

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

PRESENT: Chair Elizabeth Robbins and Commissioners Terry Kirkpatrick, Brandon Staff, Michael Tobias, and Anthony Varela.

Absent: Commissioner Grace Edwards.

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

CHANGES TO AGENDA: There were no changes to the agenda.

COMMISSIONER'S REPORTS: Chair Robbins reported on recent interviews of Commission candidates with Mayor Sullivan and Manager Medrud. Several more interviews are scheduled to fill all vacant positions on the Commission by October.

MANAGER'S REPORT: Manager Medrud reported one of the interviewees was recommended for appointment. Two other candidates for other City Commissions also applied for the Planning Commission. A meeting is planned with both candidates on Friday, August 16, 2024. He anticipates all appointments to be completed by the Commission's second meeting in September.

Manager Medrud invited members to meet with him and Chair Robbins individually to track progress and review efforts on the Comprehensive Plan update. He plans to contact members in late September and October to schedule meetings.

Manager Medrud announced the Climate Element Open house scheduled on Wednesday, August 14, 2024 at the ASHHO Cultural Community Center in Tumwater. Information is available online under the Comprehensive Plan Update webpage. An accompanying online component will be offered through the end of September 2024.

PUBLIC COMMENT: Warren Hendrickson offered public comments later in the meeting due to difficulties with his audio connection.

2025 COMPREHENSIVE PLAN PERIODIC UPDATE – DOCUMENT FORMAT: Manager Medrud reviewed the proposed new document format for the Comprehensive Plan Periodic Update. The intent is updating the entire format of the plan with the exception of the Parks, Recreation, and Open Space Plan. The update of the Economic Development Plan is pending based on contracting with a consultant to assist in developing a draft plan. All other elements will be formatted based on the proposed draft.

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The Introduction Plan includes a Goals and Policy Guide and a User Guide for the community describing the purpose and importance of the Comprehensive Plan. The Goals and Policy Guide will combine all goals and policies from all elements in one location.

Each element and plan will each have a section. For example, the Land Use and Climate Elements will include goals, policies, implementation chapter, and a separate technical guide.

The Plan Introduction serves as the foundation of the Comprehensive Plan covering the overall vision, mission, and the Council's strategic priorities. The Plan Introduction includes Growth Management Act (GMA) goals.

The Countywide Planning Policies are identified as a separate Appendix. The Urban Growth Area Subcommittee is comprised of elected officials and others administered by the Thurston Regional Planning Council to explore the possibility of amending the Countywide Planning Policies. Before an update of the Comprehensive Plan, the Countywide Planning Policies are typically updated as they serve as the policies guiding the cities and Thurston County for growth in the urban growth areas, annexations, and expansions of urban growth boundaries. The policies have not been updated since 2015 and because of the lack of capacity to update the entire plan, one policy will be added for tribal communications because of recent state legislation expanding requirements for tribes to be included in the comprehensive plan process. Other amendments have been proposed; however, most of the planning directors within the county prefer not addressing those amendments because of time constraints. Each element references the appropriate GMA goal(s) or policies within the Countywide Planning Policies.

Another section in the Plan Introduction speaks to an ongoing review program. New state law requires jurisdictions to monitor the Housing Element after five years to measure the effectiveness of the element and any needed amendments. A schedule will be included for review of all elements as part of the annual amendment cycle. The annual amendment process and periodic update process are also included as well as some provisions applicable to public participation. Another section addresses implementation and coordination with other jurisdictions, tribes, and across City departments.

The section on overall plan goals is in progress and includes new

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language. The section identifies similarities across all elements that speak to engagement of the community, implementation actions to support the goals, a coordination goal, and a community vibrancy goal. The Comprehensive Plan serves as the map for the City's investments. Community vibrancy attempts to capture what makes the City special. Equity, climate resilience, fiscal stewardship, and environmental justice will be added as goals.

Manager Medrud reviewed how the overall goals, policies, and implementations are formatted within the Plan Introduction. The goal includes policies and implementation actions. The information includes the identification of leads (department or position) responsible for completing the actions. A general timeline is included pertinent to each action.

Staff is considering the placement of How to Use the Comprehensive Plan within the User Guide.

The last section walks the reader through each of the elements comprised of a two-page introduction to the element, why it is important, and how it relates to the entire plan. Language is from the 2016 User Guide but will be updated to reflect the updated Comprehensive Plan.

Commissioner Kirkpatrick asked whether digital links would be provided to the digital draft document. Manager Medrud responded that the Comprehensive Plan is intended to be published as an online document. Hyperlinks will be included within the document to link supporting documents and other information, as well as hyperlinks to the definitions.

Commissioner Varela asked whether there has been an accessibility review of the document, such as color coding, text, and for speech. Manager Medrud explained that the process will be completed as the document is finalized. The City's new Communications Manager and staff will meet with staff to discuss accessibility issues associated with the document. The update process will include conversations on how to ensure the Comprehensive Plan is accessible to everyone.

Chair Robbins suggested that since the Plan is a living document, it would be beneficial to highlight both new and changes since the last update, as well as notating progress on actions. Manager Medrud said most of the Plan will include new information rather than transferring existing information from the 2016 Comprehensive Plan.

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Planner Smith-Erickson described how tracking is documented and accomplished for the Housing Mitigation Plan that identifies new, modified, existing, and status. A requirement of the Housing Mitigation Plan includes tracking progress on goals and initiatives. It may be possible to include a table in the Comprehensive Plan similar to the one included in the Housing Mitigation Plan.

Manager Medrud added that during the development of the Housing Action Plan, a list was included in the appendix of existing goals, policies, or actions that were not included. The information identifies why the information was not included. It may be possible to mimic a similar process for the Comprehensive Plan.

Commissioner Tobias recommended that any links that are external to the document should not create the inability to return to the main document. Manager Medrud advised that one way of controlling the issue is ensuring all links are to internal sources rather than to sources outside of the City.

Manager Medrud displayed the draft Utilities Element and reviewed the layout of the different sections within the element. The draft includes a summary of the element's overarching goals and details on the goals explaining the purpose of the goal and individual policies and action items with leads identified. He reviewed the technical guide of the Utilities Element. The technical guide is used to justify capital projects, as well as ensuring sufficient infrastructure is in place to serve new development. In some circumstances, the guide serves as the justification for development permit reviews.

Commissioner Staff asked whether the City has considered ways to streamline development permitting processes. Manager Medrud affirmed that staff is devoting time to streamline permitting processes based on direction from new legislation for permit reforms requiring jurisdictions to review the entire permitting process and timing and adjust the City's code to adhere to the new timelines. Staff is working on drafting an ordinance by the end of August to meet the state's deadline of January 1, 2025. Staff is reviewing the entire permitting process to ensure it works effectively internally and to meet new state requirements.

PUBLIC COMMENT
(CONTINUED):

Warren Hendrickson, Director of Operations, Port of Olympia, said he served previously as the Airport Senior Manager. Within the Land Use Element of the Comprehensive Plan, he asked for an additional goal recognizing airport properties as a public facility. The City should consider the experience of Snohomish County when it undertook a similar comprehensive plan update under the

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GMA that included a separate section within its land use capabilities of the six public use airports that are located within Snohomish County. The Olympia Regional Airport is the only public use airport with paved runways in Thurston County. Including the properties would address compatible land use requirements that ultimately would be included in the Tumwater Municipal Code, as well as updating the Airport Overlay (zone), which was adopted in 2004 and updated by Washington State Department of Transportation Aviation in 2011 to include an additional zone. The intent is to create compatible use guidelines and consideration of an Aviation Easement to advise residential properties they live within close proximity of a public use airport. It is also a way to notify future landowners and residents of their location with respect to the airport, as well as helpful to the airport for community outreach and addressing noise complaints and issues that might be affected by the operation of the Aviation Division. He added that he and Manager Medrud work closely together on a number of different issues.

Chair Robbins said she believes the comments speak to provisions within the Transportation Element. Manager Medrud said the goals and policies address the airport, the land use, and the impacts. The airport is acknowledged as a transportation land use. Because the airport is not a City facility but a coordinated facility within the property of the Port of Olympia, the City is only responsible for permitting development on the properties. The overall master planning and future land use on the property fall under the purview of the Port of Olympia.

**2025 COMPREHENSIVE
PLAN PERIODIC UPDATE –
HOUSING:**

Planner Smith-Erickson updated members on the status of the update of the Housing Element. She reviewed several important terms within the Housing Element:

- *Displacement* is the process in which a household is forced to move from its community because of conditions beyond its control. Three types of displacement include physical displacement (forced to move for reasons of eviction, foreclosure, natural disasters or deterioration in housing quality), economic displacement (households are compelled to move because of rising rent or cost of home ownership), and cultural displacement (residents are compelled to move because of people and institutions that make up the community have left the area).
- *Racially disparate* impacts occur when policies, practices, rules, or other systems result in a disproportionate impact on one or more racial groups.

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The current Housing Element included 13 goals, which have been reduced to five goals. Goals from the Housing Action Plan, which informs the Comprehensive Plan, were moved to the draft Housing Element along with more policies and actions. In addition to addressing legislative changes, the GMA, Countywide Planning Policies, and the Department of Commerce Guidance and Checklists, the policies were strengthened through active statements of impact. Actions are included for the policies to document progress.

The update included identifying barriers and limitations on housing production, identifying policies and regulations that contribute to racially disparate impacts, displacement, and exclusion in housing, documenting programs and actions needed to achieve housing availability, developing goals, objectives, and mandatory provisions for housing, identifying and implementing policies and regulations to address and begin to undo racially disparate impacts, displacement, and exclusion in housing.

Based on 2021 legislation through House Bill 1181, the City is required to incorporate consideration for environmental justice – the fair treatment and meaningful involvement of all people regardless of race, color, national origin, or income with respect to the development, implementation, and enforcement of environmental laws, rules, and policies, or all laws, rules, and policies within environmental impacts by vulnerable populations and overburdened communities.

Planner Smith-Erickson reviewed draft new goals:

- **H-1 Increase the supply and variety of housing for every income and age group.** The goal is based in part on the Tumwater Housing Action Plan Strategy 1: “Increase the supply of permanent, income-restricted affordable housing.” Existing Goals H-4, H-5, H-7, H-9, and H-10 are now new policies. The new goal is intended to conserve and improve existing City housing stock and quality of life of neighborhoods.

Commissioner Tobias referred to a new action of H-1.1.1 Establish City programs to offset the displacement of existing housing and community members by new housing development. He asked how new development would contribute to the displacement of existing housing. Planner Smith-Erickson explained that new housing can often

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increase property taxes or require existing housing to convert to City utilities, which could negatively impact existing housing. Commissioner Kirkpatrick cited an example as an existing home replaced with a multifamily development.

Commissioner Staff spoke in support of new policy “H-1.4 Encourage innovative plans, codes, standards, and procedures to take advantage of the best private and public sector approaches to affordable housing.” The policy can lead to creative outcomes. Many developers and real estate professionals are seeking more innovation in housing as it has been lacking because it is not accessible or the permitting process is laborious creating disincentives to pursue innovative development.

Commissioner Kirkpatrick referred to language that speaks to “encourage” versus “require.” In some of the provisions, “require” is included where it might not be reflective of the City’s authority to “require.” He suggested reviewing the document for provisions with “require” to review existing City processes that require a specific action.

Planner Smith-Erickson explained that the draft includes some proactive and innovative goals that were included based on feedback from other staff members. Staff will review the language.

Manager Medrud added that the draft addressing disadvantaged communities or lower incomes includes much more aggressive language in policies and actions. There likely will be more instances of “strongly encourage” for many of the policies and actions.

Commissioner Kirkpatrick offered that any requirement will require an ordinance and most importantly, will require the City to develop a system to enforce requirements.

Manager Medrud responded that the regional land capacity analysis is being completed by TRPC. The draft will inform goals, policies, and actions in the Housing Element. It is likely the City will need more housing units than currently forecasted and more of those housing units would likely be affordable to those with a household income of 80% of area median income. To achieve that goal, the City will need to develop stronger provisions.

Chair Robbins cited new policy, “H-1.3 Direct multifamily, mixed use, and high density residential development along urban corridors and into urban centers to support place-making opportunities.” She asked staff to speak to the location of that type of development in the City.

Manager Medrud said the language of “urban corridors” is from the 2016 Housing Element. In Tumwater, the location of urban corridors includes the Brewery District, Capitol Boulevard Corridor, Tumwater Town Center, and the Littlerock Road area. The element also identifies small neighborhood centers, which may be too small to develop; however other options are available to achieve goals.

Planner Smith-Erickson said that language could be added identifying those specific areas. Chair Robbins commented on the importance of including other smaller opportunity area/sites in addition to the larger corridor areas.

Commissioner Staff commented on naming conventions of different areas and including information on resources each center offers as a way to attract future development opportunities if some areas lack specific types of services.

Manager Medrud said some language within the existing element could be reviewed and incorporated within the update, such as language that speaks to 20-minute neighborhoods to provide more detail as to the types of development envisioned for those areas.

Chair Robbins suggested considering other types of placemaking opportunities, such as locations or City-owned properties for festivals or pop-up markets that support the community.

- **H-2 Expand the supply of permanent, income-restricted affordable housing.** The new goal addresses new state requirements and GMA goals. The term “inclusionary zoning” is defined as to incentivize new housing either as mandatory or often voluntary affordable housing with new development.

Manager Medrud added that inclusionary zoning can include a realm of options such as incentives in exchange for a certain number of units to meet the requirement.

Planner Smith-Erickson added that the City prefers not creating concentrations of affordable housing but a mix of incomes to ensure equitability.

- **H-3 Maintain and improve existing housing stock.** A new goal from existing goal (H-8) and policy (H-1.1) to support healthy residential neighborhoods which continue to reflect a high degree of pride in ownership or residency.

Commissioner Staff asked whether the goal is currently in place.

Manager Medrud advised of the City's regulatory basis to oversee property maintenance within the City's nuisance codes and the property maintenance code. The next step is some level of inspection and enforcement.

Planner Smith-Erickson said the goal is also included in the Housing Action Plan as the plan guides the City's Housing Element that is enforced by the City's Development Code.

Commissioner Kirkpatrick cited an example of a housing situation in Lacey that creates conflicts between enforcement action and displacement of individuals. The conflict is avoiding displacement while also enforcing maintenance of facilities.

- **H-4 Make it easier for households to access housing and stay housed.** Included as a new goal from Housing Action Plan – Strategy 2: Make it easier for households to access housing and stay housed. The goal can range from supportive housing, home ownership, or rental assistance.

Chair Robbins asked whether the City offers insurance cost assistance such as a homeowner that may be reluctant to rent because of the cost of insurance.

Manager Medrud said that type of situation has not been encountered by the City. However, staff is exploring mechanisms to support mortgages for the disadvantaged or for projects serving the needs of different groups of people. The City is planning for housing units based on revised housing allocations that include both the City and its urban growth area.

Planner Smith-Erickson added that some policies address

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organizations that help perspective homeowners with financial assistance (down payment) or rental assistance. It is important to include policies that are applicable to both homeowners and renters. Policy H-4.3 speaks to developing policies to protect vulnerable populations from displacement and inflated housing costs when on fixed incomes. The policy was generated from discussions on housing land trusts and manufactured home parks. Other types of housing would be applicable as well that are experiencing an increase in rents.

Commissioner Kirkpatrick asked whether the goals and policies also speak to identifying additional areas suitable for siting new mobile home parks.

Manager Medrud said the issue is interesting, as the state has invested funds for new development of mobile home parks. However, at this time, the City is not pursuing a similar process because the market is not producing new mobile home parks. It is important to retain existing mobile home parks while ensuring units are upgraded over time as the housing units deteriorate faster than regular built homes.

Chair Robbins asked whether any data are available that speaks to how economic activity may drive rent or housing costs, such as the presence of short-term rentals (Airbnb).

Manager Medrud advised that specialized areas, such as resort towns, may experience issues. The Housing Action Plan addresses tracking and if it becomes an issue, the City would address it in the future. Spot checks of Airbnbs in the City have not eliminated housing stock at this time. The City has adopted regulations for both enforcement and monitoring.

Planner Smith-Erickson advised that new Action, "H-4.3.4 Streamline housing development by reviewing the permitting requirements and processes under Title 14" should be corrected to reflect new Policy H-4.5.

- **H-5 Continually build on resources and collaboration to improve implementation of housing strategies.** A new goal from Housing Action Plan – Strategy 2: Continually build on resources and collaboration to improve implementation of housing strategies.

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Planner Smith-Erickson reviewed the accompanying draft Policies and Actions.

Commissioner Kirkpatrick questioned the difference in two policies addressing the establishment of permanent source of funding for low-income housing.

Manager Medrud advised that the policies should address the construction of housing and support of low-income housing with wrap around services and other forms of support. Funding for housing is from Home Fund dollars collected specifically for housing or the City applying for housing-specific grants rather than the City's general fund. Grants require adequate staff resources for monitoring the contracts and seeking other opportunities for funding. The City of Olympia has approximately five employees dedicated to affordable housing. The City of Tumwater would need more resources to manage grants and to be more proactive. The intent of the Regional Housing Council is to consolidate resources to manage housing funds and contracts.

Planner Smith-Erickson encouraged Commissioners to contact her with any feedback or comments on the draft Housing Element.

Manager Medrud added that the documentation includes all goals, policies, and actions within the existing plan that were not carried forward in the new draft plan.

NEXT MEETING DATE:

Manager Medrud said the pending transportation tour has been rescheduled to the first meeting in October. No agenda topics are scheduled for the next regular meeting on August 27, 2024.

MOTION:

Commissioner Staff moved, seconded by Commissioner Tobias, to cancel the Commission's August 27, 2024 meeting. A voice vote approved the motion unanimously.

ADJOURNMENT:

Commissioner Tobias moved, seconded by Commissioner Kirkpatrick, to adjourn the meeting at 8:32 p.m. A voice vote approved the motion unanimously.