential Development), and Chapter 17.88 (Incentives for Community Benefits), 17.160 (Glossary) and introduce a new Chapter 17.57 (Objective Design Standards for Capitola Mall Redevelopment). The Housing Element Implementation also includes amendments to the Capitola General Plan Land Use Element Action LU-9.3 regarding floor area ratio at the Capitola Mall site. The proposed amendments would increase allowed building height and floor area ratio (FAR) on the Mall property, establish objective design standards for Capitola Mall redevelopment, and modify development regulations to facilitate residential development on the Mall property consistent with the Housing Element. The amendments also include applying the Objective Standards within Chapter 17.82 to the Mixed-Use Village zoning district and Industrial zoning district. The Zoning Code is part of the City's Local Coastal Program (LCP) and

amendments require certification by the California Coastal Commission prior to taking effect in the Coastal Zone.

Recommended Action: Consider amendments to the draft Zoning Code and General Plan and either 1) adopt resolutions recommending the City Council adopt the proposed Zoning Code and General Plan amendments or 2) continue the item to a Special Planning Commission Meeting on February 23, 2026.

Director Herlihy, City Attorney Eric Phillips, and Planning Consultant Ben Noble presented the staff report.

Public Comment:

- Jamas Gwilliam
- Katie Guernsey
- Daniel Alvarez
- Daya Khunkhun
- Rafas Sonnefeld
- Terre Thomas
- Linda Smith

The Commission discussed the proposed amendments to the Capitola Mall Zoning Code Amendments and General Plan.

Motion to adopt a resolution recommending City Council adopt text amendments to the General Plan Land Use Element residential action LU-9.3 to be consistent with the proposed Capitola Mall Zoning Code Amendments and find that the project's environmental effects were adequately analyzed in a previous EIR such that CEQA requires no supplemental or subsequent environmental standards:

Commissioner Estey

Second: Commissioner Welch

Voting Yea: 5-0

Motion to adopt a resolution recommending the City Council adopt an ordinance amending Municipal Code Title 17 (Zoning) for the Capitola Mall Property, finding the project exempt from CEQA with the following amendments to the draft:

- a) ***Amendments to Sections 17.24.035.E and 17.24.035.F as outlined in the February 3, 2026, memorandum submitted by Director Herlihy as additional materials; and***
- b) ***Amendments to 17.57.050.B.1.a to update "public" to "publicly accessible."***
- c) ***For the definition of Tier 2, modify the:***
Minimum meeting space to 3,000 square feet, and minimum commercial space to 30,000 square feet.
- d) ***For the definition of Tier 3, modify the option with a 125-room hotel to have:***
Minimum meeting space of 4,000 square feet, and minimum commercial space of 40,000 square feet.

Commissioner Estey

Second: Commissioner Kieu

Voting Yea: 5-0

7. Director's Report

Director Herlihy thanked the Commissioners and consultants for the time spent on the Capitola Mall Zoning Code Amendments.

8. Adjournment – *The meeting adjourned at 8:20 PM. The next regularly scheduled meeting of the Planning Commission is on March 5th, 2026.*