



# PLANNING COMMISSION

Tuesday, August 12, 2025 at 6:30 PM

## APPROVED MINUTES

### Members Present:

Chair Jennifer Shoemaker  
Commissioner Charles Castner (Zoom)  
Commissioner Scott Jacobson  
Commissioner Reid Herman

### Members Absent:

Commissioner Trina Kingsbury  
Commissioner David B Rosengard  
Vice Chair Brooke Sisco

### Staff Present:

City Planner Jacob Graichen  
Communications Officer Crystal King  
Community Development Administrative Assistant Angelica Artero

### Council Members:

Councilor Russell Hubbard  
Councilor Mark Gunderson

### Others:

Marelle Vorster  
Zack Pelz  
Brendan Hart  
RT

### 1. 6:30 P.M. CALL TO ORDER & FLAG SALUTE

### 2. TOPICS FROM THE FLOOR (Not on Public Hearing Agenda): Limited to five minutes per topic None.

### 3. CONSENT AGENDA

- A. Draft Minutes dated July 8, 2025

**Motion:** Upon Commissioner Herman's Motion and Commissioner Castner's Second, the Planning Commission voted to approve the draft minutes dated July 8, 2025.

[AYES: Commissioner Jacobson, Commissioner Herman, Commissioner Castner. NAYS: None.]

### 4. PUBLIC HEARING AGENDA

- B. 6:30pm Annexation of 58506 Kavanagh Street-Mark Comfort

Chair Shoemaker opened the public hearing at 6:36pm. No commissioners had any bias, ex parte contacts, or conflicts of interest were declared. City Planner Jacob Graichen presented the staff report.

He explained that this was an annexation request for a property developed with a dwelling since the 1950s, located close to the Les Schwab Tire Center. The property owner is Tom Mahaffy, while Mark Comfort is the applicant. Graichen noted that a second home was placed on the property as a medical hardship, which triggered the need for connection to sanitary sewer and thus the annexation request. City Planner Graichen further noted that the comprehensive plan designates the property as Highway Commercial, making Highway Commercial zoning the only appropriate choice. Staff recommended approving the annexation with a comprehensive plan designation of Highway Commercial and zoning of Highway Commercial. The Commission discussed that water service would likely continue to be provided by the McNulty Water District as City water infrastructure is approximately 600 feet away with a wetland in between.

#### **In Favor**

No one spoke in favor of the application.

#### **Neutral**

No one spoke as neutral of the application.

#### **Opposition**

No one spoke in opposition of the application.

#### **End of Oral Testimony**

#### **Close of the Public Hearing & Record**

#### **Deliberations**

The Commission felt like it was a pretty straight forward annexation.

**Motion:** Upon Commissioner Jacobson's motion, seconded by Commissioner Herman, the Planning Commission made a motion to recommend approval of the annexation to City Council. [AYES: Commissioner Jacobson, Commissioner Herman, Commissioner Castner. [NAYS: None.]

C. 6:45pm Conditional Use Permit for 2615 Sykes Road-Presbytery of the Cascades 2400 Gable Road Nationwide Health Properties/City of St. Helens.

Chair Shoemaker opened the public hearing at 6:47 PM. No bias, ex parte, or site visits declared. Planner Graichen presented the staff report, explaining that this conditional use permit application is for a new sanitary sewer main that would run through two private properties. He explained that the City's wastewater system master plan update revealed infrastructure deficiencies that needed to be addressed. The proposed sewer line would connect existing mains on Sykes Road and Gable Road.

Marilee Vorster from AKS Engineering and Forestry presented on behalf of the applicant. She explained that the City's wastewater system was found to be undersized based on a 2021 study, and the growing population would continue to strain the system without intervention. The new sewer line would help address areas with potential for overflow.

#### **In Favor**

No one spoke in favor of the application.

#### **Neutral**

No one spoke as neutral of the Application.

#### **Opposition**

No one spoke in opposition of the application.

### **End of Oral Testimony**

### **Close of the Public Hearing & Record**

### **Deliberations**

Commissioner Jacobson asked City Planner Graichen where the sewage from the two properties currently goes, and Graichen indicated they must be connected to the existing sewer lines in the abutting right-of-way.

**Motion:** Upon Commissioner Jacobson's motion, seconded by Commissioner Herman's Second, The Planning Commission voted unanimously approved to have Chair Shoemaker sign the findings. [AYES: Commissioner Jacobson, Commissioner Castner, Commissioner Herman NAYS: None.]

**Motion:** Upon Commissioner Jacobson's motion for the approval of the Conditional Use Permit for 2615 Sykes Road-Presbytery of the Cascades and 2400 Gable Road-Nationwide Health Properties, Seconded by Commissioner Herman [AYES: Commissioner Jacobson, Commissioner Herman, Commissioner Castner. NAYS: None.]

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

There were no comments on Planning Director Decisions from the Commission.

### **6. DISCUSSION ITEMS**

#### **D. Architectural Review- New door to Courthouse Annex 230 Strand**

City Planner Graichen introduced the new door for the County Courthouse discussion to the Planning Commission and introduced Brenden Hart who was representing Columbia County to discuss the details for the new door. There was some discussion including the new door resembling recently replaced nearby double doors, that the Commission approved previously.

**Motion:** Upon Commissioner Jacobson's motion to approve the proposal for the new courthouse annex, seconded by Commissioner Herman. [AYES: Commissioner Jacobson, Commissioner Castner, Commissioner Herman. NAYS: None.]

#### **E. Vacant and Underutilized Storefronts - St. Helens Mainstreet Alliance**

Chair Shoemaker shared that she had recently given a tour to the Heritage Commission along with Erin Salisbury from the St. Helens Main Street Alliance and County Commissioner Kellie Jo Smith. During this tour, she met a former planner from Astoria who had worked on their vacant storefront issues for 15 years. The former city planner suggested examining Astoria's code and offered to provide insights on their approach. Chair Shoemaker mentioned that the Astoria code included both incentives and enforcement mechanisms. One interesting requirement was that vacant buildings must have something visually appealing in their storefront, such as a historic photograph or mural. The code also required building maintenance, including awning replacement, with fines for non-compliance.

#### **F. Quarterly Planning Report**

City Planner Graichen presented the quarterly planning report. The City will need to prepare for its next housing capacity analysis next year which is required by the state. The consultant who helped

with the economic opportunities analysis recommended pushing it back a year, which the state approved.

Staff had researched the Yachts Landing boat slip parking issue. City Planner Graichen explained that the parking associated with each residential unit was under or by the unit, while spaces along the street were associated with the boat slips. The County's lot was not mentioned in the land use decision.

A pre-application meeting was held for a property outside of city limits off Millard Road. City Planner Graichen explained that the owners had been considering different development options over several years, including a mobile home park, standard residential subdivision, and one-acre lots.

City Planner Graichen also discussed his staffing limitations in the planning department. Being the only planner limits his ability to support the Commission's proactive items. He mentioned that they intend to hire an associate planner later in the year, but training will take time.

## **7. CITY COUNCIL LIAISON REPORT**

None.

## **8. FOR YOUR INFORMATION ITEMS**

None.

## **9. ADJOURNMENT**

*There being no further business before the Planning Commission, the meeting was adjourned at 7:41pm.*

*Respectfully submitted,*

*Angelica Artero*

*Community Development Administrative Assistant*