



STAFF REPORT (Item Specific)

Meeting Date: March 11, 2026 (joint meeting)
Author: Jacob Graichen, AICP, City Planner
Department: Community Development
Division: Planning
Subject: Planning Commission operational policy
Type of Item: Potential future code amendment
CC: City Administrator John Walsh

Introduction: The Planning Commission operational rules are found in Chapter 2.08 SHMC. Most of this chapter was adopted in 1978, with some changes in 1995, 2008 and 2016. If the Council and Commission have a productive conversation at the March 2026 joint meeting, we may be looking at a 2026 amendment to this chapter.

Moreover, the Historic Landmarks Commission operational rules are found in SHMC 17.36.020 as originally adopted in 2008. For many years, staff has recognized that this section is more appropriate in Chapter 2.08 SHMC and moving this is “low hanging fruit” as a piggyback amendment to the other matters the Commission has discussed.

Oregon House Bill 3136 (2025), provides another piggyback amendment—see [attached draft](#).

Background: The Planning Commission started to discuss their operational rules at their July 2025 meeting after a suggestion in May 2025 to reexamine the Commission’s attendance policy. At the October 2025 Planning Commission meeting this was discussed further based on draft ideas from Commissioner Rosengard. Based on that discussion and some other things staff provided some refinement and a possible adoption proposal to the Commission at their February 10, 2026 meeting.

The [attached draft](#) is the February 2026 meeting approved (by motion) concept of the Planning Commission for discussion with the Council at this March 11, 2026 joint Council/Planning Commission meeting.

Staff Analysis: Staff has refined the Commission’s ideas into something that is simple and reasonable and has suggested other amendments, and the Commission agrees.

Budget Impact: No fiscal impacts anticipated. Just staff time.

Because the amendments focus on Chapter 2 and avoid the Development Code, we don’t need public hearings and a staff report addressing all the necessary land use findings and such. This eliminates legal notice expenses and helps keep busy-work efforts to a minimum.

Alternatives: Not to do anything and keep current policy as is.

Requested Action: If the conversation is productive, staff may bring this matter as a proposed Ordinance to the Council at a regular meeting.

Attachments:

- Feb 10, 2026 (after the Commission meeting) draft amendments
- 2025 Planning Commission regular meeting attendance

underlined words are added
~~words stricken~~ are deleted

[...] means skipping text as it reads in the code (e.g., to focus on text being edited in this document)
Feb. 10, 2026 (after the Feb. Planning Commission meeting) DRAFT

CHAPTER 2.08 PLANNING COMMISSION

[...]

2.08.020 Membership.

The commission may consist of up to seven members. The councilmember(s) in charge of planning shall be entitled to sit with the commission and take part in its discussions, but shall not have the right to vote. The following regulations shall also apply to the planning commission:

[...]

~~(2) No more than two voting members shall be engaged principally in the buying, selling, or developing of real estate for profit as individuals, or by members of any partnership, or officers or employees of any corporation that is engaged principally in the buying, selling, or developing of real estate for profit.~~ No more than two voting members shall be engaged in the same kind of occupation, business, trade or profession.

[Editor's note: Oregon HB 3136 (2025) eliminates the "real estate" member provision as long as the Commission has more than five members. Because St. Helens has a seven-member Commission we can strike this provision (assuming all agree).]

[...]

2.08.040 Vacancies and removal.

~~Appointments to fill vacancies shall be for the remainder of the unexpired term. A member may be removed by the city council after a hearing for misconduct or nonperformance of duty. A member who is absent from three consecutive meetings without an excuse as approved by the planning commission is rebuttably presumed to be in nonperformance of duty, and the city council shall declare the position vacant unless finding otherwise following the hearing.—~~

(1) Filling vacancies.

(a) Appointments of a Commissioner shall follow the guidelines and procedures adopted by the City Council; and

(b) Appointments to fill vacancies shall be for the remainder of the unexpired term.

(2) Removal. An appointed Commissioner may be removed from their position by the City

Council if at a hearing the Council finds the Commissioner has engaged in misconduct and/or nonperformance of duty.

(a) A hearing may be initiated by the City Council;

(b) The Commission may request a hearing be initiated by the City Council by an approved motion for such;

(c) If the City Council removes a Commissioner, that position shall become vacant immediately; and

(d) For the purpose of this Section, nonperformance of duty includes but is not limited to a Commissioner being absent for a regularly scheduled monthly meeting pursuant to SHMC 2.08.070(1) at least four times in a one-calendar-year period.

2.08.050 Presiding members.

At its first meeting of each calendar year, the commission shall elect a ~~chairman~~ chairperson and ~~vice-chairman~~ vice-chairperson to serve one-year terms. The chair and vice-chair shall not hold consecutive yearly terms unless the Commission finds it is in the public interest to do so.

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Other amendments to be added:

1. Find other “chairman” language and change to chairperson.
2. Move SHMC 17.36.020 regarding the Historic Landmarks Commission to Title 2, a more appropriate place for committee operational provisions. This is a low hanging fruit “housekeeping” amendment addition to the above changes.

2025 Planning Commission Meetings

DATE	Rosengard	Kingsbury	Jacobson	Shoemaker	Herman	Castner	Sisco	
Jan-14	CAN	CAN	CAN	CAN	CAN	CAN	CAN	
Feb-11	P	-	P	P	P	P	P	
Mar-11	P	P	P	P	P	P	P	
1st Qtr Totals	2	1	2	2	2	2	2	Stipends forwarded to finance on 03/13/25
Apr-8	A	P	P	P	P	P	P	
May-13	A	P	A	P	A	P	P	
June-10	CAN	CAN	CAN	CAN	CAN	CAN	CAN	
2nd Qtr Totals	0	2	1	2	1	2	2	Stipends forwarded to finance on 5/30/2025
July-08	P	A	P	P	P	P	P	
Aug-12	A	A	P	P	P	P	A	
Sept-9	P	P	P	P	P	P	P	
3rd Qtr Totals	2	1	3	3	3	3	2	Stipends paused due to budget
Oct-14	P	P	P	P	P	P	P	
Nov-11	CAN	CAN	CAN	CAN	CAN	CAN	CAN	
Dec-9	P	P	P	P	P	P	P	
4th Qtr Totals	2	2	2	2	2	2	2	Stipends paused due to budget
YEAR TOTAL	6	6	8	9	8	9	8	

P = Present; A = Absent; CAN = Cancelled