



MINUTES

PLANNING POLICY COMMISSION 6:30 p.m. – Thursday, July 10, 2025

1. Call to Order

The hybrid meeting was called to order at 6:34 p.m. by CHAIR VOISS.

Commissioners Present: Chair Voiss, Commissioners Adair (virtual), Krass, Matthews, Oliner, and Zakharoff

Absent: Commissioners Millender-Irwin and Patterson (Excused)

Staff Present: Minnie Dhaliwal, CPD Director
Tisha Gieser, City Clerk
Thomas Valdriz, Senior Planner

2. Approval of Minutes

- a) Minutes of March 22, 2025

Chair Voiss stated that Chair Voiss and not Vice-Chair Patterson had adjourned the meeting. With no other comments, the Minutes were approved.

3. Public Comments (General)

There were no requests to speak.

3. Public Hearing (00:02)

- a) **Title 18: Tree Preservations Amendments (A)**

Presented by:

Minnie Dhaliwal, CP&D Director

Dhaliwal presented the topic.

COMMISSIONER KRASS stated that calipers and canopies are confusing from a layperson perspective and asked for clarification regarding differing tree replacement allowances. Dhaliwal replied that canopy studies have shown that the urban heat island effect is in Central Issaquah due to fewer trees, and preserving larger trees is an incentive to maintain shade as opposed to smaller trees that will take time to produce shade. COMMISSIONER KRASS asked if there has

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been a visual study in Central Issaquah of lots to know the extent of the issue, and Dhaliwal replied that there is not a full inventory of trees on private properties.

COMMISSIONER ZAKHAROFF asked what entity decides the status of a tree, for example, nuisance or dying. Dhaliwal replied that the applicant makes an application for an initial determination and the city makes the final decision.

COMMISSIONER MATTHEWS asked what the process is to designate culturally significant trees. Dhaliwal replied not knowing details of the program regarding implementation and that the question would be researched.

COMMISSIONER ADAIR stated that certain trees could be flagged [inaudible].

CHAIR VOISS asked for clarification whether a developer in Central Issaquah needs to maintain a 25% tree canopy on the property or counted offsite. Dhaliwal indicated yes, on the property. CHAIR VOISS related a specific hypothetical scenario of 10 trees removed and 20 retained, and Dhaliwal replied that if at least 25% of caliper inches can be preserved, the first bar of the tree preservation requirement has been met; trees will need to be replanted so that all trees provides 25% canopy coverage for the site. CHAIR VOISS asked if a site had 35% canopy coverage prior to construction if only 25% must be met, and Dhaliwal replied correct. CHAIR VOISS asked what would happen to the subtracted 10% and Dhaliwal replied that the 10% is lost, no fee-in-lieu or replacement required. CHAIR VOISS asked when fee-in-lieu and replacement comes into play. Dhaliwal replied that if all trees were removed and with the tree preservation requirement of saving at least 25% caliper inches, fee-in-lieu and 25% on or off site in the same sub area is required. CHAIR VOISS asked for further clarification regarding the trigger for fee-in-lieu and replacement if 25% canopy coverage is required onsite. Dhaliwal replied the loss of larger trees.

COMMISSIONER ZAKHAROFF asked what occurs if a property will not allow for 25% coverage and Dhaliwal replied that percentages have already been lowered from previously and the balance of development and trees can still occur; if onsite does not allow, off-site planting or fee-in-lieu is allowed by code.

COMMISSIONER KRASS asked for clarification of the intent of counting the caliper of established small trees, and Dhaliwal replied that the rule only applies to large significant trees.

COMMISSIONER MATTHEWS asked if species and fallen trees due to loss in emergencies are recorded, and Dhaliwal replied that residents can be asked to voluntarily report down trees on private property, but that the real assessment comes with tree canopy studies for the Climate Action Plan. COMMISSIONER MATTHEWS asked if 1:1 replacement includes Landmark Trees and Dhaliwal replied that replacement of Landmark Trees is 1:2 ratio.

COMMISSIONER OLINER asked for clarification regarding when an Arborist is required. Dhaliwal replied that current code language has been softened in that if a tree is clearly dead, an Arborist report is not required.

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CHAIR VOISS asked for clarification that 1:1 replacement is flexible for single-family lots in that if there is already a higher percentage of tree canopy in the lot, fee-in-lieu and replacement can be waived, and Dhaliwal replied yes, this is the proposal and documentation is required. CHAIR VOISS asked how much an Arborist Report costs and Dhaliwal replied hundreds of dollars but that cost estimates can be obtained to answer the question. CHAIR VOISS asked for clarification regarding the requirement difference for new development outside of Central Issaquah and Dhaliwal replied planting off-site or fee-in-lieu applies. CHAIR VOISS asked for clarification that 25% needs to be onsite in Central Issaquah unless there are very extenuating circumstances and Dhaliwal replied that last sentence in the proposal could be struck and brought to Council as a Commission recommendation, but there would be no incentive to not clear cut.

COMMISSIONER KRASS stated that certain parcels around potential light rail will be developed, warehouses with large parking lots and no trees, and that an informal audit should be conducted for tree inventory. Dhaliwal replied that the current situation has been assessed.

CHAIR VOISS asked that Council receive visuals of what the code requirement proposal would look like in Central Issaquah, in example with a large Home Depot renovation and a smaller Brown Bear Car Wash, for clarity.

Public Hearing (00:45)

- **Richard Scearce**, Montreux Homeowners Association (HOA) Vice President stated being a current participant in the tree permit process for private property. Other Tree City codes vary in restrictiveness. Prohibitions such as removing a tree from a slope, critical areas, or wetlands are not mentioned in proposed code. Issaquah permits are more expensive than other cities and if fewer permits were required the result would be less cost.
- **Susan Glicksberg**, Montreux HOA Board Member, stated that there is still confusion in the code and that more clarity in verbiage such as when a permit is required and what fees will be is needed. Emergency tree removal from homes or across roads should not require an Arborist report. Removal of dead landscape trees needs to be a simpler process. Permits applied for by the HOA are made in the name of an individual Board member and when roles change, the paperwork must change; a permit in the name of the HOA as a group would be helpful.
- **Roberta Brown** (virtual), Issaquah resident, stated that the Wildlife Urban Interface code should be developed before the tree preservation element is decided. Underbrush should be addressed before tree removal for fire resistance. Employing Arborists who are independent and not aligned with a developer may be helpful.

CHAIR VOISS stated that written Public Comment had also been received as late as today and closed the Public Hearing.

MOTION by COMMISSIONER KRASS to recommend approval of the proposed Title 18 Tree Preservation Amendments as presented. MOTION seconded by COMMISSIONER OLINER.

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COMMISSIONER KRASS stated that more granularity regarding larger properties would be helpful.

COMMISSIONER ZAKHAROFF stated that comments from the Public Hearing should be considered before proceeding with adoption and asked for more time to review.

COMMISSIONER ADAIR stated agreement with COMMISSIONER ZAKHAROFF and that overhang canopy needs further discussion.

COMMISSIONER MATTHEWS stated agreement with COMMISSIONERS ZAKHAROFF and ADAIR.

CHAIR VOISS stated that many issues have been addressed since 2023 and a recommendation with a note of concerns can be sent to the Council as the Commission is not adopting policy.

COMMISSIONER ADAIR stated that the tree code document does not reflect what is being discussed.

CHAIR VOISS stated that the code could be revisited at the next Commission meeting on July 24, 2025, but that specifics should be brought so that the code will move forward in any form in respect to the Council timeline.

COMMISSIONER ZAKHAROFF asked if bullet points could be sent to Council for consideration.

Dhaliwal stated that if Commissioners can provide direction, edits will be made to the documents and concerns captured for Council.

CHAIR VOISS asked if the next meeting would be for formulating ideas for Council consideration and not another Public Hearing. Dhaliwal replied that the official Public Hearing has concluded but General Public Comments can still be made.

CHAIR VOISS asked for a vote to hold another meeting. The vote result was 1yay and another meeting would not be held. Concerns for Council would be compiled at this meeting.

COMMISSIONER OLINER asked for clarification regarding overhang coverage intent. Dhaliwal replied that overhang coverage does count, reflected in the document.

COMMISSIONER ADAIR asked for specific clarification regarding an overhang involving two lots and Dhaliwal replied that the issue would present at redevelopment.

CHAIR VOISS asked if the HOA and Homeowner split is mentioned in the proposed code per the earlier Public Comment, and Dhaliwal replied that a human representative and not a generic Board is needed on a permit application for communication purposes.

CHAIR VOISS stated that regarding the Public Comment mentioning fires, the current plan is temporary until Washington State Legislature and other components are settled.

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COMMISSIONER ZAKHAROFF recommended that Council examine speeding up permits, the high cost, an easier process for tree removal, and problem areas such as slopes. CHAIR VOISS asked for clarification that a slope is still a part of a property and tree canopy. Dhaliwal replied that removing trees from slopes is a stability issue and that Critical Area code would apply. CHAIR VOISS asked if all would be addressed at the Building Permit stage and Dhaliwal replied correct. Dhaliwal stated that there is a zero-dollar fee for hazardous tree removal, and that fees are not in Title 18 but Title 3, examined by Council annually due to the increasing cost of living but the true cost of time.

COMMISSIONER KRASS stated that if fees are too high, trees will be cut without permits out of frustration. Dhaliwal replied that there is a double fee if there is no permit. CHAIR VOISS stated that Council can be made aware of the concern that Issaquah Tree Permits costs are higher than most cities and should be examined. Dhaliwal stated that if a tree is already down no permit is necessary and COMMISSIONER KRASS asked that this be confirmed in code.

COMMISSIONER ADAIR commented on the mathematical formulas for figuring canopy area.

Dhaliwal stated that staff will confirm that language supports that down trees do not require a permit, visuals will be prepared of Central Issaquah for Council, that overhang will be left as is, HOA permitting will be examined, the interplay between Critical Area Code and Tree Code, 1:1 replacement language will be examined, and that tribes will be reached out to regarding the Heritage Tree Program.

The MOTION with additional comments for the Council passed unanimously.

Dhaliwal stated that the next steps are the recommendation going to the Council Committee in September 2025 for a recommendation to full Council which will formerly adopt the ordinances.

5. Regular Business

a) Light Rail Station Planning Introduction (D) (01:32)

Presented by:

Thomas Valdriz, Senior Planner

Valdriz gave the presentation.

COMMISSIONER MATTHEWS asked for clarification regarding Lakemont Boulevard, Newport Way and I-90. Valdriz replied that the station is provisional based on money available to build and not certain but would probably run on I-90.

COMMISSIONER OLINER asked if ballot measure funding covers parking garages and changes to local and regional roads. Valdriz replied that the ballot measure does provide for parking.

COMMISSIONER KRASS asked how Sound Transit chooses locations. Valdriz replied that Issaquah has become a regional growth center providing jobs and housing and the impetus for Sound Transit to engage. COMMISSIONER KRASS asked for further clarification and Valdriz

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replied that there is a planning process that examines land cost, the budget, connection for density, environmental review, and land use capabilities.

COMMISSIONER MATTHEWS asked if Issaquah has a say in how a station is designed. Valdriz replied that land use and zoning is used, and operational components will be compatible with the community. Transit Agencies are consulted.

COMMISSIONER ZAKHAROFF asked how many people Sound Transit is expecting on trains daily. Valdriz replied that 2016 numbers were approximately 8,000 riders initially. COMMISSIONER ZAKHAROFF replied that only 500 parking spaces are being planned. Valdriz replied that Redmond uses a distributed parking network with Park & Rides and other stations with parking. COMMISSIONER ZAKHAROFF asked if cities to the east are being engaged to provide parking with buses to Issaquah. Valdriz replied that King County Metro is currently planning various solutions.

Valdriz stated that the target is 2041, but that Sound Transit can deliver as late as 2044.

6. Reports

a) Council Update (01:56)

Dhaliwal stated that earlier this week, the Planning, Development, & Environment Committee addressed impact fee updates, going to Council on July 21, 2025. Bellevue College will be leasing land intended for a satellite location in the Highlands with a two-year extension from Council. Title 18 updates are slated for adoption by the Council on July 21, 2025. An update on the Transit Oriented Development (TOD) site next to the Transit Center was given.

7. Other Business/Announcements

a) Upcoming Schedule

Dhaliwal stated that permit process improvements are still the staff priority in 2025. The next Planning Policy Commission meeting is To Be Determined (TBD) depending on the agenda items.

8. Adjournment

CHAIR VOISS adjourned the meeting at 8:37 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Carolyn Garza, LLC
Recording Secretary