



CITY OF WHITE SALMON
Planning Commission Meeting - Wednesday, June 25, 2025

COMMISSION AND ADMINISTRATIVE PERSONNEL PRESENT

Commission Members:

Carl Trabant, Chair
Michael Morneault
Nate Loker
Brendan Brown
Erika Price (5:35 p.m.)

Staff:

Erika Castro Guzman, Project Coordinator
Rowan Fairfield, Planner
Kelly Hickok, Legal Counsel

CALL TO ORDER/ ROLL CALL

Chair Carl Trabant called the meeting to order at 5:30 p.m. A quorum of planning commissioner members was present. One member of the community attended the meeting, either in person or via teleconference.

Moved by Michael Morneault. Seconded by Brendan Brown.

Move to excuse the absence of Commissioner Erika Price from the June 25 Planning Commission meeting.

MOTION CARRIED. 4-0

Morneault – Aye, Loker – Aye, Brown – Aye, Trabant – Aye.

APPROVAL OF MINUTES

1. **Meeting Minutes – June 11, 2025**

Moved by Brendan Brown. Seconded by Nate Loker.

Motion to approve the meeting minutes from June 11, 2025, as presented.

MOTION CARRIES 4-0.

Morneault – Aye, Loker – Aye, Brown – Aye, Trabant – Aye.

PRESENTATION

2. **Short Course Videos**

- a. Summary of “Roles and Responsibilities in Planning” (WA Dept. of Commerce)

Three types of local planning decisions:

1. Legislative – Creates broad land-use policy (e.g., comprehensive plans, zoning). Applies jurisdiction-wide; founded on robust public participation under Washington’s Growth Management Act.
2. Quasi-judicial – Case-specific permit reviews (e.g., rezones, subdivisions). Decision-makers act like judges, must follow the Appearance of Fairness doctrine.
3. Administrative – Staff-level permits (e.g., building permits, lot-line adjustments). Guided strictly by code-based criteria and state-mandated timelines.

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Key participants and what they do:

- Elected officials (city or county councils/boards) – Set vision; adopt plans, development regulations, and annual budgets that fund services and infrastructure.
- Planning commissioners (volunteer citizens) – Study issues, foster public engagement, draft policy options, and recommend actions to elected officials; in some jurisdictions also handle quasi-judicial hearings.
- Professional staff/consultants – Supply technical analysis, draft plans and ordinances, manage public notices and records, process administrative permits, and enforce codes.
- Hearing examiners – Neutral, often legally trained professionals who hold public hearings and issue decisions or recommendations on quasi-judicial matters, easing elected officials’ workload and reducing legal risk.
- Other advisory boards (arts, parks, neighborhood councils, etc.) – Offer specialized community perspectives.
- Intergovernmental partners – Tribes, state/federal agencies, utility districts may propose projects, fund infrastructure, or review local proposals.
- General public (residents, businesses, developers, media, advocacy groups) – Encouraged to engage continuously; their input improves the quality and durability of land-use decisions.

Each process has different legal standards, timelines, and participation rules, so knowing “who decides what and how” ensures transparency, fairness, and predictability in community development.

b. Summary of “Public Participation & Effective Meetings” (WA Dept. of Commerce)

Public participation - why and how:

PRINCIPLE	PRACTICAL TIPS
Early and Continuous Involvement (Growth Management Act)	Publish a clear timeline that shows when and how the public can weigh in at every project phase.
Use Many Engagement Channels	City website, social media, mailed notices, neighborhood and civic group presentations, pop-up booths, etc.
Meet People Where They Are	Bring information to Chamber, PTA, neighborhood councils; translate jargon into plain language.
Correct Misinformation	Proactively share accurate facts; clarify whether you speak as an individual or on behalf of a body.
Set Expectations for Each Event	Tell participants whether you’re simply taking comments, co-creating ideas, or refining draft code and explain how feedback will shape decisions.

Tip for residents and stakeholders: Influence is greatest during long-range planning (visioning, comprehensive plans) rather than during later permit reviews bound by adopted codes. When testifying, explain how the proposal affects you and community goals, be concise, respectful, and feel free to ask staff for help if things aren’t clear.

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Planning Commission best practices:

- Know the rules: Read bylaws, meeting procedures, and the commission's publicly posted work plan.
- Effective chair: Builds agendas with staff in advance, anticipates special procedures, and keeps discussion on track.
- Commissioner conduct:
 - Arrive prepared; review packet before the meeting.
 - Listen patiently to public and peers; keep long-term goals and adopted decision criteria front-of-mind.
 - State motions clearly and explain the rationale for your vote.
 - Disagree civilly; don't take passionate testimony personally.

Running an efficient meeting:

1. Quorum check – verify you can legally act.
2. Advance materials – agenda and staff reports out several days early.
3. Objective staff reports – clear, thorough, jargon-free; commissioners shouldn't hesitate to ask clarifying questions.
4. Follow the agenda and bylaws – stay on topic; let every member speak.
5. Functional tech – make sure mics, projectors, and hybrid-meeting tools work so everyone can hear/see.
6. After the public hearing closes:
 - Identify key issues and applicable decision criteria.
 - Discuss options, seek consensus, then make a motion.
 - Always state reasons for the action; the elected council will rely on this record for its final decision.

Consistent, well-advertised opportunities for public input, and planning commissions that are prepared, respectful, and process-oriented, lead to transparent decisions that better reflect community needs and withstand legal scrutiny

DISCUSSION ITEM

3. Proposed Ordinance for Unit Lot Subdivision

Chair Carl Trabant introduced the proposed Unit Lot Subdivision ordinance, noting that City Planner Rowan Fairfield had incorporated several updates since the prior meeting.

Planner Fairfield summarized the key revisions, including a reworked purpose statement that now references common areas and structures. Definitions were clarified using terms already established in Title 17, and a note regarding plat recording was updated to align with Senate Bill 5559 (effective July 2025). Provisions from the bill that do not apply to non-GMA jurisdictions, such as mandatory pre-application meetings, notice requirements, and processing time standards, were excluded, as they are not relevant to the city's context.

Planner Fairfield also responded to feedback from Commissioner Michael Morneault, who had recommended reorganizing the purpose and definitions sections, clarifying the language on lot partitioning, referencing accessory structures and storage areas, and adding a clause to allow administrative discretion. Planner Fairfield confirmed that these were reasonable suggestions and would be incorporated into the revised draft.

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Commissioner Erika Price proposed refining the ordinance's reference to "storage areas" by instead using "accessory structures" for greater clarity. The commission discussed potential improvements to the list of common elements, such as garages, parking, and utilities, and reached consensus on using more inclusive language like *"common spaces and structures, including but not limited to..."* to ensure consistency and clarity.

Commissioner Morneault also pointed out ambiguous wording in Section 16.66.080(E)(3), which seemed to suggest that the city is responsible for obtaining a copy of the recorded plat. Planner Fairfield agreed to revise the language to clearly state that the applicant is responsible for submitting the recorded document.

Chair Trabant raised a question about codifying existing practices regarding notice and pre-application meetings. Planner Fairfield clarified that while notifying adjacent property owners is a standard practice, it is not currently required by code. The commission agreed codification could be considered, though no final decision was made.

The conversation then shifted to maximum processing times and a shared desire to make clear that the ordinance does not increase allowable density. Chair Trabant emphasized the importance of communicating that the ordinance focuses solely on ownership models, not housing unit count.

Commissioner Brendan Brown asked whether internal accessory dwelling units (ADUs), such as daylight basement apartments, would be permitted under the ordinance. Fairfield explained that the model ordinance assumes one dwelling per unit lot and prohibits stacking, largely due to building code concerns (e.g., shared utilities and fire-rating requirements). Commissioners Price and Brown supported allowing internal ADUs on a parent lot under single ownership, consistent with current allowances for White Salmon homeowners.

The commission explored how to differentiate between unit lots and ADUs in terms of ownership and zoning limits. There was general agreement to maintain caps on total dwelling units per parent lot, while allowing flexibility in configuration; particularly to permit internal ADUs that are not separately owned.

To address this issue, Planner Fairfield agreed to consult with the Public Works Director, Building Official, and Housing Consultant to assess the impact of removing the clause that prohibits stacked dwellings. If no concerns are raised, the clause will be removed. If objections arise, it will remain in place. A revised draft will be prepared for the public hearing scheduled in two weeks.

Commissioner Price also proposed modifying language in Section 16.66.040(A) (Development Standards) to read: *"Individually owned dwelling units shall not be stacked,"* which would allow internal ADUs under single ownership while preserving the ordinance's intent. Chair Trabant supported the revision and asked Planner Fairfield to review the meeting recording to guide the final edits.

The commission agreed not to delay the upcoming public hearing but acknowledged the ordinance may still evolve based on public feedback and further staff review.

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ACTION ITEM

4. Annual Work Plan

Planner Rowan Fairfield presented the updated annual work plan, noting that only the milestone dates had been adjusted to align with the revised public hearing schedule. They also shared City Administrator Paul Koch's recommendation to hold a joint work session with the City Council once the Planning Commission is ready to forward the plan, enabling both bodies to review priorities together.

There were minimal substantive changes. Commissioner Erika Price pointed out that Activity 4 and Goal 2 were blank. After a brief discussion, the commission agreed to retain those lines but label them as "TBD" to maintain flexibility for unforeseen tasks.

Planner Fairfield committed to incorporating these edits, coordinating the scheduling of the joint session, and transmitting the finalized draft to the City Council.

Moved by Erika Price. Seconded by Brendan Brown.

Motion to recommend the amended work plan (including updated dates and "TBD" placeholders) and to present it to the City Council for review at the proposed August joint meeting.

MOTION CARRIES 5-0.

Price– Aye, Morneauult – Aye, Loker – Aye, Brown – Aye, Trabant – Aye.

ADJOURNMENT

The meeting was adjourned at 6:42 p.m.

Signed by:



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Carl Trabant, Chair

Signed by:



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Erika Castro Guzman, Project Coordinator