



JOINT PLANNING COMMISSION & CITY COUNCIL

Wednesday, June 11, 2025 at 4:00 PM

DRAFT MINUTES

MEMBERS PRESENT

Mayor Jennifer Massey
Councilor Mark Gunderson
Councilor Russell Hubbard
Councilor Brandon Sundeen

Commissioner Scott Jacobson
Vice Chair Brooke Sisco
Commissioner Trina Kingsbury

MEMEBERS ABSENT

Council President Jessica Chilton
Chair Jennifer Shoemaker
Commissioner Charles Castner
Commissioner Reid Herman
Commissioner Davis B. Rosengard

STAFF PRESENT

John Walsh, City Administrator
Jacob Graichen, City Planner
Jennifer Dimsho, Associate Planner
Angelica Artero, Community Development Administrative Assistant

OTHERS

Dana Lathrope, Parks & Trails Commission, Chair

CALL SPECIAL SESSION TO ORDER – 4:00PM

DISCUSSION TOPICS

A. Discussion of the Parks Commission's Wood Reserve Proposal

City Planner Jacob Graichen introduced the topic of the Woodland Reserve concept that was presented by the Parks & Trails Commission in December. He mentioned that the council had requested fine-tuning of the boundary. Graichen and Commissioner Scott Jacobson met in March to work on this. Dana Lanthrope, Chair of the Parks & Trails Commission, provided background on the Woodland Reserve proposal. She explained that it had been in development for a couple of years, in collaboration with the Port of Columbia County. The proposal aimed to include walking trails and other public use

services related to parks. Lathrope emphasized the timeliness of preserving the location due to potential nearby development.

Commissioner Scott Jacobson added that making it a usable area would bring it more onto the City's radar and potentially prevent issues like unauthorized camping or fire risks. Graichen said that this is a concept and the timeline is months away due to development of project Arcadia and the PGE substation parcel. It will take some time before the PGE substation parcel is finalized and it is within proximity of a portion of the potential Woodland Reserve boundary.

Throughout the discussion, various points were raised about balancing preservation with potential industrial development, considering the city's surplus of industrial land, and the unique ecological and historical features of the area. The importance of creating clear boundaries and potentially using topographical data to inform decisions was emphasized.

The meeting concluded with an agreement to further investigate the topography of the areas to help determine the most logical boundaries for the Woodland Reserve. It was also decided that more detailed discussions with stakeholders, including the Port and PGE, would be necessary to finalize plans.

B. Planning Commission Proactive Item – Architectural Standards

Vice Chair Broke Cisco reported that the commission was currently defining what they want to do and where they want to apply architectural standards. They had started with windows as a good starting point. Sisco mentioned that there was consensus that the standards should be citywide, not just focused on downtown. The commission wanted to ensure that new developments, including townhomes, have appropriate window coverage, especially on walls facing busy streets.

Sisco explained that they were breaking things up into smaller pieces to make the task more manageable. She noted that they were still in the early stages of this process and did not have much to discuss with council at this point.

C. Planning Commission Proactive Item – Vacant and Underutilized Storefronts

Commissioner Scott Jacobson presented a document he had prepared on vacant and underutilized storefronts. Jacobson's document included considerations such as defining what constitutes a vacant or underutilized storefront, looking at examples from other cities like Astoria, and potential next steps. He mentioned that St. Helens might have a vacancy register, but he was unsure how up-to-date it was. Councilor Brandon Sundeen raised the point of distinguishing between truly vacant properties and those that are underutilized.

Associate Planner Dimsho mentioned during her tenure that the City that she has seen new revitalization. She also mentioned that vacancies seem to appear less and less, if vacant they usually get occupied quickly now.

Councilor Sundeen recommended to have communication with property owners before having a meeting of discussion of the vacant/underutilized storefronts.

It was concluded with an agreement to collect data and bring it back to the next joint meeting for further discussion. Commissioner Jacobson volunteered to contact Main Street for their data and to conduct a walk-through to update the information on vacant and underutilized properties.

3. OTHER BUSINESS

City Planner Graichen reported to City Council and the Commission that due to a new rule from the Oregon Government Ethics Commission there are to be no more provided snacks/refreshments at public meetings until City policies can be updated with guidance from the City attorney. Also, due to

budget restraints, Planning Commission stipends have been removed from the budget, beginning in July.

4. ADJOURN

There being no further business before the Planning Commission, the meeting was adjourned at 5:48pm.

Respectfully submitted,

Angelica Artero

Community Development Administrative Assistant