



PLANNING COMMISSION

Tuesday, October 14, 2025 at 6:30 PM

DRAFT MINUTES

Members Present:	Chair Jennifer Shoemaker Vice Chair Brooke Sisco Commissioner David B Rosengard Commissioner Charles Castner Commissioner Scott Jacobson Commissioner Reid Herman Commissioner Trina Kingsbury
Members Absent:	None
Staff Present:	City Planner Jacob Graichen Communications Officer Crystal King Community Development Administrative Assistant Angelica Artero
Council Members:	Councilor Russell Hubbard Councilor Mark Gundersen
Others:	Steve Toschi Al Peterson Julie Ann Kodmur Stuart Smith Karen Natale Dave Natale Judi Kellar Steve Kellar Malcome Scott

1. 6:30 P.M. CALL TO ORDER

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

Toschi, Steve. Steve addressed the commission regarding the direction of the city. He thanked the commissioners for their service and expressed concern about the Planning Commission becoming less involved in planning the city. He referenced the previous work on HB 3115 related to homeless camping restrictions, which the town adopted, but noted that an "anti-free speech law" was

subsequently passed, which led to his resignation from the Commission. Toschi also highlighted the significance of the upcoming development of the 22-acre parcel on the waterfront and reminded Commissioners of a previous joint hearing where there was a priority established for developing housing that people could own, rather than just rental properties. He stated that homeownership opportunities for children growing up in St. Helens should remain a top priority for any developer considering building housing in the area.

3. CONSENT AGENDA

A. Draft Minutes dated September 9, 2025

Motion: Upon Commissioner Jacobson's motion and Commissioner Rosengard's second, the Planning Commission voted to approve the draft minutes dated September 9, 2025, with the exception to make one correction to take the minutes recorded under architectural review and move them to underutilized storefronts.

AYES: Commissioner Jacobson, Commissioner Kingsbury, Commissioner Herman, Commissioner Rosengard, Commissioner Castner, Vice Chair Sisco **NAYS:** None.

4. PUBLIC HEARING AGENDA

B. 6:30 p.m. Variance V.4.25 34891 Roberts Lane (Kellar)

Chair Shoemaker opened the public hearing at 6:38 p.m. City Planner Jacob Graichen presented the staff report. He explained the variance was for a property in the Meadowbrook subdivision, which was platted in 1996 as a planned development with a 20-foot rear yard requirement. Graichen noted that wetland rules came into effect in 2003, after the development was created, which would have required 75-foot protection zones on either side of the stream that runs between rows of houses in the subdivision.

In Favor

None

Neutral

None

Opposition

None

Applicant Response

The applicant, Judith Keller, addressed the Commission explaining that she wanted to replace the existing deck. She thought everything would be straightforward when applying for a permit but discovered there were issues with the setback requirements. She clarified that they would be replacing the deck with the same depth but adding about six feet in width and removing the stairs. She provided photos in case the Commission wanted to see.

End of Oral Testimony

Close of the Public Hearing & Record

Deliberations

Commissioner Charles Castner noted that the variance request seemed straightforward and met all criteria for granting it.

Commissioner Rosengard commented that the variance request was for a relatively minor footprint change from what has been there previously and predated the wetland designation. Commissioners agreed that the variance criteria were met.

Motion: Upon Vice Chair Sisco's motion and Commissioner Kingsbury's second, the Commission moved to approve the variance based on the recommendation by staff.

AYES: Commissioner Castner, Commissioner Herman, Commissioner Jacobson, Commissioner Kingsbury, Commissioner Rosengard **NAYS:** None.

Motion: Upon Commissioner Castner's motion seconded by Commissioner Rosengard, the Commission moved to authorize the Planning Commission chair to sign the findings and conclusions.

AYES: Commissioner Castner, Commissioner Herman, Commissioner Jacobson, Commissioner Kingsbury, Commissioner Rosengard, Vice Chair Sisco **NAYS:** None.

C: 6:50 p.m. Variance V.5.25 130 Ivy Lane (Natale)

Chair Shoemaker opened the public hearing at 6:57 p.m. for a variance application for property at 130 Ivy Lane. City Planner Jacob Graichen presented the staff report, explaining this was another variance request for a reduced rear yard setback. The property is in the Ivy Lane subdivision and backs up to a wetland. Unlike the previous case, this subdivision predates the 2003 wetland rules, but in 2006 the Isabella Glenn subdivision was platted nearby, which created a 3.1-acre wetland preservation tract behind the subject property. Staff recommended approval with conditions specifying that the variance applies only to the attached patio cover as proposed. Graichen also read a letter from neighbors at 120 Ivy Lane who expressed no opposition to the request.

In Favor

None

Neutral

None

Opposition

None

Applicant Response

Karen Natale, the applicant, explained that part of the issue arose when their planner measured the property and calculated based on a seven-foot setback due to the unusual layout of their lot at the back of a cul-de-sac. She explained they were trying to install a concrete patio with a cover for a swim spa.

Deliberations

Commissioner Castner noted that the variance request seemed straightforward and met all criteria for granting it.

Motion: Upon Commissioner Castner's motion and Commissioner Rosengard's second, the Commission voted to approve the variance.

AYES: Commissioner Castner, Commissioner Herman, Commissioner Jacobson, Commissioner Kingsbury, Commissioner Rosengard. **NAYS:** none

Motion: Upon Commissioner Rosengard's motion, seconded by Commissioner Jacobson, the Commission made a motion for the Planning Commission chair to sign the findings and conclusions.

AYES: Commissioner Castner, Commissioner Herman, Commissioner Jacobson, Commissioner Kingsbury, Commissioner Rosengard. **NAYS:** none

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

Commissioner Jacobson questioned the Chand application (owner of Village Inn restaurant) that was sent to the Commission under the architects' last name (Zaik). Graichen explained that this application was a minor site development review and that the project involved converting part of a storage area and portion of the banquet area into a business suite.

6. DISCUSSION ITEMS

D. Architectural Review 201 S . 1st

City Planner Graichen explained that in the Riverfront District, architectural review applies to buildings that are not designated historic landmarks. The building at 201 S. 1st Street (formerly Wild Current Catering) is being converted into a restaurant. The proposed changes are mostly restorations, including window restoration, transom window restoration, and replacing a door on the St. Helens Street side of the building. Al Peterson, who is the architect working on the project, explained that the original door was found in the backroom and will be rebuilt and refinished by a certified historic preservation window and door company from Portland. The existing steel windows will be replaced in kind, and one window that currently has an aluminum slider will be replaced with a steel grid window to match the originals.

Motion: Upon Commissioner Jacobson's motion and seconded by Commissioner Castner, the Planning Commission recommended approval of the proposal to staff.

AYES: Vice Chair Sisco, Commissioner Castner, Commission Herman, Commissioner Jacobson, Commissioner Kingsbury, Commissioner Rosengard. **NAYS:** None

E. Planning Commission Attendance Policy

City Planner Graichen introduced the discussion. Commissioner David Rosengard presented a draft attendance policy. The Commission discussed several aspects of the policy, including the definition of "absent without notice" as failing to attend a regularly scheduled meeting without providing 48 hours notice to City staff; procedures for removal of Commissioners for absences or misconduct; the timeframe for absences (per term versus per year); and due process for Commissioners facing potential removal. There was general agreement that the policy should focus on regular monthly meetings rather than joint or ad hoc meetings. Commissioners also discussed having a mechanism for the Planning Commission to refer a Commissioner to the City Council for potential removal. The Commission requested Commissioner Rosengard revise the draft to incorporate their feedback, which would be sent to City Planner Graichen for further development.

F. Joint City Council/Planning Commission Frequency

City Planner Graichen explained that staff didn't have discussion items for the last joint meeting, and a Councilor suggested reducing the number of meetings if there wasn't sufficient content. After discussion, the Commission reached a consensus to recommend one scheduled joint meeting early in the calendar year, with additional meetings scheduled as needed for specific topics. This would provide more flexibility while ensuring regular communication with the Council. Councilor Russell Hubbard noted that Jacob Graichen provides good updates to the Council about Planning Commission

activities, and joint meetings might be more effective when focused on specific topics rather than being scheduled arbitrarily.

G. Planning Commission Term Expirations

City Planner Graichen explained that the terms of Commissioners Shoemaker and Sisco expire at the end of the calendar year. He noted that Sisco is completing a partial term and Shoemaker is completing one full term (plus a previous partial term), so both would be eligible for automatic reappointment if they wished to continue. Chair Shoemaker announced that while she loves serving on the Commission, she will not continue after her term expires. She will continue serving as chair through the end of her term in December. Vice Chair Sisco confirmed she wishes to renew her term with the Planning Commission.

Motion: Upon Commissioner Jacobson's motion seconded by Commissioner Rosengard, the Planning Commission moved to recommend Brooke Sisco for reappointment to the Planning Commission.

AYES: Commissioner Castner, Commissioner Herman, Commissioner Jacobson, Commissioner Kingsbury, Commissioner Rosengard. **NAYS:** None.

H. Planning Department Quarterly Report

City Planner Graichen highlighted several items from the quarterly report, including implementation of a new GIS interface on the city website; completion of the St. Helens High School project; beginning of discussions about a new water reservoir; and progress on Project Arcadia (the sale of the mill portion of the Boise Cascade property), though the closing has been delayed from August to the end of December.

I. "Snacks are Back" Resolution No. 2058

City Planner Graichen noted that snacks have been reestablished as part of the compensation for Commission members, with a resolution formally recognizing this benefit for Commission meetings.

J. Reminder about November Meeting (Wed. not Tues.)

The Commission was reminded that the November meeting will be held on Wednesday, November 12, 2025, instead of the usual Tuesday meeting date due to the federal holiday.

7. PROACTIVE ITEMS

K. Architectural Standards

No updates provided.

L. Vacant and Underutilized Storefronts

Chair Shoemaker reported that she had reached out to a former planner from Astoria who had experience dealing with vacant storefronts. The former planner sent the information about Astoria's approach, which Shoemaker had not yet had time to review in detail.

Commissioner Jacobson mentioned he had been trying to meet with Erin Salisbury from the St. Helens Mainstreet Alliance regarding this issue but had not yet been able to connect.

8. CITY COUNCIL LIAISON REPORT

No updates from Councilor Gundersen.

Councilor Hubbard reported to the Commission that they have been working on several projects, including the reservoir, police station, and working with new developers for the waterfront.

9. FOR YOUR INFORMATION ITEMS

None.

10. ADJOURNMENT

There being no further business before the Planning Commission, the meeting was adjourned at 8:29 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Angelica Artero

Community Development Administrative Assistant