



CITY OF WHITE SALMON
Planning Commission Meeting - Wednesday, August 23, 2023

COMMISSION AND ADMINISTRATIVE PERSONNEL PRESENT

Commission Members:

Greg Hohensee, Chairman
Seth Gilchrist
Michael Morneault
Ross Henry (Arrived at 5:39 pm)
Tom Stevenson (Arrived at 5:53 pm)

Staff:

Erika Castro Guzman, Project Coordinator

Planning Consultants:

Alex Capron, Consultant Planner

CALL TO ORDER/ ROLL CALL

Chairman Greg Hohensee called the meeting to order at 5:30 pm. A quorum of planning commissioner members was present. Three audience members attended in person and by teleconference.

PUBLIC COMMENT

There was no verbal or written public comment.

APPROVAL OF MEETING MINUTES

1. Meeting Minutes – August 9, 2023

Specified edit: *Senior Planner Drusilla van Hengel explained that the focus was on incorporating walking, biking, and transit access projects. ~~She stated that a complete transportation system plan could be revisited in the future.~~ A future, and complete transportation system plan could include larger-scale transportation like rail, water, and air, she said.*

Tabled.

The proposed meeting minutes for August 9, 2023, was postponed due to allow further time for planning commissioner review and edit.

PRESENTATION

1. White Salmon Critical Area Update Introduction

Senior Planner Alex Capron from DCG/Watershed discussed the need for a Critical Areas Ordinance Update to comply with Washington State requirements. The proposed amendments included reformatting for easier applicant use, combining variance and exemption processes, and providing more specific enforcement proceedings. Senior Planner Alex Capron also focused on requirements for floodplain habitat assessment and wetland buffers.

The Planning Commission discussed the Critical Area Ordinance requirement, regardless of not residing in a Grown Management Act (GMA) county. Senior Planner Alex Capron explained that all cities and counties, regardless of their status (partial or full planning), must still plan for resources and critical areas (forestry, minerals, and critical areas).

Commissioner Seth Gilchrist discussed the reasoning behind the heritage tree code in Chapter 18.10 verses Chapter 18.35, which focuses on planting trees on city land rather than

management of critical areas. According to Senior Planner Alex Capron, the heritage trees don't fully align with what the state level defines as a critical area. He stated that under the current code, heritage trees must comply with everything that is a critical area. This is specifically a 15-foot building setback off the tree's dripline, which is unique to White Salmon and not seen in other jurisdictions.

Chairman Greg Hohensee requested clarification on the logic behind removing the planning commission's role in critical areas ordinance variances, and Senior Planner Alex Capron explained that it was to alleviate the burden on the commission and rely on the technical expertise of the hearing examiner.

The Planning Commission inquired about wetland categories and their definitions, which are primarily based on a habitat score (value based on soil type, habitat characteristics, and plant diversity). Commissioner Tom Stevenson discussed the need for specific wetland categories tailored to the White Salmon area rather than relying on standard categories that may not apply.

Commissioner Ross Henry requested clarification of the restrictiveness of heritage trees, and Senior Planner Alex Capron stated that moving heritage trees from critical areas removes the 15-foot building setback that is applicable to all the critical area types within the chapter; the same regulations will apply, allowing for the best standard practice.

The Planning Commission agreed to review the proposed changes (to be publicized on August 30th) and make comments at the next meeting on September 13th.

Proposed Timeline

Senior Planner Alex Capron stated that he anticipated the public comment period was set to begin on August 30th, with a planning commission meeting scheduled for September and October to discuss suggested changes and make a recommendation on the draft ordinance.

- City Planning Commission Meeting – August 23, 2023 (today)
- City public comment period – August 30 to September 29, 2023
- City Planning Commission Public Hearing – September 13, 2023
- Respond to Public Comments – October 11, 2023
- City Planning Commission Recommendation – October 25, 2023
- City Council Adoption of the Critical Area Ordinance – November 2023

The group discussed various topics including upcoming land use decisions, the progress of the housing action plan, and the possibility of a joint session. They also considered the idea of a workshop on open public records and the differences between Oregon and Washington laws.

ADJOURNMENT

The meeting was adjourned at 6:23 pm.



Greg Hohensee, Chairman



Erika Castro Guzman, City Project Coordinator