



**CITY OF WHITE SALMON**  
**Planning Commission Meeting - Wednesday, October 25, 2023**

**COMMISSION AND ADMINISTRATIVE PERSONNEL PRESENT**

**Commission Members:**

Greg Hohensee, Chair  
Seth Gilchrist  
Michael Morneault  
Tom Stevenson (Arrived at 5:43 pm)  
Ross Henry (Excused)

**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 5:36 pm. A quorum of planning commissioner members was present. There were two audience members in attendance via teleconference.

**PUBLIC COMMENT**

There was no verbal or written public comment.

**APPROVAL OF MEETING MINUTES**

1. Meeting Minutes – September 13, 2023

Ultimately, the commissioners decided that the best option for the City would be to keep the existing (200 feet) buffers for Type S and **use the average of the tree height potential for** Type F streams, ~~and to increase the buffers for Type Np and Ns streams to 100 feet (from 75 and 50 feet).~~

2. Meeting Minutes – October 11, 2023

Commissioner **Seth Gilchrist** ~~Tom Stevenson~~ said he believes that trees are a shared resource, similar to streams, and should be preserved... Commissioner **Gilchrist** ~~Stevenson~~ suggested modifying the critical areas ordinance to include trees of a certain size...

**Moved by Seth Gilchrist. Seconded by Michael Morneault.**

**Motion to approve minutes of September 13, 2023, as written, and October 11, 2023, as amended.**

**MOTION CARRIED 3–0.**

**Gilchrist – Aye, Morneault– Aye, Hohensee – Aye.**

Michael Morneault withdrew his second.

Seth Gilchrist withdrew his motion.

**Moved by Tom Stevenson. Seconded by Seth Gilchrist.**

**Motion to approve minutes of September 13, 2023, and October 11, 2023, as both amended.**

**MOTION CARRIED 4–0.**

**Stevenson – Aye, Gilchrist – Aye, Morneault– Aye, Hohensee – Aye.**

**ACTION ITEMS**

3. White Salmon Critical Area Update

The Planning Commission acknowledged the inclusion of their drafted Heritage Tree Ordinance. It was decided to table their draft and focus on approving the original provided version of the Heritage Tree Ordinance of the CAO until such time a proper public hearing procedure can reflect the substantial changes.

Commissioners requested further discussion on stream setbacks. The idea of using tree height averaging to benefit the Type F riparian buffer was clarified, and agreed to maintain the existing buffer depths for Type S and N.

The Commission debated whether the appeal process should go through a hearing examiner or the planning commission as the deciding body for Critical Areas Ordinance standards, specifically highlighting the desire to minimize potential political influence on land use decisions. They considered the benefits of having a professional with a legal background to make decisions and provide defensible documentation, while also acknowledging the burden it may place on city staff.

Chair Greg Hohensee and Commissioner Tom Stevenson preferred the planning commission as the deciding body for critical area ordinance standards; Commissioner Michael Morneault preferred the hearing examiner option, while Commissioner Seth Gilchrist abstained as it was his understanding that both options do not interpret code.

**Moved by Seth Gilchrist. Seconded by Michael Morneault.**

**Motion to recommend Critical Areas Ordinance amendments for approval to City Council, including proposed amendments to White Salmon Municipal Chapter 18.10, Chapter 18.40 (dated August 30, 2023), and Section 19.10.040 herein attached to this Planning Commission Packet, dated October 25, 2023, removing hearing examiner for Type 2 decisions.**

**MOTION CARRIED 4–0.**

**Stevenson – Aye, Gilchrist – Aye, Morneault– Aye, Hohensee – Aye.**

The Planning Commission addressed concerns about the accuracy of the minutes and made edits. See Item 2.

Commissioners Michael Morneault and Seth Gilchrist were thanked for their work on the draft Heritage Tree Ordinance.

**ADJOURNMENT**

The meeting was adjourned at 6:14 pm.

  
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Greg Hohensee, Chairman

  
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Erika Castro Guzman, City Project Coordinator