



THURSTON COUNTY PLANNING COMMISSION

Minutes May 3, 2023

1
2 1. 6:30 P.M. CALL TO ORDER

3 Chair Casino called the Thurston County Planning Commission meeting on May 3, 2023, to
4 order at 6:30 P.M. Commissioners provided self-introductions.
5

6 **Attendance:** Commissioners Eric Casino (Chair), Derek Day (Vice Chair),
7 Scott Nelson, Barry Halverson, Helen Wheatley, Doug Karman, Jim Simmons, and
8 Kevin Pestinger.
9

10 **Absent:** Joel Hansen
11

12 **Staff:** Christina Chaput, Andrew Deffobis, Marisa Whisman, Andrew Boughan, Maya Teeple,
13 and Ashley Arai
14

15 2. 6:32 P.M. APPROVAL OF AGENDA
16

17 **MOTION: Commissioner Nelson moved to approve the agenda. Commissioner**
18 **Karman seconded. Motion carried, as amended.**
19

20 Add 2.5: Director Cummings addresses the Planning Commission

21 Add 8.5: Update on subcommittee by Commissioner Pestinger
22

23 3. 6:33 P.M. APPROVAL OF MEETING MINUTES
24

25 **MOTION: Commissioner Pestinger moved to approve the 4.19.2023 meeting minutes.**
26 **Commissioner Wheatley seconded. Motion carried, as amended.**
27

28 On page 4, line 2-3, remove the sentence, "He is concerned the staff might not be good stew-
29 ards of the money with printing and other communication strategies."
30

31 **The audio recording is the official record of the above-dated meetings. The information**
32 **herein is provided as an overview of the meeting and a road map to the audio record-**
33 **ing. Audio is available online on the [Thurston County Planning Commission](#) website.**
34

35 4. 6:35 P.M. DIRECTOR CHECK-IN
36

37 Director Cummings addressed the Planning Commission. He thanked the Commissioners and
38 staff for their hard work for the public. He wanted to ensure that the Planning Commission
39 knows their request for a meeting with the Board of County Commissioners has been for-
40 ward-ed and a meeting has been scheduled. The BoCC seeks an agenda from the Planning
41 Commission to ensure communication between the staff, Planning Commission, and Board of
42 County Commissioners stays positive and professional. He also announced Chris Chaput is
43 leaving Thurston County. Her last day is May 12. The person filling her role in the interim is
44 Jeremy Davis, Operations Manager. He has many years of experience in long-range planning.

5. 6:40 P.M. PUBLIC COMMUNICATIONS (Not associated with topics for which public hearings have been held.)

1. John Pettit, Olympia, WA
2. Marcy Cleaver, Olympia, WA
3. Sam Payne, Olympia, WA

6. 6:48 P.M. WORK SESSION #1: Minor Amendment 2023-2028 Capital Improvement Plan
(Staff: Andrew Boughan, Maya Teeple)

Mr. Boughan presented a PowerPoint on the minor amendment to the 2023-2028 Capital Improvement Program. Commissioner Pestinger wanted to know what public comments, if any, were received about the shortened time frame of the project. Mr. Boughan explained there were no public or oral comments received at the Board of County Commissioners meeting. Clarification on what intersection the new project in the CIP takes place at was asked by the Planning Commission. Matt Unzelman, Interim County Engineer, answered and explained the funding package being offered by the state will be split evenly between the three entities that will be working on the three roundabouts. Those stakeholders are the City of Yelm, Thurston County, and Pierce County.

MOTION: Commissioner Halverson moved to approve the public hearing on May 17, 2023, for The Amendment Request to the 2023-2028 Capital Improvement Program (CIP) to add State Route 507 and Vaile Road SE Roundabout Project. Commissioner Pestinger seconded. The motion carried unanimously.

7. 6:55 P.M. CALENDAR

May 17, 2023: Commissioner Pestinger will not be attending

- Long-Term Agriculture Zoning Update,
- Forest Conversion Code Amendment
- Minor Amendment Public Hearing CIP

May 22, 2023: Commissioner Pestinger will not be attending

- City of Yelm Joint Planning Work Session

8. 6:57 P.M. STAFF UPDATES

Ms. Chaput announced that the SMP public hearing will be held May 16, 2023. The Olympia Joint Plan BoCC briefing is on May 17, 2023. The Grand Mound Subarea Plan will be presented to The Board of County Commissioners on May 17th as well.

9. 6:58 P.M. SUBCOMMITTEE UPDATE

Commissioner Pestinger updated the Planning Commission and staff about the hierarchy of the subcommittee as well as what their first meeting was focused on. Commissioner Pestinger was voted as the Chair, Commissioner Wheatley was voted in as Vice Chair, and Commissioner Day was voted in as the Secretary. The focus of the subcommittee's first meet-

ing was reviewing House Bill 118. This new bill has a lot of requirements for periodic comprehensive plan updates and GMA. They have drafted a list of recommendations for the Planning Commission and will route those documents through staff.

10. **7:01 P.M PUBLIC HEARING: Open Space "Terry" Property**
(Staff: Marisa Whisman)

Chair Casino opened the public hearing and provided instructions for the public testimony.

Ms. Whisman provided an overview of the Open Space tax program and the Terry Open Space application, which included a summary of the public outreach and participation. There were no written comments submitted at the time of the hearing. One public commenter thought the application should be approved.

Chair Casino closed the public hearing at 7:05 P.M.

11. **7:06 P.M WORK SESSION #2 & RECOMMENDATION: Open Space**
(Staff: Marisa Whisman)

There were no additional questions or comments by the Planning Commission for Ms. Whisman to address.

MOTION: Commissioner Karman moved to recommend approval of the application from James Terry Jr. to be accepted into the Open Space Tax Program for the classification of 12.84 acres as current use assessment for parcel 11714110000 located at 8512 Spurgeon Creek Rd. SE, Olympia, WA 98513. Commissioner Pestinger seconded. The motion carried unanimously.

12. **7:08 P.M. WORK SESSION #1: Long-Term Agriculture Zoning**
(Staff: Maya Teeple, Ashley Arai)

Maya Teeple and Ashley Arai presented on the Long-Term Agriculture Zoning. Commissioner Wheatley asked a clarifying question about the current designation criteria requirements in the Comprehensive Plan now and the scenarios in the presentation. Ms. Teeple stated in scenario one, the requirements are the same as the County's current designation criteria requirements for agriculture, except instead of the requirement of 50% or greater prime farmland soils, this scenario's requirement is 75% or greater, and instead of blocks of agricultural land being 200-300+ acres, it drops down to 100 acres or more. The requirement for parcel size stays the same as the County's current criteria at 20 acres or greater. Scenario two's requirements reduce the blocks of agricultural land to 40+ acres and parcel size to 15+ acres. Ms. Teeple will include a comparison table for the next meeting.

Commissioner Nelson mentioned that there are different soil types on the soils list being considered – prime farmland if irrigated or prime if drained. He made a point that soils may not be the best criteria for a property to be considered long-term commercially significant for agriculture due to limitations on draining and water access. Ms. Arai noted that this issue was something the stakeholder group also discussed. Commissioner Halverson asked how many redesignated properties fall under the Habitat Conservation Plan (HCP). Ms. Arai explained

1 the HCP applies to any property regardless of how it is zoned. She noted that using conserva-
2 tion measures during agriculture will benefit protected species. He mentions the Oregon
3 Spotted Frog and asks if the land is listed as farmland, how can the owners work the land for
4 agriculture? Ms. Arai explained that agricultural activities are exempt from the constraints of
5 the HCP under the 4D Rule. However, it would be different if you start talking about build-
6 ing structures on that land.

7
8 Commissioner Wheatley wondered about commercial farm size. What is and is not a com-
9 mercial farm? She also wanted feedback on how the work group discussions have gone. Ms.
10 Arai clarified that the median farm acreage from the census is 15 acres and that the average
11 agricultural parcel size is about 15 acres. Acreage and parcel size are different things. She is
12 referring to parcel size for planning purposes. There were many scenarios the workgroup
13 considered before landing on the ones shared with the Commissioners. Commissioner Sim-
14 mons asked about how much farmland the County needs to provide food for the population
15 in the County. Ms. Arai responded that the state does not provide guidance how much land
16 needs set aside. Ms. Arai also mentions the stake holder workgroup had the same questions.
17 At the next work session, members of stakeholder workgroups will be present to speak to the
18 Planning Commission directly.

19
20 Commissioner Wheatley asked how equity was considered in the outreach plan implemented
21 in the presentation. Ms. Arai explained how the staff found groups that should have a seat at
22 the table. Many people attended these work sessions. The work sessions were held close to
23 those areas where underrepresented citizens live and where most people would be affected.
24 She also asked community members anytime she met with them if they had any recommen-
25 dations on individuals or groups that she should include.

26
27 Commissioner Halverson asked about the proposal to get around water rights; He wanted
28 more feedback on Commissioner Nelson's comments about soil drainage and irrigation. Ms.
29 Teeple explained The Department of Ecology regulates water rights. It did come up consist-
30 ently in the stakeholder workgroup. For this county-wide proposal, it was decided, to keep
31 the prime if irrigated/prime if drained in these scenarios and to assume lands could meet that
32 unless proven otherwise. Commissioner Halverson asked how the County is partnering with
33 the Department of Ecology to add something to state law to enhance farmlands through water
34 rights. Ms. Teeple said that the Department of Ecology is not ready to add anything addi-
35 tional; however, it is something that the County can put in its Comprehensive Plan, so the
36 conversation continues, and shows the County is doing its due diligence to facilitate that con-
37 versation on behalf of the farming community. Ms. Arai added that her discussions with the
38 state did not provide helpful feedback. The state's maps say they are only about 75% accu-
39 rate; Because of the inaccuracy, it is not a resource that should be used for planning. Staff did
40 look at different counties and how those counties address water rights. The Planning Staff
41 found that it is okay to have this type of requirement as some farms are not soil dependent.
42 Ms. Teeple pointed out that these questions are policy questions and that she would be happy
43 to bring some example policies to the Planning Commissioners to show how other counties
44 have addressed this.

45
46 Commissioner Day asked if a piece of land is not 100% prime soil, what other types of agri-
47 culture could the land be used for? What is the agricultural value of that property? He is in-

1 terested in what data is available about nuisance claims. Will there be an increase in com-
2 plaints with the block size being smaller? Ms. Arai explained of all the themes brought to the
3 community meetings; the agricultural block sizes received the most feedback. She said she
4 was happy to get any available nuisance data back to the Planning Commission for them to
5 review.
6

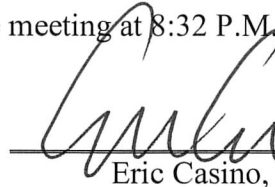
7 Ms. Teeple spoke about the timeline of the project and the dates of the work sessions. A
8 question arose about where the work sessions will be held and if the staff is still doing public
9 outreach. Ms. Chaput clarified the Planning Commission work sessions will be held at 3000
10 Pacific Ave in the board room. Ms. Arai mentioned that the staff will continue to reach out to
11 stakeholders throughout the process.
12

13 **Other Business**

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15 13. 8:30 P.M. **GOOD OF THE ORDER**

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17 14. 8:32 P.M. **ADJOURN**
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19
20 With no further business, Chair Casino adjourned the meeting at 8:32 P.M.
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24 
Eric Casino, Chair

25 Prepared by Tosha Knight

