MEDINA, WASHINGTON

PLANNING COMMISSION

Tuesday June 24, 2025

Subject: Critical Areas Ordinance Update

Planning Commission Action: Discussion item only; no action needed.

Staff Contacts: Steven Wilcox, Development Services Director

 Summary

The intent of this Agenda Bill is to begin to familiarize you with the Critical Area Ordinance (CAO) update project that the Planning Commission will become involved with. Our consultant has begun work on our CAO update but will not be prepared for a presentation until September. There are no definite answers about the implications of the update on Medina yet.

A. Background. Washington State is mandating a periodic update of our Critical Areas Ordinance. Washington's Growth Management Act requires cities and counties to review and update their critical areas policies and regulations on a periodic basis. This process ensures these protections reflect the current Best Available Science and continue to safeguard sensitive environmental areas. The state identifies five types of critical areas that must be designated and protected:

- Wetlands
- Critical aquifer recharge areas (which help replenish drinking water supplies)
- Frequently flooded areas
- Geologically hazardous areas (such as landslide-prone slopes)
- Fish and wildlife habitat conservation areas

Within Medina, known critical areas include wetlands, geologically hazardous areas, and fish and wildlife habitat conservation areas. The most common critical area type that is part of Medina development permit applications involve "steep slope" geologically hazardous areas.

The CAO update will involve a change in how our existing stream buffers are to be managed. A view of our streams as Riparian Ecosystems, and a new Riparian Management Zone (RMZ) may be the most impactful changes caused by this state-mandated CAO update. To begin understanding the new approach to stream buffers you will find the Washington Department of Fish and Wildlife (WDFW) "Recommendations for Riparian Ecosystems" which is labeled EXHIBIT 2.

Our existing Critical Area Map which is provided as Exhibit 3, will require updating in 2026 following this project.

B. <u>History and Consultant</u>. Medina's last update to Municipal Code Chapter 16.50 – Critical Areas was in 2015. Since 2015 Medina has not made any CAO updates. Washington State's mandated CAO periodic update schedule had been every 8-years, but this has now been increased to 10-years.

The company named Facet is formerly DSG/Watershed (Kirkland) and was Medina's consultant on our previous 2015 CAO periodic update. Medina has successfully worked with DSG/Watershed on several projects over the years.

Facet has recently worked with the Cities of Sammamish, Kirkland, and Bellevue among others on their CAO updates.

The same lead Facet staff member who participated in our 2015 CAO periodic update will also lead this 2025 effort.

A staff goal is to keep this CAO periodic update as simple as possible and to state minimum requirements for approval by the Department of Commerce.

C. <u>Consultant Contract</u>. The Facet Task Order for the CAO update is provided for your review as EXHIBIT 1. An important part of the Facet Task Order is community engagement. We want to inform residents of the project, gain input, and then keep everyone updated on the status of the work throughout the project. An updated progress schedule, maps, meeting information, project details, and FAQ's will be on our Medina website. Facet will also work with Development Services staff to facilitate two public open houses/forums. I anticipate that one open house/forum will be virtual, and the other in-person. Our City Attorney will be asked to assist with ordinance development during the process.

The schedule through the CAO update is being finalized.

Attachments

Exhibit 1. Facet Task Order

Exhibit 2. WDFW's Recommendations for Riparian Ecosystems

Exhibit 3. Medina Critical Area Map

Proposed Planning Commission Motion:

Discussion item only; no action needed.