



PLANNING COMMISSION

Tuesday, September 9, 2025 at 6:30 PM

APPROVED MINUTES

Members Present:

Vice Chair Brooke Sisco
Commissioner David B Rosengard (Zoom)
Commissioner Scott Jacobson
Commissioner Reid Herman (Zoom)
Commissioner Trina Kingsbury

Members Absent:

Chair Jennifer Shoemaker
Commissioner Charles Castner

Staff Present:

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

Council Members:

Councilor Mark Gundersen

Others:

Shawn Clark
Dena Womack
Chase Berg
Steve Toschi
Russ Clark
Mike Russell
Joanne Rockwell
Robyn

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. Toschi expressed concern about blighted properties in St. Helens, specifically mentioning a building on Columbia Blvd. with broken windows that have been boarded up for over five years. He urged the Commission to develop a plan to address these properties through the City. He also acknowledged that there is a Joint City Council and Planning Commission meeting September 10 and a topic of discussion is ATV use on city streets. He noted safety concerns based on his preliminary research. Toschi recommended safety considerations be thoroughly addressed by experts if this issue is studied. Regarding the Grace's Antiques property, Toschi stated that he and his associate have decided

to be patient with the Commission's decision and would not pursue a LUBA appeal if the property is developed appropriately.

3. CONSENT AGENDA

A. Draft Minutes dated August 12, 2025

Motion: Upon Commissioner Jacobson's motion and Commissioner Kingsbury's second, the Planning Commission voted to approve the draft minutes dated August 12, 2025.

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

ABSTAINS: Commissioner Rosengard.

4. PUBLIC HEARING AGENDA

B. Subdivision Preliminary Plat, SUB.1.25; Subdivision Variance V.1.25; Sensitive Lands Permits SL.1.25, SL.2.25, and SL.3.25

Vice Chair Sisco opened the public hearing at 6:38 p.m. No Commissioners declared any bias, ex parte contacts, or conflicts of interest. City Planner Graichen presented the staff report, noting this was a "reboot" of a previously approved development from 2022 that has not been completed within the required timeframe. Graichen explained that the project would include extensions of North 9th and 8th Streets, with a lengthy cul-de-sac requiring a variance from the standard 400-foot/20-lot limitation. He outlined the utility plans, noting that water would be extended from 8th/9th Streets, while sanitary sewer would need to connect to Madrona Court due to topography constraints. The sewer extension would also serve as a pedestrian path, providing residents with access to the Columbia Botanical Gardens park.

In Favor

Clark, Shawn Shawn Clark, the applicant of North 8th Street LLC explained they had been working on the project for a long time making many concessions to various agencies. He emphasized their goal of providing affordable housing and expressed concern about mounting costs from fees that would affect affordability. Clark noted they were willing to improve the pump station and implement no-parking requirements if needed.

Berg, Chase Chase Berg of Lower Columbia Engineering addressed Columbia County's drainage concerns, stating that he would match existing grades along the western property line and ensure water would flow east without creating ponding issues.

Neutral

Clark, Russ Russ Clark expressed concern about Pump Station 5 across from his home, stating he did not want overflow issues. He also questioned the impact of the walkway on the woodland and potential homeless encampments. City Planner Graichen confirmed that pump station improvements would be required before final plat approval.

Rockwell, Joanne Joanne Rockwell raised concerns about the bottleneck at the entrance to the cul-de-sac, noting that with cars parked on both sides, only one vehicle could pass through. She questioned how construction equipment would navigate this area and how residents would access their homes during construction.

Opposition

There was no testimony in opposition to the application.

Applicant response to comments

Clark, Shawn Shawn Clark stated they want to work with the neighbors to reduce construction traffic during the subdivision build. A suggestion was made to use North 9th Street if that would make things easier, and they were open to suggestions to minimize impacts on the neighborhood.

End of Oral Testimony**Close of the Public Hearing & Record****Deliberations**

Commissioners discussed the need for accurate information for Columbia River Fire and Rescue based on correct population estimates. The Commission also discussed the need for no-parking requirements on one side of the street of the cul-de-sac (not outlet) portion to maintain adequate width for emergency vehicles.

Motion: Upon Commissioner Rosengard's motion, seconded by Commissioner Jacobson, the Commission moved to approve the subdivision preliminary plat variance and sensitive lands permits with the conditions recommended by staff, plus the additional conditions that there be no parking on one side of the street of the cul-de-sac (no outlet portion) and that positive communication be received from Columbia River Fire and Rescue about evacuation once they are provided with accurate inhabitant numbers.

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

Motion: Upon Commissioner Jacobson's motion seconded by Commissioner Rosendagrd, the Commission passed a motion for signature.

AYES: Commissioner Herman, Commissioner Kingsbury, Commissioner Rosengard, Commissioner Jacobson **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
No updates

- E. Vacant and Underutilized Storefronts

Commissioner Jacobson reported that he was unable to meet with Erin Salisbury of the St. Helens Main Street Alliance to work on Architectural Standards.

No updates were provided.

7. CITY COUNCIL LIAISON REPORT

There were no updates at this time. Councilor Mark Gundersen noted the Joint meeting with City Council was scheduled for the following day, September 10, 2025, at 4 p.m.

8. FOR YOUR INFORMATION ITEMS

None.

9. ADJOURNMENT

There being no further business before the Planning Commission, the meeting was adjourned at 7:43 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Angelica Artero

Community Development Administrative Assistant