MINUTES

PLANNING POLICY COMMISSION
6:30 p.m. – Thursday, March 13, 2025

---

1. Call to Order

The hybrid meeting was called to order at 6:32 p.m. by CHAIR VOISS.

Commissioners Present:	Chair Voiss, Vice-Chair Patterson, Commissioners Adair, Krass, Millender-Irwin, Oliner, and Zakharoff (virtual)
Absent:	Commissioners Mohl Barouh and Matthews (Excused)
Staff Present:	Minnie Dhaliwal, Director, Community P & D Tisha Gieser, City Clerk Amanda Jackson, Meeting & Records Assistant Stephen Padua, Assistant Planning Director Valerie Porter, Associate Planner

CHAIR VOISS introduced three new Commissioners present, Genevieve Adair, Lesley Millender-Irwin, and Eric Oliner.

CHAIR VOISS announced that the originally scheduled Public Hearing had been moved to March 27, 2025. A regular Commission discussion will be held at this meeting. Public Comment can still be given and will be considered at this meeting.

2. Approval of Minutes

a) Minutes of February 27, 2025

There being no corrections or comments, the Minutes were approved.

3. Public Comments (General)

- **Nancy Davidson**, Olde Town resident, stated wanting to inform new Commissioners of how some residents feel regarding the housing issue. There is middle housing in Squak and Old Towne and there is now an effort to increase middle housing from two units per parcel to four, increasing density in areas identified by the city as lacking parking, stormwater, and sanitary sewer systems that are deteriorating. Neighborhood character should be preserved particularly in Olde Town, protected from becoming Kirkland or

Bellevue sprawl. The administration is moving forward with two units per parcel and this is encouraged. Parking needs to continue to be required as lots are redeveloped.

4. Public Hearing

a) **Public Hearing: Title 18 Middle Housing Amendments (A)**

As announced at the beginning of the meeting, the Public Hearing has been moved to March 27, 2025. A presentation and discussion by Commissioners follows.

Title 18 Proposed Middle Housing Amendments (D) *(00:09)*
Presented by
Valerie Porter, Associate Planner

Porter began the presentation.

The first question for Commissioners was regarding city-wide modulation and blank wall standards.

COMMISSIONER KRASS asked for clarification regarding a study on single-family houses and windows. Porter replied that developers are able to be creative and choose different modulation, color, and design of windows. COMMISSIONER KRASS asked if Homeowners Association (HOA) requirements will result in violations. Porter replied that when plan review occurs for projects in HOAs with design standards, the applicants are required to obtain a stamp or letter from the HOA stating that there is approval of the design before the city approves the project. COMMISSIONER KRASS asked if there are any developments not within HOAs in recent years that would not pass new requirements and Porter replied that HOAs are usually developed around the time buildings are constructed, and certain guidelines may not be in place when the building permit is approved. COMMISSIONER ADAIR stated that in Studio City, CA, there is a sharp contrast to neighborhoods built under rules versus those that were not. COMMISSIONER OLINER stated that there are HOA design standards in Highlands, but these are not static; the HOA has become more flexible and some standards have evolved or dissolved over time.

CHAIR VOISS asked if the plan is only regarding facing and modulation, and Porter replied correct, building articulation and blank wall treatment are the only standards proposed city-wide. The stringent requirements of Olde Town, in example the color wheel, would not apply.

COMMISSIONER KRASS stated being cautious regarding legislation based on subjective design and asked if there will be an appeal process or discussion aspect. Porter replied that if an applicant does not want to or is not able to comply, the project would not be approved. The standards are lenient and there are reasonable options, but if there is a true reason standards cannot be met, a conversation would occur. CHAIR VOISS asked if the Director would have the discretion to speak with the homeowner, and Porter replied yes, and staff is normally able to find a resolution with developers and property owners that works for all.

CHAIR VOISS stated that the regulations do not appear burdensome, beautifying the city and avoiding concrete boxes, in favor.

COMMISSIONER KRASS stated that the regulations could be cumbersome for someone building on a small lot in terms of setbacks. Porter replied that the standards will apply to buildings over 30 feet, and a smaller home would not apply. COMMISSIONER KRASS stated that there could be situations where the standards would make a lot unbuildable. Porter replied that currently there is no provision in code to allow for deviation from the type of standards; prior to the 2023 code update there was language for exceptions, but the recommendation of Council was to move away from this. COMMISSIONER KRASS stated being more cautious or concerned regarding the city-wide standards.

COMMISSIONER ADAIR stated that there is enough choice in order for building standards to be maintained.

COMMISSIONER OLINER stated that the aim is to create residential scale and a sense of massing that is compatible with existing buildings, simply no street-side blank walls and no mention of materials, roof slopes, or colors, and that the standards will allow flexibility while keeping the residential scale.

COMMISSIONER MILLENDER-IRWIN stated that the articulation will provide what the human eye sees as comfortable, and that even for 30‘ buildings there are different ways to create the four-by-eight-foot variability on facades, not burdensome.

COMMISSIONER ZAKHAROFF stated support for the standards, which will avoid the building of a project that caused a moratorium years ago.

VICE-CHAIR PATTERSON stated support overall, and to the point of COMMISSIONER KRASS, that stress testing on possibilities for areas outside of Olde Town could be helpful.

CHAIR VOISS stated for new Commissioners that the process is iterative and can be addressed later if there are problems.

Porter asked the second question, does the Commission agrees with proposed Open Space requirements for Cottage and Courtyard Housing and continued the presentation.

COMMISSIONER OLINER asked if 400 square feet for 10 units is correct. Porter replied that the requirement is minimum and there is no maximum, and that more housing is hoped for than open space. COMMISSIONER OLINER asked if the 400 square feet would include pathways to units and Porter replied correct, and that the area has setbacks, 10’ to 20’. COMMISSIONER OLINER asked for clarification that the Open Space requirement would be in addition to the setback and Porter replied correct. CHAIR VOISS stated that Critical Areas are not included and Porter replied correct.

COMMISSIONER KRASS stated appreciating the update.

COMMISSIONER ZAKHAROFF stated that the difference between square feet for 10 units and 11 plus units should be revisited.

VICE-CHAIR PATTERSON asked if a benefit to 800 square foot minimum per project is that more housing is created on different lot sizes and Porter replied yes.

CHAIR VOISS stated sharing the concern of COMMISSIONER OLINER, and asked if a staggering of, in example, six and 400 square feet, eight and 600 square feet, and 10 at 800 square feet would beneficial. Porter replied that units were separated in response to the threshold for plats; plats are a lower-level process and higher levels could involve the Development Commission, a Public Hearing process. CHAIR VOISS stated that 400 square feet is small for nine and ten units and asked if staggering would be possible while maintaining process simplicity. Porter replied that small, medium, and large buckets can be examined.

VICE-CHAIR PATTERSON asked for further clarification regarding Courtyard Housing. Porter replied that code requires buildings to be a particular shape around a courtyard, surrounding the courtyard by either two or three sides; access is from the courtyard and not from the street. VICE-CHAIR PATTERSON asked for clarification that the courtyard would count as outdoor amenity space and Porter replied yes, and that Courtyard Housing would not go into Single-Family zones but rather multi-family, central areas with more land.

COMMISSIONER ADAIR asked if the term *contiguous* should be emphasized. Porter replied that *contiguous* is mentioned in the Community Amenity code.

COMMISSIONER OLINER asked if five units in Cottage Housing would require 1,500 square feet of open space whereas five units in Courtyard Housing would require a minimum of 1,100 square feet less and Porter replied yes, less with Courtyard Housing.

Porter continued the presentation with Parking Standards.

CHAIR VOISS asked if a graph of bus routes could be displayed but Porter stated that the graph was not available. CHAIR VOISS stated that the graph by Thomas Valdriz had been helpful.

COMMISSIONER KRASS asked if other cities that have similar parking issues are being worked with regarding state requirements. Padua replied that there are partnerships with neighboring cities, and some are already allowing higher density or no parking requirements; the issue is the state interpretation of legislation. CHAIR VOISS stated that Issaquah is attempting to change unfair terms. Porter confirmed that code updates reflect the preference of the Planning Policy Commission.

COMMISSIONER ZAKHAROFF stated that at this point, the state rule cannot be applied to Issaquah and being in support of changing the definition of a Major Transit Stop.

COMMISSIONER OLINER asked for clarification that the city must allow four dwelling units on all residential lots within a quarter mile of a Major Transit Stop, but not overriding zoning limitations as in setbacks, green space, and permeability and Porter replied correct, a lot would be allowed four dwelling units but all zoning and design standards must be met also.

Porter continued the Parking Standards presentation.

COMMISSIONER KRASS asked if parking within a garage counted in numbers presented and Porter replied yes. COMMISSIONER KRASS asked for clarification of a scenario, that a single-family detached unit could not have a two-car garage, and Porter replied correct. COMMISSIONER KRASS asked why not if a two-car garage will fit, and Porter replied that provisions for Single-Family detached were addressed in the last code update, the goal being to align with House Bill (HB) 1110; a discussion can be held but there is a June deadline and in order to stay on schedule, a decision needs to be made by the next Public Hearing. Porter asked if COMMISSIONER KRASS is in support of removing a maximum or changing a minimum. COMMISSIONER KRASS replied that a minimum was okay but recommended removing a maximum. Padua stated that a recommendation by the Commission can be made.

MOTION by COMMISSIONER KRASS to remove the maximum [on an unspecified page], lots under 6,000 square feet, allowing a homeowner the flexibility to have a two-car garage and driveway if all code parameters are met. CHAIR VOISS asked for discussion.

COMMISSIONER ADAIR asked if a homeowner would hypothetically be able to have a large driveway and six-car garage, and CHAIR VOISS replied property value and that the size is under 6,000 square feet. Padua replied that typically, maximums are a part of community discussions regarding car trips in and out of a development, and there are street standards that limit length or width of driveways and garages but not the number of vehicles on-site, and that usually there is a minimum or maximum but not both.

COMMISSIONER MILLENDER-IRWIN stated that three or four cars in a wide driveway is a visual blight. COMMISSIONER KRASS stated that a small lot would most likely not have four cars.

VICE-CHAIR PATTERSON asked if the maximum number of cars could be raised to four.

COMMISSIONER KRASS stated that a fair amount of existing single-family homes would be found to exceed the maximum and that maintaining a maximum will reinforce that Issaquah is a difficult location to develop.

A vote on the MOTION to remove the maximum failed with two ayes, four nays, and one abstention.

MOTION by VICE-CHAIR PATTERSON to increase the maximum number of cars for single-family detached for lots less than 6,000 square feet to four per unit maximum. The MOTION passed.

Porter stated that the timeline is a Public Hearing on Middle Housing at the next meeting and a formal recommendation, followed by the item moving to the Council Planning, Development and Environment (PDE) Committee on April 1, 2025 and City Council in May for adoption.

CHAIR VOISS asked again for a transit map by Valdriz mentioned earlier, and Padua replied that the map would be provided.

5. Regular Business

a) **Open Government Training (I)** *(01:18)*
Presented by:
Tisha Gieser, City Clerk

Gieser began the training.

CHAIR VOISS asked if a walking tour for the Commission taken recently was considered an Open Meeting, and Geiser replied yes. Padua replied that staff keeps track of all events attended by Commissioners and if a quorum might be achieved, a Public Notice will be released.

Geiser continued the training.

CHAIR VOISS asked if a congratulatory email to a Commissioner is considered a record that should be kept in the event of a records request. Geiser replied that a congratulatory email was not a duty of the position and would not apply.

Geiser concluded the training.

b) **Title 18 Proposed Amendments: Miscellaneous (D)** *(01:41)*
Presented by:
Christen Leeson, Principal Planner

Leeson gave the presentation.

CHAIR VOISS asked for clarification regarding permits in Home Business Standards. Leeson replied that there is a Home Business permit required; Home Business was formerly referred to as Home Occupations, changed in the update. CHAIR VOISS asked for clarification regarding Daycares, and Leeson replied that Daycares must comply with Home Occupation Standards only when in the Urban Village Single-Family (UV-SF) and Urban Village Multi-Family zones, and that the language would be checked.

VICE-CHAIR PATTERSON asked for more details regarding Fee in Lieu and affordable housing. Leeson replied that the verbiage can be made stronger with input by City Attorneys; the purchase of land for affordable housing; for maintenance, preservation, or affordable housing itself.

COMMISSIONER ADAIR asked, regarding Daycare 7C, for clarification regarding the number of adult family home residents allowed. Leeson replied verbiage is the same as state law but can be clarified further.

COMMISSIOINER MILLENDER-IRWIN asked to understand the overall intent of Fee in Lieu for affordable housing. Leeson replied that when Fee in Lieu is used, Council must approve and the intent of code met.

6. Reports

a) **Council Update** (*01:54*)

Padua stated that City Council has reviewed the Light Rail Vision and Guiding Principles draft, to return for approval in April 2025. City Council will review the Comprehensive Plan Docket next week, and a staff update on permitting process improvements.

7. Other Business/Announcements

Padua stated that Tree code will be reviewed at two different meetings, and there will be two Public Hearings at the March 27, 2025 meeting.

Padua stated that per a request for an update on the Pioneer Program, there is currently one interested party in the active permit process but no active Land Use or Building Permits associated with the Pioneer Program in the queue.

8. Adjournment

CHAIR VOISS adjourned the meeting at 8:29 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Carolyn Garza, LLC
Recording Secretary