

**TUMWATER GENERAL GOVERNMENT COMMITTEE
MINUTES OF VIRTUAL MEETING
JANUARY 8, 2025 PAGE 1**

CONVENE: 8:00 a.m.

PRESENT: Chair Michael Althausser and Councilmembers Joan Cathey and Leatta Dahlhoff.

Staff: City Administrator Lisa Parks, City Attorney Karen Kirkpatrick, Community Development Department Director Michael Matlock, Finance Department Director Troy Niemeyer, Water Resources and Sustainability Department Director Dan Smith, Deputy Director of Community Development Department Brad Medrud, Sustainability Manager Alyssa Jones Wood, Housing and Land Use Planner Erika Smith-Erickson, and Associate Planner Dana Bowers.

CHANGES TO AGENDA: A discussion on committee meeting times was added to the end of the agenda.

2025 COMPREHENSIVE PLAN PERIODIC UPDATE – CLIMATE ELEMENT: Councilmember Cathey commented that her review of the draft Climate Element struck a chord with the recent fires in her hometown in California that are likely to be attributed to the effects of climate change creating a horrific situation for those who lost their homes and livelihoods.

Manager Jones Wood presented the draft Climate Element and reviewed the goals and timelines within the draft. The draft Climate Element was released for public review.

The new Climate Element is in response to the effects of climate change as well as a mandate by the state to develop the element with specific requirements to include a Climate Mitigation Sub-Element to reduce greenhouse gas emissions, vehicle miles traveled, and achieving new greenhouse gas emissions reduction targets, and a Climate Resilience Sub-Element addressing climate adaptation. Environmental justice is also required throughout the new element.

Community engagement to date includes the establishment of a Climate Policy Advisory Team (CPAT) comprised of individuals from affected communities and stakeholders. The CPAT reviews drafts of the Climate Element and provides comments and feedback.

Manager Jones Wood reviewed the numerous types of public engagement and outreach efforts staff has completed to date to receive comments and feedback on the Climate Element.

Three overarching goals in the Climate Element are intended to focus on greenhouse gas emissions mitigation and adaptation:

- Ensuring environmental justice by providing all members of the Tumwater community with an equitable opportunity to learn about

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climate impacts, influence policy decisions, and take actions to enhance community resilience.

- Increase the City’s capacity to implement climate action priorities.
- Address that changing weather and climate patterns driven by human generated emissions will affect every aspect of life in Tumwater and plan for impacts such as increased heat, wildfire, and flooding while working to reduce local emissions.

Goals in the Climate Mitigation Sub-Element include:

- 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.
- Expand the use of on-site renewable energy technology (e.g., solar photovoltaics, battery storage, etc.) across all building types by providing funds, code changes, and educational programs.
- 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 multi-modal transportation options and the use of public transit throughout and beyond Tumwater.
- 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.

At least one goal is required for different sectors in the Resilience Sub-Element. Sectors include *Agriculture & Food Systems, Buildings & Energy, Cultural Resource, Economic Development, Ecosystems, Transportation, Waste Management, Water Resources, and Zoning & Development.*

Resilience Sub-Element goals for the sectors include:

- Ensure that buildings and energy infrastructure can accommodate renewable energy opportunities, keep the community safe, and can withstand and recover from extreme weather and natural hazards worsened by climate change.
- Increase preparedness for acute climate impacts and improve the resilience of Tumwater’s people and systems against climate hazards.
- Preserve, protect, and sustain cultural sites and resources in alignment with the values and needs of Tribes, traditional stewards, and frontline communities.
- With climate, growth, and environmental changes in mind,

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identify and elevate the protection of key habitats, ecosystem services, and wildlife corridors. With climate, growth, and environmental changes in mind, identify and elevate the protection of key habitats, ecosystem services, and wildlife corridors.

- Ensure that zoning and development decisions support compact urban development, prevent displacement, and foster system-wide resilience, including a resilient local economy.
- Ensure that the local transportation system, including infrastructure, routes, and non-motorized travel modes, fosters connectivity and can withstand and recover quickly from climate impacts.
- Protect and improve water quality and availability.
- Expand local food justice to address climate impacts and increase access to nourishing, affordable, culturally appropriate, and climate-friendly foods while expanding local use of composting.

Councilmember Dahlhoff questioned how the goals also support rural areas of the City in terms of the lack of transit services and the many households not served by City water and sewer utilities. Manager Jones Wood responded that she would review the document from that perspective while also noting that the City is charged with planning for an increase in the population through compact urban development. The goals that often align with rural areas are ecosystem services, wildlife corridors, and preserving habitat and cultural sites. The conflict is the requirement that the City must reduce vehicle miles traveled in areas that do not have access to light rail or other rapid transit services. The City is dependent upon Intercity Transit expanding bus service to other areas of the City.

Councilmember Dahlhoff commented on the importance of properly messaging the community while acknowledging that many areas lack sidewalks, transit service, or are not served by City utilities. Residents encounter difficulties in accessing areas that lack sidewalks and crosswalks. Often, areas in the City have county roads that are narrower and do not provide adequate space to add sidewalks. She spoke to the importance of residents supporting the goals if many are lacking the services as depicted in the goals.

Manager Jones Wood shared a Gantt chart of different actions categorized by starting/ending dates and ongoing actions by dates. Actions for the Climate Mitigation Sub-Element are concentrated within the next 6 years with many of the actions ongoing.

Actions for the Resilience Sub-Element are scheduled to begin in the next biennium due to funding; however, funding in the current biennium is available to initiate a vulnerability assessment of climate hazards in 2026 following the adoption of the Climate Element.

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Councilmember Cathey referred to some language within the element of allowed activities and uses that could occur within protected wetlands and fish and wildlife habitat conservation areas. The language is disturbing because uses are not allowed in protected areas. Manager Jones Wood explained that all protected areas require some form of maintenance, such as stormwater, beaver activity, or other maintenance activities associated with wetlands and protected habitat areas. It is important that those activities are allowed within those areas.

Councilmember Cathey shared some feedback from a local family tracking progress on the development of the Climate Element. They questioned why the City has not promoted transportation options with the school district to Black Hills High School as many students drive to school or their parents drop them off and pick them up at school. The resident inquired about the possibility of the City working with the schools to encourage students to ride school buses. She asked about the possibility of the City contacting the school district to discuss actions by the school district to reduce the impacts of climate change by encouraging students to use school buses for transportation to and from school. Manager Jones Wood affirmed the possibility of meeting with school officials to promote discussions to achieve the goal of increasing school bus utilization by students. During a recent event at the Tumwater Library, she spoke to several students from New Market Skills Center who addressed the need for bus expansion in Tumwater and the lack of any transit service to Black Lake High School. Similar comments were shared by several attendees during the open house in August 2024.

Councilmember Cathey said another resident spoke to her about the lack of food resources and residents being hungry. They questioned the possibility that food hunger exists in the City. Manager Jones Wood said she values the conversations and relationships she has established with many food bank clients at Mountain View Church during food distribution events. The department often provides a tabletop on a quarterly basis to share information about City services and programs and build relationships with food bank clients, volunteers, and staff.

Deputy Director Medrud referred to the conversation surrounding rural and urban services. Because the intent is to evolve and change over time, it is important to consider how those changes will occur in terms of more accessibility, sidewalks, and transportation options while preserving areas that need to be protected.

**ORDINANCE NO.
O2024-008, GENERAL
COMMERCIAL
RESIDENTIAL**

Deputy Director Medrud presented the proposed ordinance amending the code to allow specific residential uses within the General Commercial zone district. The proposal would allow high-intensity mixed-use residential use in response to development activity the City is

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**MIXED-USE
AMENDMENTS:**

experiencing in General Commercial zone districts, as well as to assist the City in meeting its housing goals.

Currently, residential uses allowed in the General Commercial zone are mixed-use development located within a certain distance of a state higher educational facility. He cited the example of the area surrounding the South Puget Sound Community College and residential uses supporting students living near the collage. Another allowed residential use is high-rise residential of five stories or more.

The City has been focusing efforts on transitioning both commercial and mixed use zones by requiring some level of mixed use development (residential use + commercial use). Currently, the City lacks land in the General Commercial zones for the most highest and intense commercial use within the City leading to some caution as to allowed uses in those areas. Staff recommends removing the high-rise residential as a conditional use within the zone and replacing the use as permitted for multi-family residential structures with minimum density of 40 dwelling units per acre that are part of a mixed-use development within the same structure or on the site. The first requirement is the density of 40 units per acre to ensure the most efficient use of the land and placement of residential uses in close proximity to general commercial uses to encourage walkability and the availability of local services.

The second component is to ensure a mix of non-residential and commercial uses within a mixed-use development. Proposed provisions require those commercial uses to occupy at least 25% of the total square footage of the structure (first floor of a four-story building). For uses located on the site, commercial use must be at least 40% of the total project site.

Deputy Director Medrud described the intent and outcome of the proposal in response to questions. The proposal was reviewed by the Planning Commission. The Commission conducted a public hearing on December 10, 2024 and recommended the Council approve the ordinance as presented. Staff requests the committee place the ordinance on the January 21, 2025 City Council Consideration Calendar with a recommendation to approve and authorize the Mayor to sign.

Councilmember Cathey asked whether the proposal would include existing commercial uses on site that could also include adding a residential element. Deputy Director Medrud said the option would be available to a property owner redeveloping the property. For example, an existing commercial use with extensive parking space could build a residential component if the development meets the density requirements and the site percentage requirements of residential and commercial uses. The proposal offers another option while avoiding just residential uses on

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commercial properties.

Councilmember Dahlhoff requested that the presentation to the Council include a map of all General Commercial zones in the City. She asked staff to describe the rationale for the required percentages of uses to avoid a sense that the amounts are arbitrary. Deputy Director Medrud explained that staff explored percentages by researching other examples and current activities in the market, as well as ensuring the percentages are appropriate for the City's environment. Once enacted, the percentages are non-negotiable. Throughout ongoing discussions with developers regarding the proposed changes, no developer addressed the percentages as problematic or unable to achieve.

Councilmember Cathey asked whether an affordable housing component is included in the proposal. Deputy Director Medrud advised that as part of the Housing Element and Development Code updates, staff is exploring affordable housing options as part of a comprehensive review. This proposal was focused to meet current needs.

In response to comments by the committee, Deputy Director Medrud said the proposal essentially removes the requirement for a conditional use permit to construct residential uses.

MOTION: Councilmember Cathey moved, seconded by Councilmember Dahlhoff, to recommend placement of Ordinance No. O2024-008 on the January 21, 2025, City Council consideration calendar with a recommendation to approve and authorize the Mayor to sign.

MEETING SCHEDULE: Chair Althausser reported on his work conflicts with the February, March, and April meetings. He asked about the potential of rescheduling the meetings on the Tuesday following the committee's second Wednesday of the month meeting.

City Administrator Parks advised that staff would communicate with members to ensure the rescheduled meetings are not in conflict with other meetings. The meetings will be published as "Special Meetings." Agendas for special meetings cannot be changed during a special meeting.

ADJOURNMENT: With there being no further business, Chair Althausser adjourned the meeting at 8:55 a.m.