



CITY OF ST. HELENS PLANNING DEPARTMENT

MEMORANDUM

TO: City Council
FROM: Jacob A. Graichen, AICP, City Planner
RE: Planning Commission Annual Report
DATE: May 12, 2022

This report covers Planning Commission activities from **June 2021** through **May 2022**. The Planning Commission discussed this report at their May 10, 2022 meeting.

- **Number of meetings: 12 (last year 13)**

12 meetings are usual. However, the Commission cancelled two regularly scheduled meetings (June 2021 and September 2021), but attended two additional Joint City Council Meetings (September 2021 and March 2022) outside of normal meeting dates.

- **Number of public hearings (a continued hearing is counted separately): 18 (last year 19)**

- **Acceptance Agenda Items: 7 (last year 9)**

For administrative land use actions that are more significant (e.g., Site Design Review) the Commission motions to formally accept the decisions or otherwise. This is a check and balance of sorts.

NOTE: At the December 14 meeting, it was decided to move the “Acceptance Agenda” items into the “Planning Director Decisions” for future agendas. *This will be the last annual report listing Acceptance Agenda Items.*

- **Planning Director Decisions: 28 (last year 41)**

For lesser administrative land use actions (e.g., Home Occupations, Sign Permits, Temporary Use Permits), 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 meeting, it was decided to move the “Acceptance Agenda” items into the “Planning Director Decisions.” From January 2022 and beyond, the “Planning Director Decisions” item will include all administrative decisions.

- **Discussion Items: 15 (last year 16)**

Items included (in the order they were reviewed): Riverfront Redevelopment Update; Sanitary Sewer Master Plan; Stormwater Master Plan; Planning Commission Term Expirations and Vacancies; "Acceptance Agenda" v. "Planning Director Decisions"; Right-Of-Way Dedication Of Property Between 2600 Pittsburg Road & Barr Ave; Annual Summary Report; Chair/Vice Chair Selection; The Historic Landmarks Commission - Guardians of The Plaza; Strategic Plan/Department Goals Overview; Proactive Planning Commission Discussion; Water

Master Plan; Preferred Alternatives for Grey Cliffs Park; Proactive Planning Commission Framework Discussion; Planning Commission Interview Committee; Planning Commission Annual Report to Council, Semi-Annual Planning Department Report to Council

- **Architectural review: 0 (last year 3)**

Certain proposals within the Riverfront District require architectural review. None this year, although an unpermitted alteration on the plaza was discussed during a discussion item noted above. The cause of this alteration was abated.

- **Projects in Process:**

1. During the previous Annual Report, the Commission requested additional Joint City Council meetings so that Council and the Commission to discuss common goals. Staff acted on this request, and it occurred twice during the reporting period: once in September 2021 to discuss overall City Council and Commission goals/roles, and again in March 2022 to discuss a Streets & Utilities Extension Project design on the Riverfront property.
2. Three Commissioners will participate on the Riverfront Developer RFQ Selection Committee in May 2022.
3. One Commissioner continues their involvement on the Riverwalk Project Technical Advisory Committee through Summer 2022.

- **Future Projects/Plans:**

1. TBD as related to the newly Council adopted Strategic Plan and/or related to the Commissioners recent resolve to be more proactive as volunteers (see 2 and 3).
2. The Commission has been working on proactive procedures: a formal method of suggesting things for the Commission to take on as a proactive body. These are anticipated to be finalized and adopted within the next two Commission meetings. I anticipate proactive items will be suggested after that over the next year.
3. As part of the proactive resolve, future Planning Commission agendas will have “Proactive Items” as a permanent agenda heading. This will be a placeholder, even if a month has no specific item for discussion, to help ensure the proactive resolve does not become stale.
4. A non-quorum subcommittee has been meeting outside of normal meeting hours for the last few months, which reflects the Commission’s desire and commitment to being proactive. This group was the catalyst of certain the proactive procedures mentioned in 2 above.

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

Starting at the March 8 meeting and updated at the May 10 one, the Commission discussed the following ways Council can continue to support the Commission:

1. The Commission recommends an **Associate Planner** for the upcoming fiscal year.
2. The Commission requests a budget for future projects TBD. Staff noted the link between the strategic plan and annual budgets.
3. The Commission desires more involvement on city-led projects. And, generally, they desire more inclusion.