

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

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

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

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

**APPROVAL OF  
MINUTES  
TUMWATER  
PLANNING  
COMMISSION:  
MARCH 26, 2024 &  
APRIL 23, 2024**

**MOTION:** **Commissioner Staff moved, seconded by Commissioner Edwards, to approve the minutes of March 26, 2024, and April 23, 2024, as published. A voice vote approved the motion unanimously.**

**COMMISSIONER'S REPORTS:** Chair Robbins advised of a call for the 4<sup>th</sup> of July Parade for judges. She encouraged Commissioners to consider volunteering as a judge.

**MANAGER'S REPORT:** Manager Medrud reported on ongoing recruitment efforts for an Associate Planner and Senior Planner, and possibly another position. Staff continues to seek candidates to fill vacancies on the Planning Commission. Some candidates have submitted an application for consideration. Staff is preparing for the Housing Element Open House on May 29, 2024, in-person at 7 p.m. in the Council Chambers in conjunction with an online component. A public notice is scheduled next week for the open house.

Planner Smith-Erickson advised of her plans to host a table display on Friday, May 10, 2024, at the Tumwater Library from 10 a.m. to 2 p.m. to engage members of the community as a follow-up to the community survey responses about public outreach. A housing survey has been developed and will be released following public notice of the open house. The survey will be available at the library as well. The online open house will feature a story map, a new survey, and interactive tools.

Manager Medrud reported staff has met numerous times with various stakeholders for the Housing Element to include service providers and developers. The input will help inform the open house and the update

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of the Housing Element.

Manager Medrud reported on a conversation with the Thurston County Planning Manager on the status of updating the Joint Plan for the urban growth area later in the year. As part of the process, a concurrent update of Development Code regulations will be completed. The activities will be reflected on an updated Commission meeting schedule.

**PUBLIC COMMENT:** There were no public comments.

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

Planner Baruch reported the last briefing on the Conservation Element was in October 2023. The briefing will review some of the background on required updates to meet recent state code changes and the updated format of the Conservation Element Goals, Policies, and Implementation Actions.

The Growth Management Act (GMA) requires the City to demonstrate that each element in the Comprehensive Plan meets the 15 planning goals. Two of the goals address natural resource industries and the environment. The Conservation Element includes specific guidelines and policies to ensure the viability of natural resource industries and activities. The Conservation Element also ensures the viability of natural resource industries in the City through the identification of such lands in the Conservation Element text and maps. The Legislature updated the Environment Goal in 2023 to add a requirement to enhance the environment. The Conservation Element contains specific policies related to air, water quality, water availability, and protection and preservation of critical areas. New regulations require addressing ways to enhance the environment. Additionally, each land use designation in the Conservation Element must be of an appropriate intensity in terms of location. Areas of environmental sensitivity need to be designated as open space or a lower intensity designation than other areas in the City.

During the 2016 update, best available science was included in the element. The City's Critical Areas Ordinance was subsequently amended to align with state requirements.

Topics for the 2025 update include incorporating environmental justice within goals and policies, discuss the use of habitat conservation plans and management of affected listed species and prairie ecosystems across private and public lands in the City, use best available science and update policies to designate and protect critical areas, use current data to update all maps within the Comprehensive Plan, move goals and policies related to climate mitigation and greenhouse gas emissions targets to the new Climate Element, add references to updated Shoreline Master Program, Thurston Climate Mitigation Plan, and the Urban Forestry Management Plan, update policies on urban agricultural,

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forestry resources lands, and mineral resource lands, update Tumwater Municipal Code, and simplify language within the goals, policies, and implementation actions.

Chair Robbins asked whether the recent adoption of the Urban Wildland Interface Code would be incorporated within the Conservation Element. Manager Medrud explained that because the Legislature essentially pulled most of the proposed changes, the result was direction to the Department of Natural Resources to complete new mapping. Changes in the code were minimal and addressed building requirements within designated areas, such as certain types of siding and roofing materials with no changes addressing vegetation outside the building envelope. Staff plans to address the Urban Wildland Interface Code through the Climate Element in the adaptation section of the Natural Hazard Mitigation Plan.

Planner Baruch reported the goals are statements of desired outcomes or intended achievements. Policies are specific statements that guide actions and provide a framework for future decision-making. Actions are specific implementations of goals and policies.

Planner Baruch commented on the importance of understanding policy strength continuum when developing goals and policies. He cited an example of the City of SeaTac's policies, goals, and actions reflective of a good example of how the city further categorized goals into subcategories. Staff proposes to update the format and incorporate active language.

Chair Robbins inquired about the timeline associated with completion of action items. Planner Baruch responded that the timeline will partially be dependent upon the budget and the ability of staff to implement some actions. The planning horizon is 20 years with many of the actions occurring throughout the 20 years while others may be continuous actions occurring over time.

Manager Medrud noted that one ongoing action would be updating regulations with best available science as new science becomes available. Other actions would be initiated through the Water Resources and Sustainability Department initiatives that are project-specific. Another good example is implementation of the City's Habitat Conservation Plan if approved by the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service. Implementation of the plan will cover a span of several years.

Commissioner Kirkpatrick noted that the City prioritized specific actions within the Urban Forestry Management Plan to account for funding and staff resource availability. He suggested implementing a similar approach in the Conservation Element.

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Planner Baruch reviewed a new spreadsheet format of columns depicting *New Goal New Policy New Action; Initial Staff Proposed Language; Staff Notes; Old Goal Old Policy Old Action; Current Goal, Policy, or Action; and Planning Commission Notes.*

Manager Medrud invited feedback on the proposed format. The intent is to utilize the spreadsheet format for all Comprehensive Plan Elements for consistency throughout the document.

Chair Robbins suggested adding information to the staff notes on potential outcomes or weaknesses that should be strengthened, as well as any costs attached to an action or additional costs required to achieve a particular goal.

Manager Medrud said the Commission's review of the material will overlap with feedback from other City departments. Staff will likely update the format based on internal reviews when the Commission reviews the information in June.

Planner Baruch described how the goals were grouped into three main categories with subcategories:

- Overarching Environment Goals:
  - Use Best Available Science
  - Promote natural resources conservation and critical area protection within the community
  - Enhance water quality
  - Enhance natural drainage systems
  - Improve air quality
- Environmentally Sensitive Areas:
  - Protect streams and lakes
  - Enhance wetlands
  - Protect groundwater
  - Protect geological hazardous areas
  - Preserve floodplains
  - Enhance wildlife habitat
- Natural Resource Areas:
  - Support Urban Agriculture
  - Support Urban Forestry
  - Protect Mineral Resources Lands

Planner Baruch invited comments and suggestions by May 31, 2024, to enable time to incorporate any changes for preparation for the next review on June 11, 2024.

Manager Medrud noted that the Commission is scheduled to review the

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complete draft of the updated Conservation Element in October to include all background information and policy language.

Commissioner Tobias inquired about the type of mineral resources lands concentrated primarily within the northwest area of the City. Manager Medrud said the largest area is the Black Lake Mine producing gravel and other commodities. Several extraction areas are identified in the draft, but it is unknown whether those areas are still in active production. The areas were used primarily for gravel extraction. Staff plans to follow up on the status of those areas.

Chair Robbins inquired about other examples in addition to the SeaTac plan. Manager Medrud said SeaTac's plan was adopted in 2019. The plan is now outdated with respect to new state requirements. At that time, the plan was one of the best examples when the staff first initiated the update in late 2021/early 2022. Staff anticipates receiving more examples from central Puget Sound jurisdictions that meet current state regulations. He is aware of only a few jurisdictions that have released final draft plans. The City has committed to providing an updated format of the Comprehensive Plan to the Department of Commerce prior to submission of the final version. Within the region, all jurisdictions are on a similar track in terms of the overall update process. The SeaTac example speaks to the format and how the policies and actions are reflected as it is a pullout document that can be easily utilized. The details of policies and goals are much different because each jurisdiction is different.

Chair Robbins stressed the importance of including references or information on regional approaches to enhance and protect the environment, such as at the watershed level to reflect efforts by the City in partnership with regional partners. Planner Baruch pointed out current and pending efforts by the Water Resources and Sustainability Department through watershed planning where watersheds overlap with other jurisdictions to ensure similar policies are adopted.

**NEXT MEETING  
DATE:**

The next meeting is scheduled for May 28, 2024.

**ADJOURNMENT:**

**Commissioner Tobias moved, seconded by Commissioner Varela, to adjourn the meeting at 8:41 p.m. A voice vote approved the motion unanimously.**