



PLANNING COMMISSION

Tuesday, November 12, 2024, at 6:00 PM

APPROVED MINUTES

- Members Present:** Chair Dan Cary
Vice Chair Jennifer Shoemaker
Commissioner Scott Jacobson
Commissioner Ginny Carlson
Commissioner David Rosengard
Commissioner Brooke Sisco
- Members Absent:** Commissioner Charles Castner
- Staff Present:** City Planner Jacob Graichen
Associate Planner Jenny Dimsho
Community Development Admin Assistant Christina Sullivan
City Councilor Mark Gunderson
- Others:** Eric Green
Cheryl Morrissey
Vicky Njust
Heidi Green
Lucas Green
Mark Bailets
Steve Toschi
Robyn Toschi
Sheri Melling
Catherine Ross
Monica Cade
Travis Brenner
Viola Bailets

CALL TO ORDER & FLAG SALUTE

TOPICS FROM THE FLOOR (Not on Public Hearing Agenda): Limited to five minutes per topic

There were no topics from the floor.

CONSENT AGENDA

A. Planning Commission Minutes Dated October 08, 2024

Motion: Upon Vice Chair Shoemaker's motion and Commissioner Jacobson's second, the Planning Commission unanimously approved the Draft Minutes dated October 08, 2024, as written. [AYES: Vice Chair Shoemaker, Commissioner Jacobson, Commissioner Carlson, Commissioner Sisco, Commissioner Rosengard; NAYS: None]

PUBLIC HEARING AGENDA (times are earliest start time)

B. 6:05 p.m. Amendments to the St. Helens Development Code (City of St. Helens)

Chair Dan Cary opened the Public Hearing at 6:01 p.m. There were no ex-parte contacts, conflicts of interest, or bias in this matter.

Steve Toschi said he objected to all the members on the Planning Commission to make a fair decision based on City of St. Helens Resolution Number 1986. He said it prevented the body from being able to engage as a normal decision-making body.

The Planning Commission did not agree that any of them were incapable of making a fair decision, so they moved forward.

City Planner Jacob Graichen shared the staff report dated November 4, 2024. He said there were new bills from the state that required Development Code amendments. He also did some cleaning up of the current code to make it more efficient. He shared this would cover five years of legislation. He mentioned the Planning Commission had met every month since June to discuss the Development Code amendments. He said it was divided into two parts, and they had already met and approved three portions of legislation.

The portion they would discuss for approval would be for four other parts. He started with the Housing Needs Analysis. He said the state of Oregon requires certain cities to have a Housing Needs Analysis that examines the future housing needs in a twenty-year period and whether the city has adequate land available to accomplish it.

He said this was part two of a code amendment that had been started in 2021 and part of the analysis said there should be code around allowing cottage cluster type housing. This means there would be multiple detached homes allowed on a single parcel. He shared that the first part of the multiple dwellings on a single parcel were covered in the amendments made in 2021. He shared the state had implemented legislation that says duplexes could be built with the same rules as a single-family dwelling unit on a single parcel. He shared what two attached and detached dwellings, or a duplex, looked like on a single parcel. He mentioned this new amendment would expand the detached housing on a single parcel for three or more dwelling units.

He said there was another House Bill 4064 regarding Single Room Occupancies (SROs). He said this would be an individual room that would have a shared lavatory or one shared kitchen in the whole house. He said this is not a dwelling unit, but a space for someone to have a lockable room to sleep and keep their items safe for independent use. He said this was not something mandated, but he would like to have tools to help guide when there is a customer who comes in to discuss developing an SRO. He said this means if there are no rules in place, they would be required to use the rules the state allows. He said in a standard single-family dwelling or duplex zone area, this rule would allow up to six SROs in a building. If it is a zoning district that allows apartments, then it would be comparable to the density that allows apartments. This application would still require a land use application such as a Site Design Review where the neighbors are notified, and certain things can be imposed, including parking.

He said there was also a new law from the state that said they had to allow manufactured and prefabricated structures allowed within the city limits. He said there are a few different types of manufactured homes, and it depends on the age. He said all these mobile homes would need to be allowed in city limits but only within mobile home parks. He also mentioned with this new law, single-wide manufactured homes would have to be allowed within city limits. However, he mentioned this type of housing would not be allowed in or adjacent to a Historic District or adjacent to a Historic Landmark.

Vice Chair Jennifer Shoemaker asked about the SRO and if it was just considered a room that could be rented out of a home. Graichen said yes, that was part of the definition. She also asked if there was a clear definition on Cottage Clusters. She was concerned about someone coming in and setting up four sheds on a parcel. Graichen said they would be required to comply with the Building Code and sheds would not comply. She also asked if they had the authority to implement Architectural Standards on this type of housing. Graichen said it would be the same as what is imposed on single-family dwellings.

In Favor

Melling, Sheri. Melling was called to speak. She said she was in favor of these new rules around SROs because she thought it would provide affordable living opportunities for vulnerable populations. She said this would help those who have experienced homelessness or have financial instability to have an opportunity to be sheltered with a more affordable and more accessible place that would provide stability and community living. She said it could also serve as a bridge to a more permanent option.

In Neutral

Ross, Catherine. Ross was called to speak. She was concerned about how tiny homes would be regulated. She also wanted to be sure there would be no increase to their property taxes or affect their property values.

Njust, Vicky. Njust was called to speak. She was concerned that the Cottage Clusters would be built in some of the residential zone districts. She wanted to be sure that the multiple detached single units would be smaller in size and not row homes or apartments. She also wanted to be sure that all easements for properties were met and that the rules for single-family dwellings would apply to this type of housing. She also expressed concern about the parking that would be allowed for this type of housing. She wanted to be sure that the increased number of vehicles did not impact her neighborhood. She also expressed concern about the sewer issue the City is facing and wanted to be sure these would not impact the sewer capacity issues.

Bailets, Mark. Bailets was called to speak. He said that he wanted to see this cottage cluster type of housing be a more permanent structure, including a foundation and connections to city utilities.

Green, Eric. Green was called to speak. He shared his concern over parking and making sure there would still be a development plan for making the parking work in different districts. He said the new rules were taking out the words "catering to motorists," and he wanted to be sure there would still be language that would help when developing a property. He also asked how long it would take to implement these new codes. Graichen said there was a process, but it would likely be by the first of the year.

Bailets, Viola. Bailets was called to speak. She wanted to ask about the size of the lots that would allow multiple units. She wanted to be sure that the houses would fit in with the appropriately sized lots and that there would be enough parking.

Cade, Monica. Cade was called to speak. She asked if the rules would apply only to properties in City Limits. Graichen told her yes. She mentioned that she was right on the outskirts of the City and there were a lot of larger properties that surround her. She wanted to be sure that if those properties were to annex in and wanted to develop this type of housing, she wanted to have the ability to oppose those applications. Graichen said yes, these new rules would make it clear that a land use application would be required with neighbor notice.

In Opposition

Morrissey, Cheryl. Morrissey called to speak. Morrissey did not like the idea of SRO type of housing. She wanted to express concern about potential duplexes or apartments being built in her neighborhood.

She asked if each development was taken case-by-case or if there are just generalized rules that allow them to build what they want wherever. She was concerned about the narrow streets, and the neighborhoods that could not handle more density housing. Graichen said SROs would still be allowed in these neighborhoods, but these new rules would allow for some guidance when these are being developed. She did not agree and said there are neighborhoods that this should not be allowed.

Brenner, Travis. Brenner was called to speak. He was not in support of more density housing brought into his neighborhood due to safety reasons. He felt low-income housing would become an issue with SROs and he was concerned that this would add unsafe occupants to his neighborhood.

Toschi, Steve. Toschi was called to speak. He said he was opposed to the allowance of more high-density housing in the City. He said he believes it invites crime into our neighborhoods. He also said he believed it would cause property values to drop. He expressed concern that there were commercial operations being run in residential neighborhoods for housing of those with mental illnesses. He did not want to see more houses in residential neighborhoods become commercial operations for the homeless populations.

Commissioner David Rosengard said he personally was a citizen who struggled with mental illness and shared that there was no evidence that residents with mental health issues were more likely to be perpetrators of crime. He said that they are more likely to be victims of those crimes. He also said that this community has never expressed that those struggling with these issues were not worth interacting with or talking to. He said this was not reflective of St. Helens or this community's values.

Rebuttal

There was no rebuttal.

End of Oral Testimony

Close of Public Hearing & Record

Deliberations

Commissioner Brooke Sisco mentioned there should be clear and concise code and rules on what is appropriate and not appropriate for SROs. It gives the Planning Department and Commission the ability to help those who are developing projects around this type of housing.

Commissioner Shoemaker said she also agreed there should be guidelines and tools for our community to be able to follow once these state rules are imposed. She also expressed that she would like to see architectural standards applied to the cottage cluster type housing.

There was a small discussion on the necessity of having these tools in place.

There was a discussion on adding SRO definition into the residential zoning districts R7 and R10 to be consistent with the other residential zones.

Motion: Upon Commissioner Sisco's motion and Commissioner Rosengard's second, the Planning Commission unanimously recommended approval to the City Council of the amendments as written by staff with the modifications as described. [AYES: Vice Chair Shoemaker, Commissioner Jacobson, Commissioner Carlson, Commissioner Rosengard, Commissioner Sisco; NAYS: None]

DISCUSSION ITEMS

C. Planning Commission Term Expirations

Graichen reminded the Commission that Chair Cary would be leaving after the December meeting. He also reminded the Commission that they wanted to discuss the attendance before considering the reappointment of Commissioner Rosengard after local elections.

There was a discussion about attendance and the importance of being at meetings in person. Commissioner Rosengard explained why he has missed several of the meetings.

The Commission agreed that Commissioner Rosengard had a valid reason for being absent and wanted to vote to continue his service to the Commission for another term.

Motion: Upon Commissioner Carlson’s motion and Commissioner Sisco’s second, the Planning Commission unanimously approved the renewal of Commissioner Rosengard term. [AYES: Vice Chair Shoemaker, Commissioner Jacobson, Commissioner Carlson, Commissioner Sisco; NAYS: None]

There was a discussion about whether there should be two commissioners who were related or in the same household on the same commission. The Commission agreed that it was not appropriate for members of the same household or those related to each other should be able to serve on the Planning Commission.

The Planning Commission agreed they had a sufficient interview pool of candidates (three people) and agreed to move forward with a committee. Commissioner Jacobson and Vice Chair Shoemaker volunteered to be on the interview committee with City Councilor Mark Gunderson and staff.

D. 2025 Public Meeting Schedule

Graichen shared the meeting schedule for 2025. He said the only date that would need to be changed is November 11, 2025 because it is Veterans Day. They agreed to move the meeting from November 11, 2025, to November 12, 2025.

There was also a discussion about moving the start time from 6:00 p.m. to 6:30 p.m. This time change would start in January when the new meetings calendar was released.

Motion: Upon Vice Chair Shoemaker’s motion and Commissioner Jacobson’s second, the Planning Commission unanimously approved to change the start time of the meeting to 6:30 p.m. for 2025. [AYES: Vice Chair Shoemaker, Commissioner Jacobson, Commissioner Carlson, Commissioner Rosengard, Commissioner Sisco; NAYS: None]

PLANNING DEPARTMENT ACTIVITY REPORT

E. Planning Department Activity Report – October

There was no discussion on the Planning Department Activity Report.

PLANNING DIRECTOR DECISIONS (previously e-mailed to the Commission)

- F. Site Design Review at 1465 Columbia Blvd – Riverside Community Outreach
- G. Site Design Review at Property lying at the SE corner of the US30/Howard Street intersection; Block 3 of the Georgetown Subdivision. – Sunset Development, LLC
- H. Lot Line Adjustment (x2) at 1300 Kaster Road. Lots 3 and 4, Block 5, Hawley Addition and Parcel 1 of Partition Plat No. 2020-03
- I. Site Design Review (Amended) at property lying at the SE Corner of the US30/Howard Street intersection; Block 3 of the Georgetown Subdivision
- J. Site Permit (x2) at 745 S Columbia River Hwy – Pacific Stars, LLC
- K. Sign Permit at 299 S Vernonia Road – O’Reilly Auto Parts

There was no discussion on the Planning Director Decisions.

PROACTIVE ITEMS

- L. Architectural Standards
- M. Vacant Storefronts
- N. The Plaza Square

There was no discussion on the Proactive Items.

FOR YOUR INFORMATION ITEMS

Vice Chair Shoemaker shared she was excited to see the new sign being handled at the O'Reilly Auto Parts store.

ADJOURNMENT

There being no further business before the Planning Commission, the meeting was adjourned at 8:50 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

*Christina Sullivan
Community Development Administrative Assistant*