



CITY OF WHITE SALMON
Planning Commission Meeting - Wednesday, January 27, 2021

COMMISSION AND ADMINISTRATIVE PERSONNEL PRESENT

Commission Members:

Ross Henry, Chairman
Greg Hohensee
Seth Gilchrist
Tom Stevenson
Michael Morneault

Staff:

Erika Castro Guzman, City Associate Planner
Jan Brending, City Clerk-Treasurer

Consultant:

Scott Keillor, WSP Senior Land Use Planner
Ethan Spoo, WSP Senior Land Use Planner

CALL TO ORDER/ ROLL CALL

Ross Henry, Chairman, called the meeting to order at 5:00 p.m. Eight audience members were attending by teleconference. A quorum of planning commissioner members was present.

APPROVAL OF MINUTES

1. Approval of the minutes of November 24, 2020.
Moved by Ross Henry. Seconded by Seth Gilchrist.
Discussion: None
Motion to approve meeting minutes, as is, of November 24, 2020. CARRIED 4–0–1.

PUBLIC COMMENT – DRAFT ELEMENTS

Comments on the Draft Elements for the Comprehensive Plan were received by the following:

- Ruth Olin, Inside City Limits, White Salmon, WA
- Kallie Kurtz, Outside City Limits, White Salmon, WA
- Peter Wright, White Salmon, WA
- Dorothy Herman, Inside City Limits, White Salmon, WA
- Shelley Baxter, Inside City Limits, White Salmon, WA
- Archer Mayo, Business Owner, White Salmon, WA
- Becky Miles, White Salmon, WA
- Gracen Bookmyer, White Salmon, WA
- Kalama Reuter, Inside City Limits, White Salmon, WA
- Dan Cox, White Salmon, WA
- Karen Jenkins, Inside City Limits, White Salmon, WA
- Debie Garner, Inside City Limits, White Salmon, WA
- Fire Chief Wesley Long, Klickitat County Fire District 3, Husum, WA
- Smoke Management Field Coordinator Carolyn Kelly, DNR, Olympia, WA

Staff noted that additional public comment on the elements will be allowed for the planning commission meeting on February 10, 2021.

ACTION ITEMS

2. **Comprehensive Plan Update Process Review**

a. **Presentation and Discussion**

WSP Senior Planners Scott Keillor and Ethan Spoo made an overview presentation of the comprehensive plan update status, timeline and highlighted goals from the draft elements for discussion. Chairman Henry requested the group to be mindful to incorporate public and city comments from the early Comprehensive Plan discussions.

3. **Discussion of Draft Elements**

b. **Economics Element**

Commissioner Gilchrist stated that due to the pandemic, White Salmon has experienced an influx of remote workers and would like to see the comprehensive plan reflect the impact of remote workers in the economics element. He said he thinks it is not the state sales tax that deters tourism but instead the bridge toll and would like to see that addressed.

Commissioner Hohensee had no comment on the economics draft element.

Commissioner Stevenson acknowledged that Klickitat County is growing but believes it would be unlikely to fill the identified lodging needs due to the increasing number of short-term rentals and because White Salmon is not located on the highway.

Chairman Henry agreed with Commissioner Gilchrist as he's personally seen an increase of remote workers in White Salmon within his profession. He said internet providers are better able to service our area, and believes this may boost the local population growth, but is unsure how it would help small business growth. Henry said he would like the comprehensive plan to reflect the past year's activity due to COVID19. Henry said that although tech-related jobs in the area are large today, it may not be the case tomorrow and therefore the city should strive to connect with local business owners to assure their success.

Commissioner Morneault agrees with Commissioner Henry that employment has changed tremendously within the last 40 years. He suggested adding how the community has distributed the jobs and wages, as he believes it would change how the section is viewed.

Consultant Planner Keillor stated that the urbanization study could give more details of how the jobs and salary distribution. He said the lodging room number is driven by demand, and short term rentals would impact the number. Keillor said he agrees about the need to pay attention to local business growth.

c. **Environmental Quality/Critical Areas Element**

Commissioner Gilchrist stated that he found the wording for the wildland fire protection language weak and would like to see more requirements on this subject.

Commissioner Hohensee suggested clarification of language in E/CA-4.5.

Commissioner Stevenson believes that overdoing critical areas hinders the city, specifically requirements related to the white oak tree. He said he agrees with wildfire concerns but questions how to maintain the trees and make properties safe from fire.

Commissioner Morneault agreed with Commissioner Gilchrist; the comprehensive plan needs to be more specific regarding wildland fire protection.

Chairman Henry stated that climate change is essential, but it is important to consider our city's size when addressing climate change.

Consultant Planner Spoo recognized that there is a tension between addressing wildland fire and maintaining trees/critical areas and stated that it is a vital balance to strike. He said the comprehensive plan reflects policy statements for which code revisions will follow with specific requirements where wildfire protection can directly support. Spoo stated that in the State of Washington, white oaks, predominantly woodland white oaks, are considered priority habitat and critical area. He said the city only has the flexibility to write its code to protect and allow for development surrounding said areas. Spoo said the city is concurrently updating its critical areas ordinance.

d. **Land Use and Urbanization Element**

Commissioner Gilchrist stated that its residents have a strong connection with Bingen and the Port of Klickitat, and would like to see a goal for White Salmon to access recreation or work with biking/walking facilities from Rhineland Village and White Salmon without using a car or walking on the side of the highway.

Commissioner Hohensee commented on what it means to have medium density. He said he believes that the city's last rezone started a conflict in neighborhoods that were traditionally single-family residences which were then zoned R2. Hohensee said he thinks it works against the desire to maintain the small-town feel.

Commissioner Stevenson agreed with Commissioner Hohensee; that the vision to maintain the small-town feel of the existing neighborhoods holds an equal or larger position to affordable and multi-family units.

Commissioner Morneault gave an example of infill density on the corner of Main and Cherry Street, where a developer tore down a single-family dwelling and constructed three in its place. He said this may be seen more as the older single-family homes are the ones that occupy larger lots.

Chairman Henry expressed concern about how the city would grow into the urban exempt area. He stated that a plan and a vision with the county would help guide growth in the urban exempt area. Henry said housing prices have skyrocketed in the last three years and believes that increasing the density is not going to make White Salmon attainable at the affordable rate the city seeks. He said creative mixed-use housing has the potential to address the affordable housing issue.

Consultant Planner Keillor stated that the comments voiced during the development of the urbanization study captured in the goals and policies of the current draft element. He said townhouses are located next to single-family homes because of the city's inclusive zoning. He said the functional question is how to balance housing choices and types and organize the context in which the plan creates zones that enhance existing and future uses while trying to accommodate growth. Keillor recommended taking a look at the infill area and urban exempt area. He stated that he understands the challenge of keeping the neighborhood's character and adapting for growth and indicated that changes could be made between policy and code levels. Keillor agreed that collaboration with Klickitat County to develop the urban exempt area is key and that density does not always equal affordability. He stated that he likes the idea of identifying walking facilities from neighborhoods to employment areas, and it may be best placed in the transportation element.

Staff further commented on the ability to change the land use designation map, adding that the Riverfront Zone (created in the 1980s) has now been developed in a manner that makes the original vision unobtainable. Staff suggested the zoning could be changed to commercial or other mixed-use designation. Staff also suggested planning commissioners review the residential designations to determine if they want them to remain the same, specifically R2 zoning.

Commissioner Stevenson recommended that the aesthetics and design section contain language “maintain existing small-town feel both in the downtown and neighborhoods.”

e. **Housing Element**

Commissioner Gilchrist said that cost burden is only one part of the a matrix related to affordability. He said it may depend on other factors such as how many people live in a unit and believes that the rate of cost burden for a residence could be higher as families live in multi-generational homes. He said referring to policy H-2.3, that it is challenging to decrease traffic while increasing density.

Commissioner Hohensee questioned how the city could reconcile the high minded design and environmental goals with the attainable housing agenda. He said he understands the need for affordable housing but does not see it being possible with high development costs and requirements.

Commissioner Stevenson agreed with Commissioner Hohensee and shares concern on how to achieve affordable housing. He said he is encouraged with policy H-1.4 regarding vacation/short-term rental restrictions but would like to see a further paragraph of how short-term rentals affect affordability, including a statement that long term rentals are one of the most affordable ways to live in a community. Stevenson said he believes the city should focus on ADUs even though the community may not want ADUs, but it may be better than the alternative housing types such as duplexes or townhomes.

Commissioner Stevenson said he would also like a policy that encourages narrow roads and lower traffic speed in older existing neighborhoods and in newer neighborhood developments that can enhance pedestrian and bicycle networks.

Commissioner Morneault had no comment on the housing draft element.

Chairman Henry clarified that the consultant had seen the planning commission's draft short-term rental consensus. He said that requiring residential development to have sidewalk, curb, and lighting requirements needed clarification as many infill lots may end up creating dead-end sidewalks/connections.

f. **Parks and Recreation Element**

Parks and Recreation Element discussion was tabled to the following meeting.

ADJOURNMENT

The meeting was adjourned at 8:00 p.m.

Ross Henry, Chairman

Erika Castro Guzman, Associate Planner