



MINUTES

PLANNING POLICY COMMISSION 6:30 p.m. – Thursday, May 22, 2025

1. Call to Order

The hybrid meeting was called to order at 6:30 p.m. by CHAIR VOISS.

Commissioners Present: Chair Voiss, Vice-Chair Patterson, Commissioners Adair, Krass, Matthews, Millender-Irwin, Oliner, and Zakharoff

Absent:

Staff Present: Minnie Dhaliwal, Director, Community P & D
Amanda Jackson, Meeting & Records Assistant
Christen Leeson, Principal Planner

2. Approval of Minutes

a) Minutes of May 8, 2025

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

3. Public Comments (General)

- **Lindsey Walsh**, Issaquah Council President, thanked the Commission for hard work.
- **Ken Esemann**, [inaudible] user of the tree code on the Talus property, stated support for the suggested new code but that further revisions could be made, and encouraged the Commission to simplify. The percentage of tree canopy for small lots is not reasonable and Urban Villages have minimal yard space. An aerial view of Issaquah could be helpful. Issaquah tree canopy requirements do not belong in Urban Villages. Middle-housing is well intentioned but overachieving in the suburb that is Issaquah.
- **Connie Marsh**, Squak Mountain, stated that including large open spaces in averages make tree canopy goals higher, that what tree canopy should like in developed neighborhoods needs to be separated, and that if all neighborhoods are to seem individual people should have a say in that neighborhood canopy. Other forms of green that serve the function of trees should be considered such as solar panels. The simplicity of replacing a tree with a tree is viable for hazardous and nuisance trees, but the Tree Inventory Study and neighborhood visioning should be waited for.

4. Regular Business

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- a) **Public Hearing - 2025 Title 18 Policy Amendments (A) (00:14)**
Presented by:
Christen Leeson, Principal Planner

Leeson gave the presentation.

COMMISSIONER KRASS asked what has been changed since the last presentation. Leeson replied that micro-units as a type of co-living housing has been removed and changed back to an individual use, approval criteria should not have changed during the process, construction permits are now called building permits for specificity, added to the table regarding complete application submittals.

COMMISSIONER ADAIR asked who was consulted regarding the month of June rather than July for a Beekeeping issue. Leeson replied that other cities were referred to and asked why June would be preferrable. COMMISSIONER ADAIR stated having been told in regard to capping the number of spawning hives during reproduction.

CHAIR VOISS opened the Public Hearing.

- **Connie Marsh**, Squak Mountain, stated that the presentation would have been helpful to have had in advance to formulate comments. Time allowed for Site Development permits and Master Site Plans will allow people to use old code when best available science is supported in new code.
- **Kyler Danielson** (virtual), Land Use Project Manager with Lakeside Industries, stated having intended to comment on a change to Mineral Resource Zone language but that Leeson stated having made the change desired during the presentation, and so thanked staff for the edit.

CHAIR VOISS closed the Public Hearing.

MOTION by VICE-CHAIR PATTERSON to recommend approval of the 2025 Title 18 Policy Amendments as presented. MOTION seconded by COMMISSIONER ZAKHAROFF.

CHAIR VOISS stated that Title 18 has been deliberated during the last several months with only minor adjustments at this time and asked for clarification regarding trade-offs for common areas. Leeson replied that all units must have 148 square feet but for 50% of units, all 148 square feet can be put into common amenity space, with the other 50% at 100 square feet into common space and 48 square feet in a unit.

COMMISSIONER MILLINDER-IRWIN asked what stop gaps are to ensure that eternal construction projects do not occur. Leeson replied that there are timelines and rules regarding noise and hours of operation. Dhaliwal clarified the process further in detail and that terms are not changing, only clarification being provided. CHAIR VOISS stated that all developers want to finish projects as quickly as possible.

The MOTION passed unanimously.

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Leeson stated that the Amendments would go to the Planning, Development, and Environmental Committee in June, 2025 and to Council in July 2025.

- b) **Title 18 Tree Preservation Amendments (D) (00:43)**
Presented by:
Doug Yormick, Environmental Planner

Yormick gave the presentation.

COMMISSIONER KRASS asked for clarification regarding smallest designation lots being 10,000 square feet and smaller and Yormick replied correct. COMMISSIONER KRASS stated that there is a difference between a 5,000 square foot or less lot with a house and driveway versus a 10,000 square foot lot and asked if there could be a designation for even smaller lots. Yormick replied that most small lots occur in Urban Villages where tree canopy requirement is reduced and lots are single-family zones. COMMISSIONER KRASS stated that 25% tree canopy is significant for a 3,000 square foot lot after building a house and driveway. COMMISSIONER KRASS asked if city owned parkways and trails could be more developed for both canopy and heat disparity. Yormick replied that the issue would be handled under Street Standards and Public Works, and that Title 18 Tree Preservation code is more for individual lots and not right-of-way which is one-third of Issaquah.

COMMISSIONER ADAIR asked for clarification regarding a discrepancy during the presentation in multi-family requirements. Yormick replied that the correct percentage is 30%, but 25% for Village Residential in Central Issaquah.

VICE-CHAIR PATTERSON asked if parcels must be connected to each other for single removal permit coverage and Yormick replied one permit if management is by the same Homeowners Association (HOA) or park properties.

COMMISSIONER ADAIR asked the methodology for canopy coverage goals. Yormick replied existing land uses and potential planting area for more trees. Impervious coverage does not allow for planting.

COMMISSIONER MATTHEWS asked if there is a process to ensure that a tree is not removed until after a nesting period for, in example, a resident eagle. Yormick replied that currently there is no information in the system regarding bird nesting periods when reviewing tree permits. COMMISSIONER MATTHEWS and COMMISSIONER KRASS asked if a site visit could require a check for nests. Yormick replied that an inspector will visit to ensure a replacement tree has been planted, but not every permit has a site visit. COMMISSIONER OLINER asked for clarification that there is a review by an Arborist and if the scope of work would include noticing nesting birds. Yormick replied that for a hazardous tree, an overall risk assessment is provided but not specifically requested. COMMISSIONER OLINER asked if notification of seeing nesting birds could be required as part of the Arborist report.

CHAIR VOISS asked the first of five policy questions that staff asked to be addressed, does the Commission agree with the new Tree Canopy Coverage percentages based on zoning and lot size, or should these remain based on neighborhood.

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COMMISSIONER KRASS stated that both should be considered and CHAIR VOISS stated agreement. COMMISSIONER ZAKHAROFF stated that there are lots in the Highlands that cannot provide any more tree canopy. CHAIR VOISS asked if Memorial Park will be required to have the same canopy coverage as a new development elsewhere and Yormick replied that conversations with Parks are to have suitable off-site planting locations so that if not feasible on a small lot there will be other options. COMMISSIONER KRASS asked if deciduous and evergreen trees have the same requirements. Yormick replied that tree code preference is for Evergreen but that there is a preferred tree list that includes deciduous species as a resource. COMMISSIONER KRASS asked for further clarification regarding evergreen preference. Yormick replied that Evergreens are the dominant tree species in Western Washington forests, but deciduous is an option and that right-of-way trees will be deciduous. Leeson replied that deciduous are native and also have year-round environmental benefits.

CHAIR VOISS asked question two, does the Commission agree that the full canopy coverage requirement should only be required for new or major redevelopment.

COMMISSIONER MATTHEWS asked what percentage is considered major redevelopment. Yormick replied 50% of the King County Assessed Improvement value over a three-year period.

COMMISSIONER ADAIR asked for clarification that one-to-one replacement of a tree is still required and Yormick replied correct.

VICE-CHAIR PATTERSON stated support of the requirement only applying new development or major redevelopment in order to not penalize existing scenarios, and because new and redevelopment are the most common opportunity for loss and restoration.

CHAIR VOISS asked question three A, does the Board agree that tree replacement for tree removal permits for hazardous nuisance trees should be a one-to-one replacement for non-Landmark trees and a one-to-two replacement for Landmark trees.

COMMISSIONER ADAIR asked for clarification and CHAIR VOISS repeated and COMMISSIONERS ADAIR and OLINER stated agreement.

CHAIR VOISS stated concern regarding one-to-one replacement for a nuisance or hazardous tree but less so for Landmark trees, as people may ignore hazards and potential problems due to cost; Landmark trees may only need one-to-one replacement for the same reason.

COMMISSIONER MATTHEWS stated that providing financial assistance may need to be an option for Landmark trees, and that one-to-two replacement is required because a Landmark tree is generally large. CHAIR VOISS asked Yormick if a fund can be created to help people with fee-in-lieu costs and Yormick replied that a larger discussion is needed. COMMISSIONER ADAIR stated that there had previously been a discussion regarding a tree giveaway program. Yormick replied that the program is managed through the Parks department.

CHAIR VOISS read question three B, does the Commission agree to allow flexibility from tree preservation requirements for the Central Issaquah sub-area, and if so, is there feedback on

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proposed approval criteria for such flexibility. Yormick stated that this question was presented in the packet but not in the staff presentation at this meeting, applying to new and redevelopments.

CHAIR VOISS stated that if density is to be focused on Central Issaquah, there will have to be flexibility.

VICE-CHAIR PATTERSON stated support for flexibility in Central Issaquah, and that canopy coverage would still be addressed rather than tree-by-tree only. Yormick replied that there would be a deviation allowed for retention requirements but not canopy requirements; retention must be 25% of caliper inches in Central Issaquah. VICE-CHAIR PATTERSON asked for clarification that no tree canopy would be lost and Yormick replied yes.

COMMISSIONER OLINER asked if the language in the variance process in paragraph B needs to be refined so that the applicant would not be able to pay into the fund only and not meet canopy requirements. Yormick replied that the intent is not to allow an option out of canopy requirements, explained the variance in further detail, and stated that verbiage can be tightened.

CHAIR VOISS asked question four, does the Commission have feedback on including a standard to allow tree removals based on wildfire risk assessment on a lot-by-lot basis or waiting until Wildland-Urban Interface Codes are developed and adopted by the city.

COMMISSIONER MILLINDER-IRWIN stated that as a large HOA manager, when an HOA makes a request to remove trees reasons are almost always either to address nuisance trees or wildfire risk mitigation, and a standard for guidance is essential on a lot-by-lot basis.

VICE-CHAIR PATTERSON asked if there was a timeline for the Wildland-Urban Interface Codes and Yormick replied no, but possibly two years.

COMMISSIONER ADAIR asked if codes will not be available for two years, if a lot-by-lot basis is needed until codes as ready as wildfire is more of a risk as time goes on. CHAIR VOISS stated agreement.

CHAIR VOISS asked the Commission if there were any further changes to consider.

CHAIR VOISS stated that a majority of resident responses have been in support for what has been put in place to remain but that language in responses has softened over time to agreeing with some changes, and that the issue is a work in progress; The Planning Policy Commission will not see the topic after going to the Environmental Board, with a Public Hearing after and Council involvement beginning in September.

Leeson stated that the Planning Policy Commission can be given another review in July and CHAIR VOISS replied that the opportunity would be helpful.

COMMISSIONER MATTHEWS stated that map overlays of the entire city indicating the different departmental responsibilities and goals would be helpful.

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COMMISSIONER ADAIR stated that sample site plans showing potential code versus old code would be helpful.

5. Reports (01:41)
a) **Council Update**

Leeson stated that Middle Housing was approved Monday by Council and thanked Valerie Porter, Associate Planner.

6. Other Business/Announcements

Leeson stated that 2025 is an election year and that while as an individual support can be given freely, Commissioners are impartial and are not to wear any buttons or clothing representing anyone running for any position during Planning Policy Commission meetings.

Leeson stated that Stephen Padua, Assistant Planning Director, is leaving city employment and that Leeson will be the Planning Policy Commission Liaison going forward, beginning at this meeting.

CHAIR VOISS stated that in addition to Padua, Yormick and Jen Davis Hayes, Economic Development Manager, are also leaving city employment.

7. Adjournment

VICE-CHAIR PATTERSON adjourned the meeting at 8:14 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Carolyn Garza, LLC
Recording Secretary