



CITY OF ST. HELENS PLANNING DEPARTMENT

M E M O R A N D U M

TO: City Council
FROM: Jacob A. Graichen, AICP, City Planner
RE: Planning Commission Annual Report
DATE: May 10, 2023

This report covers Planning Commission activities from [June 2022](#) through [May 2023](#). The Planning Commission discussed this report at their May 9, 2023, meeting.

- **Number of meetings: 15 ([last year 12](#))**

12 meetings are usual based on the last several years. In this last year, the Commission added 3 meetings: a Special Session in March 2023 for a “Planning Commission Retreat” and two Joint City Council Meetings (December 2022 and March 2023) which were outside of normal meeting dates. Because the joint meetings are quarterly now, what is usual will be different next year.

- **Number of Public Hearings (a continued hearing is counted separately): 19 ([last year 18](#))**

- **Planning Director Decisions: 56 ([last year 35](#), [*including last year’s acceptance agenda items](#))**

For administrative land use actions (e.g., Site Development Review, Home Occupations, Sign Permits, Temporary Use Permits, and others), the items from the last month are included on the agenda to facilitate discussion and query usually for clarification purposes or to address concerns.

***NOTE:** At the December 14, 2022 meeting, it was decided to move the “Acceptance Agenda” items into the “Planning Director Decisions.” From January 2023 and beyond, the “Planning Director Decisions” item included **all** administrative decisions.

- **Discussion Items: 35 ([last year 15](#))**

Regular meeting items included (in the order they were reviewed): Recommendation for Street Vacation at N. 1st Street, N & S. River Street, and Columbia Blvd – Locke, Dillard, Williamson Trust, and Jones; Proactive Planning Commission Framework Discussion; Emails & Quorums; Chair Signature for Columbia Commons Subdivision Final Plat; ACSP Update; Conex Box 8-Plex Ground Lease; Order and Conduct of Public Hearings; Planning Commission Start Time; Oregon’s Measure 109 related to Psilocybin and Land Use Implications; PC Term Expirations; Council Reports Land Use Matters to PC; Discussion of a Joint PC/CC Meeting in 2022; Discussion of Comstock Decision; Semi-Annual Planning Department Report to Council; PC Interview Committee Recommendations; Recommendation for Street Vacation at N. 9th Street – Murphy & Bellar; 2023-2024 CLG Historic Preservation Grant Program; Chair/Vice Chair Selection; 2022 Year End Summary Report; Practical Councilor Liaison Attendance; Vision Sharing for a Future Meeting; Renaming of “Mill Street” in the Riverfront District; Discussion of the PC’s Vision & Future of St. Helens; HB 3115 Recommendations to Council; Semi-Annual Planning Department Report; PC Annual Report to Council.

Joint and special meeting items included (in the order they were reviewed): Meeting Basics, Hellos and Goodbyes, 2023 Quarterly Joint Meetings Scheduling, Planning Division To-Do List Overview, Waterfront Update, House Bill 3115 and the City's Role, Sanitary Sewer Capacity, Planning Commission as a Resource for the City Council, House Bill 3115, Commission's Vision and Future of St. Helens

- **Architectural Review: 6 (last year 0)**

Certain proposals within the Riverfront District require architectural review. We had a significant uptick in development in the Riverfront District which warranted architectural review.

- **Proactive Items:**

As part of the proactive resolve, in June 2022, the Planning Commission adopted the Planning Commission Proactive Procedures which dictate how "Proactive Items" are included on agendas. All PC agendas now include Proactive Items as a permanent agenda heading.

Proactive items sometimes include a non-quorum subcommittee, which can meet outside of normal meeting hours to discuss the item. The Proactive Items which were voted by a quorum to be taken on by the Commission during the last reporting period include:

1. **HB 3115** – This item was included for discussion on 8 separate agendas. Text amendments must be adopted by the City Council by July 2023 to comply with House Bill 3115.
2. **Architectural Standards** – This item was included on 3 separate agendas, although there has not been adequate time at meetings to discuss it for any length of time.

- **Future Projects/Plans:**

Finish HB3115 recommendation efforts, the commission's first adopted proactive item, in the short term. This has consumed much commission and staff time, hindering other efforts and goals.

Architectural standards, the latest adopted proactive item, will probably start getting traction in the next year as HB3115 becomes less time consuming.

Aiding in city-led projects as they may occur in the upcoming year such as the Economic Opportunity Analysis and Transportation Systems Plan efforts.

- **What can the Council do to support the Commission?**

The Commission discussed the following ways Council can continue to support the Commission for last year's (2022) report, which may still be relevant to you:

1. The Commission recommends an **Associate Planner** for the upcoming fiscal year.
2. The Commission desires to continue their involvement in city-led projects. And, generally, they desire more inclusion.

This is a similar message from last year – repeated again for emphasis and long term (>1 year) planning.