

Anacortes Planning Commission Minutes - January 22, 2025

Roll Call

Chairperson Linda Martin called to order the Anacortes Planning Commission meeting of January 22, 2025 at 6:00 p.m. Commissioners Jim Stoneman, Frank Jeretzky, Paul Ryan, Luke Currier, and Mike Mills were present. Commissioner William McCombs was absent. Jim Stoneman moved to excuse Commissioner McCombs; Mike Mills seconded. All ayes.

Pledge of Allegiance

Minutes

Minutes of 10/09/2024

The minutes for October 9, 2024 were submitted for approval. Mike Mills moved to approve the minutes as submitted. Jim Stoneman seconded. All ayes.

Public Comment

No public comment taken.

Public Hearings

Other Business

Election of Officers

Linda Martin pointed out that there are 2 officers to elect tonight. Paul Ryan nominated Linda Martin for Chair; Luke Currier seconded. No other nominations for chair were received. All Ayes. Frank Jeretzky nominated Mike Mills for Vice-Chair; Paul Ryan seconded. No other nominations for vice-chair were received. All Ayes.

2025 Comprehensive Plan Update - Proposed amendments to the goals and policies in the Capital Facilities & Utilities elements

Libby Grage said the Capital Facilities and Utilities element of the Comprehensive Plan update will be discussed tonight. She reviewed the schedule and upcoming meetings. She reviewed the elements of phase 1 of the update to the Comprehensive Plan. All the public comments, staff reports and commissioner comments will be compiled and released for public review prior to starting phase 2.

Andy Rheume reminded everyone that Public Works is basically all the utilities, facilities and fleet for the city. Included in tonight's review is the Capital Facilities and the Utilities elements of the Comprehensive Plan. Anacortes capital facilities and services include: water, sewer, stormwater, transportation, parks, fire & EMS, and police. He reviewed the capital facilities plan from RCW 36.70A.070(3). There are 4 plans that are in process: water system plan, general sewer plan, stormwater master plan and transportation master plan. The details and implementation plan will be in these updates. The general themes tonight are minor updates to language for clarity, specificity and readability; policies that are suggested to be relocated or removed; addition of new policies and revisions to existing policies. He gave examples of language updates. Some of these are financially constrained, but we are keeping the goals in the Comprehensive Plan so that they can be addressed in the future. He moved on to the levels of service standards and gave examples of proposed updates. He reviewed the utilities updated goals and policies. He pointed out that the Climate Change element has impacted these goals for our community. There will be a public hearing scheduled for February 26th.

Mike Mills asked why the 6-year timeframe was being changed in CF1.2.

Andy Rheume clarified that it's common to plan further than that because the Comprehensive Plan goes until 2045. We want to plan as far out as we can.

Linda Martin suggested adding "system plans" to the glossary.

Mike Mills commented that on page 3 and elsewhere, this refers to facilities or assets owned by the city. He asked if there were leased assets that should be referenced.

Mr. Rheume said he don't think there are any that are leased, but will verify.

Linda Martin referenced CF1.10 which says to conduct vulnerability assessments and prepare disaster preparedness plan. She wonders if this could be moved to CF3 which discusses deficiencies. Then on page 5, in the stormwater goal, the last sentence states "strive to achieve a future condition". This is an aspirational goal. She feels we are striving for all of them. She suggested rewording or removing.

Jim Stoneman pointed out that all of these have the "strive to achieve". He suggested they all be rewritten.

Andy Rheume clarified that it's normal to have aspirational language in the Comprehensive Plan. He gave the example of the Stormwater Master Plan update "aspiring to have healthy streams", but that sometimes takes longer than anticipated.

Frank Jeretzky stated that the new fire policy cuts the time down from 7 minutes, but eliminates the times for everything but structure fires. He wondered if there are time constraints for other types of fires; such as vessels, vegetation, etc.

John Coleman said the Fire Department wanted to improve their response times and have their focus on SFR's.

Commissioner Martin said she spoke with a family member that is a fire fighter. He was impressed with how this was written. He clarified that the second alarm to structure fires is for commercial buildings.

Frank Jeretzky expressed concern about putting time constraints on some of these.

Mr. Coleman pointed out that Chief Harris can address this if you'd like.

Linda Martin wondered why the Police department removed the time elements from their section.

Andy Rheume said he will have Chief Floyd address that too.

Mr. Mills stated he liked the addition of implementing a funding prioritization process on page 7.

Linda Martin referenced CF4.5. This sounds good in theory, but may make building less affordable, which is not what we want. She moved on to the new language on page 9 asking why adjacent is included.

Andy Rheume clarified this is usually regarding the adjacent ROW. We normally require them to do sidewalks, curb & gutter and half the street and the pipes in ground.

Mike Mills suggested adding "ROW" to clarify.

Paul Ryan suggested adding "inside, adjacent, or in the ROW of the project".

Mr. Rheume suggested "adjacent to the project in the ROW". We want to clarify this is not the adjacent private property.

Linda Martin referenced CF7.8 & CF7.9 stating these may need to be amended or moved to the new climate subheading. She recommends keeping them here for now, and readdressing them after the climate element is brought forward. She moved on to the utilities and pointed out that there may be a few of these, U6.2, U6.3, and U6.4, that may be moved to the "new climate element subheading" at the end of each section.

John Coleman clarified that when we bring the climate element to the Planning Commission, we plan on addressing climate throughout the Comprehensive Plan.

Linda Martin thanked Andy for putting together the master plans for these utilities. As a citizen, it's nice to hear that this is being planned.

Libby Grage said staff will make clarifications and updates to these goals & policies and bring them back to you at the next meeting, February 26th. We will also get clarification from the Fire and Police Chiefs.

2025 Comprehensive Plan Update - Housing Action Plan (HAP) strategies discussion, continued

Linda Martin reminded the Commissioners that the HAP is a menu of sorts. The planning committee of City Council asked the Planning Commission to narrow the HAP down more. She wants the Commissioners to ask themselves: (1) will the change that is being proposed increase affordable housing; (2) will the change increase the types of available housing; and (3) will the change be accepted by the community. The goal is to find the items that achieve these 3 goals.

Libby Grage clarified that the document has been updated to include the commissioners for each section review and to include their suggestions.

Linda Martin asks what "move forward with PCED recommendation" mean.

Ms. Grage explained that staff is looking for the Planning Commission to provide direction to staff to develop language for the development regulations. That will allow the Commissioners and the public to see the recommendations.

Commissioner Martin started at HAP 2.1.9.

Jim Stoneman recommended complying with the Department of Commerce.

Libby Grage clarified that the new law for co-living housing may supersede this. Staff needs more time to review this and then it will be brought back to the Commission.

Paul Ryan wondered if HAP 2.1.9 includes rooming houses.

Ms. Grage said there is some guidance on that. Co-living facilities have to be allowed where at least 6 multi-family units would be allowed, but if we have similar regulations for rooming houses, we can keep the separate term for the residential zones.

Jim Stoneman stated that HAP 2.1.10 looks like it's to comply with state law. He doesn't think there were concerns, but can review it again.

Linda Martin pointed out that HAP 2.3 was not assigned to a Commissioner for review.

Mr. Ryan said maintenance property code covers most of this for ADU sizes. He recommends a rental registration program for ADU's and rental properties.

Mike Mills said he could not find his file with the notes regarding his section.

Commissioner Martin understood. She asked if the HAP has new suggested changes in it.

Libby Grage disagreed, stating that when the HAP was put together, they stated what the changes were on most of the items,

Linda Martin said there's a section in the HAP showing how and where they suggest reducing lot sizes per zone. She wonders if this will provide more affordable housing. In her opinion, it could because it's a smaller lot. She's not sure if it will accomplish a variety of housing types or be accepted by the community. Therefore, we may be able to cross this off.

Mike Mills expressed his overall observations in the HAP regarding changing minimum lot sizes in residential areas. We need to clarify if R1 and OT are being excluded or included. He wonders why HAP 2.4.2 relates only to R4 and R4A. Lastly, he wonders how HAP 2.4.4, the idea of applying this only to new lots, can be implemented.

Linda Martin asked why R1 was not included in HAP 2.4.1.

Mr. Mills pointed out that there's other language in the HAP regarding adjusting minimum lot sizes in all residential zones, but that doesn't coincide with this section. He would like the language to be consistent.

John Coleman asked if Mr. Mills wants to add OT to HAP 2.4.1. He clarified that R1 is not included as it doesn't allow for MF.

Linda Martin suggested they bring back 2.4.1. She moved on to HAP 2.4.2, which recommends going from 50% maximum lot coverage to 60% in R4 and R4A zones. She recommends making the changes as per the HAP recommendation. She moved on to 2.4.4.

Mike Mills said he struggled with determining if this applies to new lots or is there language about grandfathering. He wondered if this would incentivize redevelopment if it applied to existing lots.

Linda Martin suggested bringing this back too. She moved on to HAP 2.4.5 regarding setbacks.

Libby Grage said this recommendation regarding the upper story step back on structures, reduces the likelihood of building additional units. This is for the R3, R3A, R4 and R4A zones. These areas have smaller lots in higher density zones. The intent is to provide more flexibility in building design to promote development.

John Coleman clarified that garages would still have a 20-foot setback, but the rest of the house could be forward.

Commissioner Martin referenced HAP 2.4.6, the height bonus program.

Mike Mills pointed out that the thought process had to do with providing storage. He wondered if this is conditioned or unconditioned space.

Linda Martin said the Commissioners determined that we could say no to this one.

John Coleman stated that a developer requested this increase to 650 to have additional space inside the unit

for storage, so between that comment and the HAP recommendation, staff included it.

Mr. Mills said he's more amenable if this is referencing conditioned, interior space.

John Coleman commented that the intent is more storage space inside the unit.

Linda Martin expressed concern that this might cost more instead of encouraging more affordable units. She asked if this provides a different type of affordable housing or if it would be accepted by the community.

Frank Jeretzky stated that if this is being used to get the bonus height, then it would not be accepted by the community.

Linda Martin crossed this off the list. She moved on to HAP 2.4.7 asking if this gets to affordability.

Mr. Jeretzky pointed out that development will tell you if this works. Since we only have one of these, that's our answer.

Mike Mills pointed out that the height requirement for elevators may go down as technology improves and these are reduced in size.

Commissioner Martin said the Commissioners are recommending no on HAP 2.4.7.

Frank Jeretzky wondered if there's been any thought to change the language to a "max of 650". Then the developer can determine if this pencils out.

Libby Grage stated that to obtain the bonus height, a certain percentage of the units in the building have to be 600 sq ft or less. Theoretically, smaller units cost less.

Linda Martin pointed out that with our aging population, there may be many senior citizens that are living in larger homes that may be willing to move to smaller units.

Frank Jeretzky said the building would need to have an elevator if seniors are living there.

Mike Mills agreed that as we age, we like to downsize. He understands that stairs can be an issue for an older population. He agrees that the market can determine what is built. He pointed out that the work the Planning Commission and City Council do determines what does not get built.

Luke Currier wondered if new options can be presented. He understands that City Council wants the HAP list shrunken down, but he would like new ideas brought forward if they accomplish the goals.

Linda Martin agreed. The Planning Commission will pause here because the next section was handled by the Commissioner that is absent tonight. We will bring it back at the next meeting.

Mike Mills asked if staff will be bringing the proposed changes to language at the next meeting.

Staff agreed.

Planning Commission Rules of Procedure discussion

Linda Martin said she asked for this to be added to the agenda. At a prior meeting, an audience member brought up the concern that RCW 35A was not included in our rules of procedure. When the Mayor gave the State of the City address he referenced RCW 35A. She provided copies of the table of contents and definitions from that section. She checked with John and Legal to see if this should be added to our document. She asked the Commissioners if they would like discuss this or table for another meeting.

Jim Stoneman asked if RCW 35A supersedes the rules of procedure.

Linda Martin clarified that the Planning Commission is covered by RCW 35, but RCW 35A covers other items that are within our purview.

Mike Mills wondered if the intent would be to add RCW 35A in addition to RCW 35.

Commissioner Martin stated it would be in addition to RCW 35.

Jim Stoneman commented that if our document works, he's not sure we need to address this.

Luke Currier asked if this would be a positive addition and why.

Linda Martin expressed her opinion that it would be a positive addition and would not hurt to add it.

The Commissioners decided to discuss this at another meeting.

Linda Martin asked Commissioner Mills to give a quick report about the climate committee.

Mike Mills stated that they had 2 meetings since the last update. At last weeks meeting we tweaked the guiding principals to prioritize items to achieve the most benefit for the costs. We reviewed measures for climate vulnerability and resiliency. This process illuminated how it's difficult to only focus on one section as these items permeate across many sections. He explained that on the City's website for the

Comprehensive Plan there are presentations for the climate committee, so he recommends Commissioners review those. At the next climate committee meeting on February 27th they will be reviewing the goals and policies. They hope to bring this to the Planning Commission in March or April. He reminded the Commissioners that there are great classes available on seniorcollege.org.

Planning Department Update

John Coleman reminded commissioners that the Planacortes webpage is continually updated with new information. The climate explorer tool is there too. The Planning Commission made a recommendation on HB5290, but there has been an appeal of the SEPA determination. This will go before the Hearings Examiner before it can be taken to City Council.

Adjournment

Linda Martin adjourned the meeting at 7:47 p.m.