

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

PRESENT: Planning Commission Chair Elizabeth Robbins and Commissioners Grace Edwards, Terry Kirkpatrick, Brian Schumacher, Meghan Sullivan, Michael Tobias, and Kelly Von Holtz.

Excused: Commissioner Anthony Varela.

Staff: Planning Manager Brad Medrud and Land Use and Housing Planner Erika Smith-Erickson.

CHANGES TO AGENDA: A discussion on the role between the Planning Commission and the Tree Board was added to the agenda.

**NOVEMBER 8, 2022
PLANNING
COMMISSION
MEETING
MINUTES:**

**JANUARY 24, 2023
PLANNING
COMMISSION
MEETING
MINUTES:**

MOTION: **Commissioner Tobias moved, seconded by Commissioner Von Holtz, to approve the minutes of November 8, 2022 and January 24, 2023 as published. A voice vote approved the motion unanimously.**

COMMISSIONER'S REPORTS: There were no reports.

MANAGER'S REPORT: Manager Medrud introduced the department's new Land Use and Housing Planner, Erika Smith-Erickson who recently joined the City.

Manager Medrud reported on the recent community conversation on the Street Tree Plan. A second community conversation is scheduled on Monday, March 20, 2023. A community conversation on the landscape code update is scheduled on April 13, 2023. All meetings are in-person and virtual. In-person meetings will be held at the Tumwater Fire Department Training Room.

PUBLIC COMMENT: **Amy Tousley** said she serves as the Local Manager with Puget Sound Energy and is engaging with local cities and Thurston County on the periodic update of the comprehensive plan.

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Jerome Tuaño said he is representing the *JOLT* and had no additional comments.

2025
COMPREHENSIVE
PLAN PERIODIC
UPDATE PROCESS
– DRAFT
COMMUNITY
OUTREACH PLAN:

Manager Medrud reported the briefing is to review and discuss the Draft Community Outreach Plan for the Comprehensive Plan periodic update.

State law mandates a periodic update of the Tumwater Comprehensive Plan and development regulations every ten years. The last update was completed in 2016. The next update is due on June 30, 2025. Direction from the Mayor and the Council was not to pursue a wholesale revision of the Comprehensive Plan but to account for all changes in state requirements and the growth of the City through annexations and population growth.

The update process also includes outreach beyond the Planning Commission and the City Council. The purpose of the discussion is to identify ways of seeking input from residents, workers in the City, and others to engage with them on the update process. A draft of the outreach plan identifies some audiences to reach and the methods for outreaching those audiences, as well as a draft outreach schedule.

Because of new legislation, the City's Housing Element will substantially change requiring a more extensive update than in the past. The City receives a population projection from the state requiring the cities and the county to allocate growth across the county. The City must also account for housing for each economic strata. The City is required to identify the number of housing units necessary to meet each income level and how many housing units are over or under the targeted level.

Staff identified the need to identify areas where the City is underperforming and establish realistic policies to achieve the targets. In some cases, it may entail considering the broader picture. The City allows different development densities to enable the development of housing to support different populations. Areas to explore are identifying areas served by transit, exploring the probability of extending transit service in other areas, and considering some level of expanding development incentives for building affordable housing. Previously, the Council adopted a resolution in 2018 outlining a series of actions to address homelessness and affordable housing. The City has progressed on many of the goals to address homelessness through its work with the other jurisdictions under the Regional Housing Council. The City enacted changes to Title 18 in the Tumwater Municipal Code to reduce parking requirements, expanded zoning districts allowing duplexes, added specific incentives for developers to construct affordable housing by increasing height and density, and adjusted the City's fee structure to offer property tax exemptions for multifamily development meeting specific goals for affordable housing. Housing will be

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a primary driver of the periodic update.

Commissioner Kirkpatrick asked how the update will account for people living in Tumwater but working in another community and those who work in Tumwater but live in other communities. An examination of the population in Tumwater will likely result in a dysfunctional figure because people who need to live in affordable and low-cost housing are not living in the City because of the lack of low-cost housing. Manager Medrud advised that it is an issue addressed to Department of Commerce staff because it speaks to a closed border approach. It is difficult to address; however, the structure directed by the state focuses on the current population of Tumwater and ways to account for different income populations in the future. Staff is working on a number of background issues, such as the issue of allocating the countywide population forecast as Thurston County receives one forecast for the entire county. Staff continues to work with Thurston Regional Planning Council (TRPC) to allocate the forecast across the jurisdictions to enable the City to plan for the future. Also under discussion is how the forecast will affect affordable housing because each jurisdiction is now required to provide housing for different income levels.

Commissioner Von Holtz commented that another source for data is through the Department of Social and Health Services (DSHS), which collects data either by county or local jurisdiction on the households eligible to receive different types of services. The information is available online. She offered to follow-up with some information.

Chair Robbins suggested inviting a staff member from TRPC to provide the Commission with a synopsis of its analysis, particularly the recent 2020 Census, as well as information on previous trends. Manager Medrud said he would follow-up with TRPC staff. However, it is important to note that TRPC is not the final decision-maker on the allocation of future population. Manager Medrud recommended scheduling a TRPC briefing following a discussion on the larger issue of the countywide population allocation.

Commissioner Von Holtz added that the Department of Commerce administers the Housing Essential Needs Program and has data on individuals who are eligible for housing assistance.

Manager Medrud reported staff is working closely with the City's communications staff for assistance with the outreach process. Staff is working on developing the work program over the next several months for approval in April. The plan will include all forms of public outreach. The current Land Use Element within the Comprehensive Plan includes a section on public engagement and coordination. Staff plans to utilize a similar approach. Additionally, staff will seek opportunities to engage with the City's other boards and commissions. The update process is similar to the

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City's regular ordinance process except that the process will be broader. The review structure begins with the general topics followed by the elements within plan with the Commission reviewing each element and providing feedback. Another goal is producing a much shorter and user-friendly document.

Manager Medrud shared information on the transition of the new City Administrator and whether it might affect any of the update parameters established under City Administrator Doan and the City Council in terms of a shorter, leaner, and more user friendly Comprehensive Plan.

Manager Medrud said one favorable example of a comprehensive plan staff reviewed is the City of SeaTac Comprehensive Plan comprised of two elements with one focusing on policies and objectives and the second containing technical information and supporting documentation.

The role of the Commission is to consider the bigger picture with specific reviews of each element within the plan and its affect on the overall plan. Following the Commission's review of the elements and plans, the formal ordinance adoption will begin with one hearing scheduled for the entire plan, which may include multiple hearings dependent upon the issues and community input. Following the conclusion of the public hearing and any additional review and deliberation, the Commission forwards a recommendation to the City Council.

Manager Medrud outlined goals for the periodic update community outreach effort.

1. Provide information to help community understanding of issues.
2. Seek early and continuous involvement from people who care about the Plan and the community.
3. Offer opportunities for the community to provide feedback to staff, and appointed and elected officials.
4. Make the process accessible and engaging for everyone.
5. Make community-driven planning the priority for this Plan.
6. Highlight projects implemented since the last Comprehensive Plan periodic update.
7. Use a flexible, phased approach.
8. Integrate and consolidate goals from all Elements of this Plan and resource Plans.
9. Develop a Comprehensive Plan that is in an easy to read and understandable format.
10. Rely on multiple communication media to share information.

Not included within the list of goals is the larger equity issue that will be incorporated within all discussions as part of the update in addition to climate resiliency.

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Manager Medrud referred members to Appendix A, a preliminary list of all stakeholders identified to date. He encouraged members to review the list and offer any additional information on other stakeholders to include.

The Commission will review the information again in March to consider feedback and comments prior to finalization of the outreach plan.

The Community Outreach Plan will include a number of ways to engage the community. Media used in the periodic update process includes email contact list, City Council and Planning Commission discussions, surveys, an updated webpage with materials associated with the periodic update, social media updates, notice of community meetings, press releases and media advertisements, open houses to discuss the periodic update with the community prior to the start of and during the legislative process, Planning Commission public hearing, worksessions, and briefings, City Council, General Government, and Public Works Committee briefings, and City Council public hearing and worksessions.

The timeline for community outreach is in three phases. The first phase of community outreach begins in winter 2023 and runs through summer 2023. The second phase is plan development beginning in summer 2023 through spring of 2024. The third phase is the legislative process beginning in summer 2024 through June 30, 2025 to complete a draft of the Comprehensive Plan Elements and Plans. The Planning Commission will hold a number of worksessions to discuss the Comprehensive Plan Elements and Plans followed by a public hearing to receive community comments on the draft Comprehensive Plan before developing findings of fact, conclusions, and forming a recommendation to the City Council.

Chair Robbins commented on the principle of “meeting people where they are” and asked for additional information on available platforms to contact the community as a variety of platforms are necessary to reach the community. Manager Medrud affirmed the intent of utilizing a variety of social media platforms, as well as meeting with community members. During the previous update, staff scheduled a series of coffee chats around the community with staff available to answer questions. Staff supports a similar approach for this update with appropriate advertising to the community in addition to other community meetings and person-to-person contacts.

Chair Robbins recommended contacting local schools, colleges, and universities, as well large employers who publish newsletters for possible inclusion of information on the periodic update of the Comprehensive Plan and ways to become involved.

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Commissioner Edwards recommended including an explanation in any public information as to why people should care about becoming involved in the periodic update in terms of personnel or community impacts.

Commissioner Sullivan suggested offering an opportunity to compete for a prize by contributing their email address to add to the email list.

The Commission supported offering surveys, as many people are unable to attend meetings for a variety of reasons. Commissioners suggested sharing information on the update during movie nights in the park or other community events and working with larger organizations and academic institutions on ways to convey City messaging to assist in overcoming trust issues.

Commissioner Schumacher requested information on the breakdown of the square footage cost for different types of housing excluding land.

Chair Robbins commented that a schematic of the update timeline, community outreach and engagement, and the legislative process would be helpful to track the many moving parts of the update. Manager Medrud said the request is appropriate because staff has developed schematics of other large projects as a way to track progress.

Commissioner Edwards suggested following up with people at the end of the process and thanking them for their feedback. It would also be important to share how their feedback was considered or incorporated within the document. Manager Medrud responded on ways staff can follow-up with community members based on previous processes.

Commissioner Schumacher recommended sending a letter to all homeowner associations inviting their participation and feedback and encouraging them to include information on the update on their HOA website or Facebook page.

Commissioner Tobias added that another possibility is including information on NextDoor. Commissioners acknowledged that posting information on numerous platforms would be unrealistic for staff to monitor, which speaks to the importance of not only providing the notice but also including a link to the City. Other suggestions included placing ads about the update on some social media platforms.

Manager Medrud reported that as part of the process, the City is also updating development regulations, which for the most part, have been largely updated. Depending upon the extent of changes to the Comprehensive Plan, an opportunity exists to update comparable development regulations. Several updates were also deferred from the previous amendment cycle that

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will be included in this update cycle such as Essential Public Facilities.

Manager Medrud requested submittal of comments and feedback on the materials presented in the agenda packet by March 13, 2023.

**ROLE OF TREE
BOARD AND
PLANNING
COMMISSION:**

Manager Medrud reported on discussions with some Commissioners and Councilmembers concerning the larger update process for the Urban Forestry Management Plan and various regulations in support of the plan. One question addressed was the role of various board and commissions during the update process. Some concerns conveyed by some Commissioners and Councilmembers was the expertise represented on the Tree Board and that some were uncomfortable asking some questions. The Tree Board structure is specifically defined in the City's code similar to the Historic Preservation Commission with some seats to be filled by professionals pertinent to the mission of the body. The Tree Board's structure includes four such positions to be filled by landscape architects or arborists/foresters. The Planning Commission's role is responsible for the broader vision of the community pertaining to development policies and codes for land use and transportation affecting the community's functions and aesthetics. The role of a Commissioner is that of a broader generalist position. Tree Board members are experts in the function of trees and individual situations whereas the Planning Commission is responsible for offering recommendations to the City Council on ordinances or regulatory changes. Commissioners who are uncomfortable because of the lack of understanding a particular issue but need to ask questions can do so through a variety of methods either directly or through staff. Staff can provide information and assistance to Commissioners to ensure they have the necessary information and are comfortable in those situations.

Chair Robbins encouraged Commissioners to actively participate, ask questions, or share specific situations during meetings.

Commissioner Tobias commented that during joint meetings, some individuals contribute information much more than others that can often affect the equilibrium of the meeting environment. In those instances, other members are less likely to contribute to avoid prolonging either the topic or the length of the meeting. It is important for all members to have an opportunity to share or offer information, such as encouraging comments from members who have not contributed to the conversation.

Commissioner Kirkpatrick referred to the housing discussion. The City of Tumwater recently modified zoning to enable duplexes in other zoning districts with some limitations in terms of the number. The Legislature is considering legislation to allow duplexes in zoning districts with no limitations. Manager Medrud replied that staff is currently in a holding pattern in terms of action by the Legislature as it is likely some housing bills

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will pass. Staff continues to track those bills. One bill under consideration is affording a tree fund bank for tree protection to promote more affordable housing. The bills have since been amended. Staff is also monitoring the timelines for some of the legislation that might pass.

NEXT MEETING: The next meeting is a joint meeting with the Tree Board on March 14, 2023.

ADJOURNMENT: **Commissioner Tobias moved, seconded by Commissioner Sullivan, to adjourn the meeting at 8:19 p.m. A voice vote approved the motion unanimously.**

Prepared by Valerie Gow, Recording Secretary/President
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