

**TUMWATER PLANNING COMMISSION  
MINUTES OF HYBRID MEETING  
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**CONVENE:** 7:00 p.m.

**PRESENT:** Chair Elizabeth Robbins and Commissioners Grace Edwards, Terry Kirkpatrick, Gina Kotek, and Brandon Staff.

Staff: Deputy Director Brad Medrud, Sustainability Manager Alyssa Jones Wood, and Housing and Land Use Planner Erica Smith-Erickson.

**CHANGES TO AGENDA:** There were no changes.

**APPROVAL OF MINUTES:  
PLANNING COMMISSION  
DRAFT MINUTES  
DECEMBER 10, 2024:** The minutes were corrected to reflect “Commissioner Staff” rather than “Councilmember Staff” in the motion after public testimony on the last page of the minutes.

**MOTION:** **Commissioner Edwards moved, seconded by Commissioner Kotek, to approve the December 10, 2024 minutes as amended. A voice vote approved the motion unanimously.**

**COMMISSIONER’S  
REPORTS:** Chair Robbins noted that staff has advised of the lack of agenda items for the January 28, 2025 meeting.

**MOTION:** **Commissioner Kirkpatrick moved, seconded by Commissioner Edward, to cancel the Commission’s January 28, 2025 meeting. A voice vote approved the motion unanimously.**

**MANAGER’S REPORT:**

**ATTORNEY GENERAL’S  
ADVISORY MEMORANDUM:** Deputy Director Medrud reported he forwarded a copy of an Advisory issued by the State Attorney General’s Office reminding municipalities that any discussions and evaluations of regulatory or plan changes should ensure that actions do not result in unconstitutional takings of private property or raise substantive due process concerns. The City follows a process for legal review of each document the Commission receives. It is important to be aware of any issues and inform staff of any discrepancies within documents the Commission reviews. The Advisory is an update by the Attorney General’s Office to their 2018 version of the document.

**DRAFT 2025 PLANNING  
COMMISSION MEETING  
SCHEDULE** Deputy Director Medrud referred to an updated meeting schedule with the next meeting scheduled on February 11, 2025. The agenda includes continued discussion on the Climate Element and a review of the Food System Plan with consultant Rebecca Potasnik.

Deputy Director Medrud advised of the departure of Assistant Transportation & Engineering Director Clint Ritter and

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Transportation Engineer I Bernie Gertje. Transportation and Engineering Director Brandon Hicks is serving in both roles as the City recruits to fill the positions. Staff continues to move forward on the update of the Transportation Plan. Director Dan Smith is assisting with coordination of efforts. The joint tour with the Council at the end of February is moving forward with an itinerary under development. An open house is scheduled in March. In the meantime, the transportation consultant is working on the update of the Transportation Plan.

Staff is working to schedule approval of the update of the Comprehensive Plan by the end of the year. The Commission is scheduled to conduct a public hearing on the Comprehensive Plan at its last meeting in December 2025. One ordinance will adopt all Elements within the Comprehensive Plan. The proposed ordinance will be considered for approval by the City Council in January 2026. The update of the development code will follow. Later in the spring, the Commission will receive briefings on draft Elements of the Comprehensive Plan. Staff continues to accommodate particular deadlines for reviews of the Transportation Plan and other Elements by other state agencies prior to finalizing the ordinance.

Chair Robbins asked whether other jurisdictions are on the same timeline, and whether Thurston County is on track with updating the County-wide Policies. Deputy Director Medrud said the City of Lacey and Tumwater are working on a similar timeline. The City of Olympia is working to complete the plan by the end of the year as Olympia's Planning Manager is retiring in spring 2025. The county is tracking with the timeline except for the County Joint Plan and Title 22 updates. The staff member leading those efforts left the county. Following recruitment by the county of the position, a new staff member will assist Tumwater staff with the update of Title 22 and any required changes to the Joint Plan. At this time, staff has not received any drafts of any materials from the county.

The Board of County Commissioners is scheduled to conduct a public hearing on January 21, 2025 to consider amendments to the County-wide Planning Policies. Two amendments are proposed addressing state mandates for Tribal communications and language. Thurston Regional Planning Council's (TRPC) Urban Growth Management Committee drafted for urban growth area (UGA) land swaps. Draft language was completed in August prompting a jurisdictional meeting of planning managers and directors to review the language and discuss necessary coordination between the jurisdictions and the county when land swaps are proposed. Staff is considering drafting an interlocal agreement with Thurston County. However, pending actions include final approval of the County-wide Planning Policies and completion by Thurston County of the

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environmental review of the proposed land swap process, scheduled for completion by the end of January. The potential exists of an appeal based on the public's interest in the land swap proposal. Staff anticipates that following acceptance of the interlocal agreement, dates will be established for joint meetings with the Thurston County Planning Commission and the Tumwater Planning Commission to discuss the proposed process for UGA land swaps. Those activities are not reflected on the Commission's schedule at this time.

Deputy Director Medrud referred to an updated Comprehensive Plan schedule with Commission meetings dates as well as Council meeting dates. The timeline is continuously updated on the City's website page as well.

**COMPREHENSIVE PLAN  
UPDATE MASTER  
SCHEDULE:**

**PUBLIC COMMENT:**

There were no public comments.

**2025 COMPREHENSIVE PLAN  
PERIODIC UPDATE –  
CLIMATE ELEMENT:**

Manager Jones Wood briefed the Commission on the status of progress for drafting the new Climate Element of the Comprehensive Plan. Because the Element includes 201 actions, the review will focus on greenhouse gas emissions within the Climate Mitigation Sub-Element.

New state law requires the Climate Element to include a Climate Mitigation Sub-Element to address reduction in greenhouse gas emissions, vehicle miles traveled, and to advance environmental justice to avoid detrimental environmental health disparities.

Community engagement to date includes establishment of a Climate Policy Advisory Team comprised of members of affected communities, key stakeholders, residents, and interested parties. The team meets frequently and provides feedback. An open house was hosted at ASHHO with approximately 60 individuals attending. An online open house was hosted from August 15, 2024 to October 31, 2024 offering the same information as the in-person open house.

Other outreach has included information presented to the Thurston Climate Mitigation Collaborative Community Workgroup, meetings with Thurston Climate Action Team's (TCAT) community organizer, hosting informational tables at the Thurston County Food Bank to encourage participation in the online open house, sharing information with the South Sound Asian and Pacific Islanders Coalition, and updating the City's website and social media posts on ways to participate in the update process for the Comprehensive Plan. The draft Climate Element has been released for public review and comment.

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Manager Jones Wood framed the discussion by asking for feedback on any questions, specific or general comments to share on a specific goal, any shift in action timelines for any of the goals, any perceived unintended consequences or burdens associated with policies and actions under the goals, and whether anyone in the Tumwater community could be overlooked by any policy or action under the goals. She noted that several of the actions are designated with icons to reflect the community's priorities. She invited additional feedback on the goals and associated policies and actions.

Greenhouse Gas Reduction Goals include:

Goal CL-4 Reduce greenhouse gas emissions from all building types through energy conservation measures prioritizing the deployment of financial resources and programs that help finance or subsidize improvements across Tumwater.

*Chair Robbins commented that a designation for the icons would be useful to explain the purpose. Manager Jones Wood advised that additional icons would be included in the next version of the draft. The City is required to report on implementation progress every five years to the Department of Commerce. Two additional icons in the next version relate to whether the action is measurable qualitatively or quantitatively or whether the action is a state requirement.*

*Commissioner Kirkpatrick referred to action, "CL-4.2.1 Require energy performance ratings and disclosures for dwelling units at time of listing for sale so that prospective buyers are informed before making purchasing decisions" and questioned how staff plans to implement that action. Manager Jones Wood advised that the actions are scheduled for review by the General Government Committee. Although the City is not notified of home sales, other jurisdictions in the Pacific Northwest and throughout the country have implemented similar actions requiring home energy scores to be disclosed at the time of listing real estate. One option for implementation is adoption of an ordinance requiring the action. The ordinance would trigger a requirement for the Northwest Multiple Listing Service (MLS) to add a field designating the requirement. Other jurisdictions have noise disclosure ordinances, such as Island County, where it is part of the sales process to inform perspective buyers of air traffic noise.*

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*Commissioner Kirkpatrick commented that when he purchased his home there was no interaction with the state involving the purchase. Manager Jones Wood advised that the action would not involve the state because it would be a City requirement implemented through the MLS process for home sales.*

*Chair Robbins commented on the burden or expectation of the listing service and whether the City is obligated to compensate the service, adding another cost to the City. She questioned the entity responsible for assuming the cost. Manager Jones Wood responded that the policy is scheduled for review by the General Government Committee in February. She offered to provide a copy of the draft ordinance. The action was identified by the Council as a regional priority for the Thurston Climate Mitigation Collaborative to address specifically. Since 2023, staff has been working on the action including much stakeholder engagement involving legal staff and representatives from MLS. The timeline of expected passage and the effective date was also recommended by MLS. The cost of a home energy score is approximately \$150 to \$300 with funding allocated in the City budget next year for low-income customers. The City would assume the cost of contracting with a national service provider for the required quality assurance and quality control of an energy audit as required by the U.S. Department of Energy. The cost will be shared between the four largest jurisdictions in the county as a component of an existing interlocal agreement.*

*Commissioner Edwards suggested considering the impact of the action. Although, it would be interesting to know the energy score of a home, it likely would not affect the sale. She asked about research completed to ascertain whether the information would be desired by homebuyers to determine if the program is worth establishing. Manager Jones Wood commented that individual homebuyers consider those issues as part of the decision process. For example, one member of the Community Advisory Workgroup for the Thurston Climate Mitigation Collaborative wanted to become a member because when she purchased her home, she did not realize how expensive her energy bill would be because the house was too drafty. It is important for homebuyers when making large financial decisions to consider the full cost of ownership to include utility bills. The City of Portland has implemented a similar*

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*program for a number of years. Portland identified a 10-fold increase in homes with an energy score, which resulted in more energy upgrades in homes.*

*In response to additional questions, Manager Jones Wood advised that the four jurisdictions are working on the same implementation actions with the goal to streamline and standardize the process. Action CL-4.2.4 to develop and adopt policies that require existing dwelling units undertake an energy audit during a substantial remodel is not scheduled until 2029. Buildings and energy are the largest emitting sectors in Thurston County for greenhouse gas emissions. Existing buildings are the largest sector. Emissions reduction is a state requirement.*

*Chair Robbins questioned whether the action would be similar for CL-4.3.1 requiring energy performance ratings for nonresidential buildings be disclosed at the time of application for tenants and at time of listing for sales so that owners, tenants, and prospective buyers are informed before making purchasing or rental decisions. Manager Jones Wood advised that the action is more difficult because although 95% of home sales are listed by MLS, there is no single platform for applicants who apply for a rental. The action will require extensive coordination prior to implementation. Some jurisdictions in the country have implemented similar programs. The action is complicated and will take time to research.*

*Chair Robbins questioned the difference in emissions of residential versus non-residential uses. Manager Jones Wood offered to provide a copy of the greenhouse gas emissions inventory that documents the percentages. Existing residential buildings are the largest emitters of greenhouse gas emissions. Staff has been tracking the information on an annual basis. With the advent of the Washington Clean Energy Transformation Act, many emissions are reduced through clean energy by conversion to all-electric homes.*

*Commissioner Kirkpatrick cited action CL-4.3.3 and asked for the definition of “living walls.” Manager Jones Wood explained that a “living wall” is a vertical wall covered by vegetation that can be either internal or external. Living walls are intended to reduce heat and are normally covered in green vegetation. She noted that the footnote in the plan does not define a*

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*living wall and offered to remove the reference as suggested by Commissioner Kirkpatrick.*

*Commissioner Kotek requested clarification of the information included for an MLS listed home in terms of prior and current energy affordability of the home. Manager Jones Wood said information is included on the estimated annual energy bill by fuel type, as well as an equivalent to a mile per gallon to demonstrate efficiency rated from 1 to 10, and cost effective energy efficiency improvements with a payback of 10 years or less to improve the score. The report also includes information on the reduction of associated energy costs.*

*Commissioner Edwards questioned current avenues available to obtain information on energy efficiency of a home. Manager Jones Wood said some homebuyers request utility data from Puget Sound Energy (PSE) with some receiving the data. PSE energy consumption reflects occupant behavior whereas the home energy score considers the assets of the home and not necessarily the number of occupants and behaviors.*

Goal CL-5 Expand the use of on-site renewable energy technology (e.g., solar photovoltaics, battery storage, etc.) across all building types through providing funds, code changes, and educational programs.

*Commissioner Kirkpatrick commented on the lack of a completion date for action CL-5.1.3 while recognizing the difficulty of securing funding sources.*

Goal CL-6 Reduce greenhouse gas emissions by making it easier for people to shift to low-/zero carbon transportation modes through policy, programming, and regional partnerships.

*Chair Robbins questioned the lack of considering the movement of goods in terms of impact. She asked how the Climate Element in addressing the movement of people also considers the movement of goods and commerce activities. Manager Jones Wood cited some actions undertaken by the City of Portland that staff could explore as well as other examples. Chair Robbins advocated for including movement of goods and services.*

*Commissioner Edwards suggested consideration of many individuals who commute to the county for work, such as state employees and others.*

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*Commissioner Kirkpatrick recommended strengthening action CL-6.2.2 by requiring the installation of EV chargers in all new homes.*

*Commissioner Staff added that at the very least, the action should require new homes to provide an electrical 50-amp outlet.*

*Manager Jones Wood shared that the action was recommended by a member of the Climate Policy Advisory Team. The member, a single mother who is also an electrician, rents an older home with outdated wiring. She recently purchased an electric vehicle and discovered she was unable to charge the car or even plug into a 110 outlet as the home's electrical system is not grounded because of its age. The intent of the action is for existing homes that are unable to support electric vehicles. Providing incentives for smaller scale landlords could help provide the electrical capacity and wiring to support EV charging in existing rental homes.*

*Commissioner Edwards commented on the tradeoffs of more EV charging because it would reduce energy efficiency in the home. Manager Jones Wood said that the home energy score model does not necessarily consider plug loads. The model considers larger systems in homes, such as insulation, windows, etc.*

*Planner Smith-Erickson suggested revising the language to improve clarity.*

Goal CL-7 Reduce greenhouse gas emissions by making it easier for people to shift to low-/zero carbon transportation modes through policy, programming, and regional partnerships. Reduce vehicle miles traveled by using permitting, regulatory, and other land use tools to promote multimodal transportation options and the use of public transit throughout and beyond Tumwater.

*Chair Robbins commented that action, "CL-7.1 Continue land use policies that support increased urban density and efficient transportation networks and reduce urban sprawl" will be a key component of addressing greenhouse gas emissions. It is important to have transportation efficient land use patterns to avoid excess or unnecessary transport.*



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*Commissioner Staff conveyed support of the 10-minute neighborhood concept. He and his family recently considered moving; however, a major reason for not moving was the lack of access in a new location to services of any type within 15 minutes.*

*Discussion ensued on a suggestion to develop a map of 10-to 15-minute neighborhoods in the City.*

Goal CL-8 Strengthen existing policy and regulations to deploy and enhance natural carbon solutions that are ecosystem-appropriate, store carbon, and offer co-benefits such as pollution reduction, wildlife habitat, and climate resilience.

*Commissioner Kirkpatrick asked about the status of tree management efforts by the City. Deputy Director Medrud said the issue was discussed by the Council during its recent work session. Based on the joint discussions during the December 10, 2024 work session, staff proposed deferring all tree-related amendments to 2026. Following input from Commissioners and Councilmembers at the work session and a subsequent discussion with the General Government Committee, the committee recommended deferring one of the tree protection issues. Staff proposed to the Council that the 160 hours necessary for the multifamily tax exemption program could be deferred to 2026 to afford sufficient staff resources to work on tree preservation efforts. The proposed work schedule will be presented to the Council for approval next week.*

*Chair Robbins referred to the community's feedback supporting the preservation of tree canopy in the City. She suggested considering the terminology of "preserving" as it likely entails preserving healthy trees and not other mature trees which may be unhealthy. Manager Jones Wood offered some suggested language that speaks to preserving larger trees of at least 24-inch diameter that sequester and store more carbon. Chair Robbins said that the framing of the language acknowledges the City's goal of retaining larger older trees for sequestration, cultural, and heritage purposes. It is also important to acknowledge that it may not be possible to save every individual tree. It is also important to recognize the*

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*importance of increasing the canopy rather than only preserving existing tree canopy.*

*Discussion ensued on the effects of climate change and wildland fire impacting tree canopy. Chair Robbins added that other types of vegetation also sequester carbon.*

*In response to comments about the lands preserved under the HCP and the potential to earn carbon credits, Manager Jones Wood advised that with limited staff resources it would be difficult to manage a carbon market system on any scale. Staff recommends focusing on the reduction of greenhouse gas emissions rather than entering the carbon market.*

*Deputy Director Medrud added that TRPC also explored potential models for prairie sequestration values. As many prairie lands are located outside of the area, it would not reflect the condition of local prairies. Essentially, the region is not at a point where it would be possible to assign values.*

*Manager Jones Wood noted that in 2026, the City will begin some preliminary work to determine how to measure ecosystem benefits to aid in City decision-making.*

*Chair Robbins referred to action, "CL-8.1.6 Maximize tree canopy coverage in surface parking lots. Establish an initiative for identifying impervious surfaces across parking lots for potential reforestation or conversion" and questioned whether the action pertains to derelict parking lots or existing usable parking lots. Manager Jones Wood said the action could apply to redeveloped or derelict parking lots. The action would not affect existing usable parking lots unless a change has been recommended. Chair Robbins offered that language should also address the possibility of converting impervious surfaces to pervious surfaces.*

*Commissioner Edwards inquired about any potential future activity related to transitioning vacant office buildings. Deputy Director Medrud replied that some applicants are seeking potential changes of use. The first project is the former occupied Department of Health building. A proposal was submitted to convert the building to multifamily housing as well as develop*

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*a portion of the parking lot as multifamily housing. However, the project has encountered a roadblock, as the site is located under the Airport Overland, which prohibits residential uses. He anticipates the City will receive more proposals for conversion of buildings and other commercial spaces.*

Manager Jones Wood reported on feedback from the Community Climate Policy Advisory Team that spoke to the previous draft timelines as unacceptable and that some actions in the future should be reconsidered because of the urgency of the climate crisis. Subsequently, some timelines were shifted. To communicate the information to the team and to the public, a gnat chart was created reflecting the greenhouse gas emissions sub-elements. Most actions have distinct start and end times with many actions ongoing. Most actions are beginning in 2030 to meet the first greenhouse gas emissions reduction goal. Timelines were shifted to align with the urgency of the climate crisis and not necessarily only responsive to the state of government.

**NEXT MEETING DATE:** The next meeting is on February 11, 2025.

**ADJOURNMENT:** **Commissioner Edwards moved, seconded by Commissioner Staff, to adjourn the meeting at 8:20 p.m. A voice vote approved the motion unanimously.**

Prepared by Valerie L. Gow, Recording Secretary/President  
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