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**TO:** PLANNING COMMISSION

**MEETING DATE:** JANUARY 13, 2025

**FROM:** TOM DUBOIS, CITY MANAGER

**SUBJECT:** PLANNING FOR JOINT SESSION WITH CITY COUNCIL

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**RECOMMENDATION:**

There will be a joint Council – Planning Commission session at the March 3 Council Meeting. This is an opportunity for Council to share their 2025 goals with the Planning Commission and for the Planning Commission to discuss update the Council and discuss any issues of concern to get their direction. This discussion item is in preparation for the joint session.

**BACKGROUND:**

The Planning Commission has an advisory role and serves at the direction of and to assist the City Council. As part of the Council’s annual prioritization process, the City Council will share their 2025 priorities. The joint session is an opportunity for both bodies to ask questions, share concerns and discuss issues facing Sutter Creek. The Planning Commission can bring up issues and receive direction from the Council to insure they are aligned. Historically the Planning Commission has primarily evaluated project applications when submitted. The Commission could take on a larger role helping to make policy recommendations and zoning code changes to the Council.

**DISCUSSION:**

The City is developing plans to address challenges to infrastructure. Core infrastructure is aging and maintenance has been deferred in some areas for many years. For example, the pavement condition index (PCI) for many streets is rated as failing. The wastewater plant requires major updates and capacity improvements. Severe storms threaten flooding and strain the existing stormwater system. Improvements to our parks, community centers and other facilities are limited due to lack of capital.

The Council reviewed and approved a Capital Infrastructure Plan at the January 6<sup>th</sup> Council meeting. An approved CIP is required along with an updated Nexus study to justify development impact fees. Impact fees on new developments can be used for capital improvements along with the recently passed local Transaction and Use tax which will go into effect on April 1, 2025.

Community financial districts of any new developments along with general funds are used for operations and maintenance throughout the city.

The City has two subdivision projects currently in the pre-application process. The Sutter Creek review process has historically taken a long time (sometimes more than a year for a project). In some cases, the U.S. economy shifted during the application process, resulting in eventual approval of projects that were no longer economically feasible by the time approval was given.

The City has also sought community benefits from developers without analyzing what level of benefits impact feasibility.

If the City wants some community benefits from developers as well as impact fees and the benefits of the projects themselves, it will be necessary for Council and the Planning Commission to be aligned and ensure that approval process is not too onerous, either financially or in terms of time, while remaining a transparent, public process.

Thinking about the Sutter Creek project review process, Staff requests that the Planning Commission discuss and agree on potential areas for improvement or questions to be presented to the City Council during their upcoming goal-setting session.

- What position does a majority of the members of the Planning Commission have on growth? Is growth desired and to what extent?
- Do you view commercial growth differently than residential growth?
- How can you best advise the Council if growth is one of their priorities, whether supported by the planning commission or not?
- Are our zoning codes and design guidelines clear, with objective standards to minimize subjective interpretations and expedite review times?
- Are there any areas where we should consider "ministerial approval" for projects that meet pre-defined criteria, allowing for automatic approval without requiring public hearings or discretionary review? For example, sign permits and Short-term rental applications are ministerial in many cities.
- Are there any performance standards we should focus on to achieve desired outcomes rather than descriptive design requirements, allowing for more flexibility in project design?
- Could we improve the way projects are presented to have better decision making in meetings?

The above are examples, feel free to bring up other issues. Please come to the meeting with some ideas for discussion.

The Planning Commission's feedback will be consolidated by staff and presented to the City Council as part of the joint session. Commissioners are requested to attend the March 3 Council meeting for the Planning Commission-City Council joint session.