



MINUTES

PLANNING POLICY COMMISSION 6:30 p.m. – Thursday, March 27, 2025

1. Call to Order

The hybrid meeting was called to order at 6:31 p.m. by CHAIR VOISS.

Commissioners Present: Chair Voiss, Vice-Chair Patterson, Commissioners Adair, Krass, Matthews, Millender-Irwin, Mohl-Barouh (virtual), Oliner, and Zakharoff (virtual)

Absent:

Staff Present: Minnie Dhaliwal, Director, Community P & D
Amanda Jackson, Meeting & Records Assistant
Christen Leeson, Principal Planner
Valerie Porter, Associate Planner
Doug Yormick, Environmental Planner

2. Approval of Minutes

- a) Minutes of March 13, 2025

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

3. Public Comments (General)

There were no requests to speak.

4. Public Hearings

- a) **Shoreline Master Program Minor Amendments (A)** (00:02)
Presented by
Doug Yormick, Environmental Planner

CHAIR VOISS opened the Public Hearing.

Yormick gave the presentation.

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COMMISSIONER MOHL BAROUH asked a question about the difference on buffers between streams and Lake Sammamish. Yormick replied that there is not a 150' buffer from Lake Sammamish, but a 35' buffer which remains unchanged following the amendment process; for Title 18, a Best Available Science report was provided by the watershed company and used to change buffers to all fish bearing streams to provide more ecological protection to resources. COMMISSIONER MOHL BAROUH asked if the city set aside funds for potential land acquisitions for properties impacted by the changed buffers. Yormick replied that some non-conforming standards had been changed. COMMISSIONER MOHL BAROUH asked if that applies to lots completely encumbered by the buffers. Yormick replied that if within shoreline jurisdiction, development can occur although possibly with an additional Shoreline Permit process.

COMMISSIONER OLINER asked if, under current shoreline management, a series of boardwalk style walkways through Ingi Johnson Park could be developed, minimally affecting wetlands. Yormick replied yes, through permitting, and impacts would need to be mitigated.

COMMISSIONER KRASS asked if there are any new rules regarding the redevelopment of an existing home and Yormick replied no, existing is handled through non-conforming code.

Public Hearing (00:16)

- **Kevin Daly** stated owning a small home on a creek and understanding that the stream mitigation area has doubled in addition to a setback and that remodeling may be impossible; changes have affected property value negatively. Creative relief considerations are needed for people who wish to remain in Issaquah.

CHAIR VOISS closed the Public Hearing.

MOTION by Vice-Chair Patterson to approve the proposed amendments to the Shoreline Master Program as presented. MOTION seconded by COMMISSIONER KRASS.

COMMISSIONER KRASS asked for clarification regarding a figure of 500 square feet related to adding more square footage to an existing property. Yormick replied that the figure has always been in place, and that if a structure is expanded greater than 500 square feet, an equivalent one to one ratio of buffer mitigation plantings along the stream are required; not limited to 500 square feet but the 500 being the trigger for additional action.

CHAIR VOISS stated for clarification that questions should occur prior to Public Testimony as testimony could be impacted; deliberation is for formal action with the information provided.

VICE-CHAIR PATTERSON stated that as four amendments are requirements that must be incorporated and the remaining three are recommended updates, the proposals are straightforward. CHAIR VOISS stated agreement and that waivers referred to during Public Testimony had been deliberately removed in the past, a conversation for Council Members.

The MOTION passed unanimously.

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- b) **Title 18 Middle Housing Amendments (A)** (00:27)
 Presented by
Valerie Porter, Associate Planner

CHAIR VOISS opened the Public Hearing.

Porter presented the amendments and asked if the Commission agrees with the proposed Open Space requirement for cottage and courtyard housing.

COMMISSIONER MOHL-BAROUH asked for clarification regarding a change from square footage versus percentage in the presentation. Porter replied that the older proposal is no longer possible as state regulation will now require 20%, and a cottage proposal was displayed. COMMISSIONER MOHL-BAROUH asked for clarification regarding what area within the cottage proposal is included in the 20% and Porter replied the entire space including between buildings.

COMMISSIONER OLINER asked what is being asked of Legislators to change the Major Transit Stop requirement. Porter replied that while the Department of Commerce has issued guidance on how to apply the Major Transit Stop requirement, staff does not believe that the interpretation is in line with intent of the requirement; modifying the actual definition seems to be the best approach, to be very clear on what is considered a Major Transit Stop.

COMMISSIONER MATTHEWS asked why the cottage requirement of 60 square feet is not the same for courtyards. Porter replied that in cottage housing there is typically a deck, in example, in front, while courtyards are generally more stack flats; a developer can build a private balcony off of each unit but a covered porch provides cottage character.

COMMISSIONER MOHL-BAROUH asked for clarification regarding Sycamore. Porter replied that all regulations would apply to Sycamore and no exemptions unless related to impacts to Critical Areas. COMMISSIONER MOHL-BAROUH asked if cottage housing could be built throughout Sycamore and Porter replied yes, unless there are existing covenants that would exempt cottages. Leeson replied that middle housing is required by the state to be allowed in all residential zones. CHAIR VOISS stated that Homeowners Associations (HOA) are grandfathered in but are void once redevelopment occurs.

VICE-CHAIR PATTERSON asked if something can be recommended differently in regard to the Action to be taken by the Commission, and asked what control the city has to define the state requirement. Porter replied that unfortunately the code must be applied as-is, which is why staff is requesting the modification of the definition, and that the decision can be reported back to the Commission. CHAIR VOISS asked if there is a way to make a recommendation in the Motion that will indicate that the Planning Policy Commission does not agree with the definition. Dhaliwal replied that a recommendation to City Council can be captured that the topic is of major concern, encouraging Council to work with legislators to resolve. Leeson replied that the recommendation would be captured in the Agenda Bill and not the Motion itself. COMMISSIONER MOHL BAROUH asked if the recommendation can be amended and Leeson replied that the Motion is related to code language and that the state requirement for parliamentary law be must be followed; the confusion is regarding how the Department of

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Commerce is interpreting versus what the State Law says, which must be complied with. CHAIR VOISS stated that Council will receive the opinion of the Commission. Dhaliwal replied that there is a Bill in State Legislature with additional language regarding Sound Transit that is hopeful; an option going forward could be that an empirical parking study can be done to demonstrate the creation of an unsafe condition for the Department of Commerce. CHAIR VOISS stated that a recommendation following a proper procedural Motion should be sufficient.

COMMISSIONER KRASS asked if there should be one Motion for all middle housing amendments and CHAIR VOISS replied yes. COMMISSIONER KRASS asked if approving the design requirements throughout the city would be within the Motion and CHAIR VOISS replied yes.

COMMISSIONER ZAKHAROFF stated that Issaquah is not designed to proceed with the full interpretation of 1110 and 1337, but with understanding that the requirement is from the state, there must be support at this time, and thanked Porter.

Public Hearing (00:55)

- **Nancy Davidson**, Olde Town, thanked the Commission for listening to Olde Town residents and that state minimum requirements only are being considered. Standard units in Olde Town, four units per lot, have been selling for over \$1 million and the question is what is truly affordable. A second Motion could be made, stronger than a recommendation.
- **Wendy Pickering**, Olde Town, stated that the State requirement makes sense in Seattle, in example, but not in Olde Town, and asked if laws regarding keeping pervious surface are going to change if four units on a lot is allowed. The tree canopy and wildlife within trees will also be impacted. No more than two units on a lot in Olde Town and possibly Squak Mountain would be positive. Affordability is of concern when a developer will be allowed to pay more in order to avoid the requirement of one affordable unit. South Park, south of Seattle, has transformed the old nature of the community to the point that residents can no longer afford to stay.

CHAIR VOISS closed the Public Hearing.

Motion by COMMISSIONER OLINER to accept the Title 18 amendments as presented. Motion seconded by COMMISSIONER MILLINER-IRWIN.

COMMISSIONER KRASS stated that when design standards move to city-wide from allowing Olde Town charm, the issue is much larger and should be taken out of the package. Porter replied that two requirements would be removed that apply specifically to Olde Town but remain for the rest of the city: building modulation and blank wall treatments.

Motion by COMMISSIONER KRASS to remove the city-wide design standards from the package until there is more study done, the remaining pieces to stay as discussed. Motion seconded by VICE-CHAIR PATTERSON.

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COMMISSIONER KRASS stated that regulating the subjective such as design is a big step for a city and while moving into an HOA situation where there is an understanding of expectations, the city of Issaquah is eclectic and the role of the city should not be to regulate taste and aesthetics.

COMMISSIONER MOHL-BAROUH stated that if restrictions limit development, there could be an amendment made later.

COMMISSIONER OLINER stated that proposed regulations are to maintain residential scale, building massing, and amenities that make new construction responsive to the existing neighborhood character and not to tastes. In Olde Town, many homes have porches and street-facing windows maintaining residential scale.

COMMISSIONER ZAKHAROFF stated support for the comment by COMMISSIONER MOHL-BAROUH.

CHAIR VOISS stated that at issue was to make Olde Town design standards city-wide, making sure other neighborhoods do not become faceless and with a template to choose from, not burdensome.

COMMISSIONER MATTHEWS stated agreement with CHAIR VOISS and stated that new neighborhoods on Newport Way are characterless.

COMMISSIONER KRASS stated that the true role of government is not to regulate what is attractive and developers will develop what is sellable.

COMMISSIONER MOHL-BAROUH stated that character should not be changed.

The Motion failed 1-6.

COMMISSIONER ADAIR stated having sent an email with pictures of some middle housing complexes to Commissioners and that in section C there is a contradiction in facing requirements as well as prioritizing vehicles and driveways over pedestrians and safety; *facing a transportation facility* could be removed. A Motion was requested but not made.

COMMISSIONER OLINER asked staff to clarify if there is a conflict between the section that requires an unobstructed pedestrian walkway to the sidewalk or public right-of-way versus driveways. Porter replied that staff does not believe there is a conflict, and that Transportation Facilities is describing roadways and alleys, not considered a driveway; the policy question at the last meeting was whether or not code should require separate walkways from the driveway. The front door must be directed toward the driveway if the developer does not design a specific pathway from the front door to the adjacent right-of-way.

COMMISSIONER ADAIR stated a concern for safety for residences that open directly into the right-of-way even if an alley and asked if there would be confusion for a developer. Porter replied that there should not be any confusion caused and that there are options in design standards. Code is clear that facing a public right-of-way with an alley as secondary access is

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required. Dhaliwal replied that a good presence along the public street is the intent and that language could be reviewed with a Motion. COMMISSIONER ADAIR asked for further clarification regarding safety. CHAIR VOISS replied that discussions have been held in the past and the city has decided that front doors facing public right-of-ways is preferred, rather than blank walls.

Dhaliwal asked for language suggestions. COMMISSIONER MOHL-BAROUH replied that a possibility would be *shall not supersede the city requirements*. Dhaliwal suggested eliminating *front doors facing a transportation facility*. Porter stated that the definition of Transportation Facility is a public or private facility for motorized or non-motorized transportation of people and goods including but not limited to roads, alleys, and right-of-ways. Dhaliwal stated that the intent is to not have blank walls along streets or trails and if no street, then the transportation facility must be faced.

Motion by COMMISSIONER MATTHEWS to amend language to read residential structures must be oriented with the front of the home facing the street or central open space or central courtyard. If either of these options is not practically feasible then the front door shall face a transportation facility providing access to the development. Motion seconded by COMMISSIONER MILLINER-IRWIN. COMMISSIONER MOHL-BAROUH suggested a correction to grammar [inaudible]. The Motion passed unanimously.

COMMISSIONER OLINER stated that underlying land use requirement will still stand despite amendments, possibly limiting the number of units on a site.

Motion by VICE-CHAIR PATTERSON to amend the main Motion to recommend that Council pursues a clarified definition of Major Transit Stop to align with public and city staff interpretations. Motion seconded by COMMISSIONER OLINER. The Motion passed unanimously.

CHAIR VOISS stated that the Commission has taken a conservative approach with the new state rules and regulations in an attempt to keep density down, and that the public has provided many comments.

CHAIR VOISS re-read the original Motion, to recommend approval of the Title 18 Middle Housing amendments as amended. Motion seconded by COMMISSIONER OLINER. The Motion passed unanimously.

5. Reports (01:39)
 a) **Council Update**

Leeson stated that City Council approved the 2025 Docket last week. On April 1, 2025, Leeson and Porter will attend the Planning, Development and Environment Committee to discuss middle housing and clarifying amendments. On April 7, 2025, Council will take action on Light Rail Visioning.

6. Other Business/Announcements

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Leeson stated that Policy Amendment Action is moving from April to May 27, 2025 on the calendar.

7. Adjournment

CHAIR VOISS adjourned the meeting at 8:12 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Carolyn Garza, LLC
Recording Secretary