

Anacortes Planning Commission Minutes - August 13, 2025

Roll Call

Chairperson Linda Martin called to order the Anacortes Planning Commission meeting of August 13, 2025 at 6:00 p.m. Commissioners Jim Stoneman, William McCombs, Frank Jeretzky, Paul Ryan, Luke Currier, and Mike Mills were present.

Pledge of Allegiance

Minutes

There were no minutes submitted for approval.

Public Comment

There was no comment received.

Public Hearings

Other Business

2025 Comprehensive Plan Periodic Update - Introducing the Draft 2025-2045 Comprehensive Plan (Discussion)

John Coleman gave an overview of why Anacortes is updating the Comprehensive Plan. Per the Growth Management Act (GMA), Anacortes is planning for 20 years of projected population growth. This is to prepare Anacortes for expected growth based on prior growth patterns. The intent is to avoid the ills that can occur if growth happens without proper planning. We are trying to avoid being unprepared for additional traffic, increasing need for our utilities, etc. This helps shape how that growth will look. The Planning department sent an all-city mailer to all residents to help engage people in the Comprehensive Plan process. We will have a public hearing on the updated Comprehensive Plan draft scheduled for August 27th. Libby Grage gave the background of the Comprehensive Plan. It's the city's plan for growth for the next 20 years. We are updating the Comprehensive Plan and the Development Regulations which are the rules on what can be developed and how. There are some mandatory requirements from the GMA: 20-year growth projections, UGA boundaries; state law changes; internal consistency between the elements of the plan; and critical area & development regulations. In addition to those, City Council adopted a docket in August 2024 for format & organizational and policy changes; Future Land Use Map (FLUM) amendments; and development regulation updates that were requested by citizens, staff and community members. She reviewed the 2-phase public process. We completed phase 1 over the past year including public outreach, creation of the Climate Team, and released the draft preliminary goals and policies. We held public meetings, open houses and public hearings to review the proposed changes. We are now at phase 2, which includes the complete draft Comprehensive Plan including volume 1 & 2. The Planning Commission has reviewed all of volume 1 and just received volume 2 in tonight's packet. There will be public hearings, a Planning Commission recommendation to City Council, and City Council adoption by the end of 2025. She reviewed the public engagement that occurred over the past year. There is a public engagement summary report available at www.planacortes.org. Staff has received over 145 comment letters and emails to date. Staff is compiling a comment summary and brief staff response table. Many of the comments are well researched and thought out. The comment period is open until the Planning Commission meeting on August 27th. Staff will be recommending keeping the public hearing open. She reviewed how to access and review the elements of the Comprehensive Plan. There are also supplemental documents and appendices that can be downloaded. Overall, the approach to the update included: consolidating overlapping policies; increasing specificity to improve understanding and implementation; reflect status of policies that have been implemented; enhance readability and clarity; and integrate and address requirements of state legislation. Staff added a preface to the Comprehensive Plan to set the stage for the rest of the plan. We introduce the

GMA planning goals, countywide planning policies overview and Tribal coordination on planning issues. The next section is the introduction and vision section where we integrated language regarding climate and housing requirements; updated the community engagement summary and other plans.

Ms. Grage reviewed each element. In the Land Use element goals & policies staff carried over the changes the Planning Commission reviewed from phase 1. There are updates to the FLUM, updates to the land-use designation table, additional policies added to integrate the climate element, and integration of public and agency feedback. She reviewed the proposed changes to the FLUM that the Planning Commission already reviewed. There are 2 new proposed changes to the FLUM. The first is changing the land use designation and zoning for the Olson building from MS to CBD. The reason for this change is that the current use and proposed redevelopment is more in line with the CBD zone.

Linda Martin asked what can be developed in the Olson building if the zoning is changed to CBD that cannot be done with the current zoning.

Libby Grage clarified that the type of use (retail on bottom and residential on top) is allowed outright in the CBD but is a conditional use in MS. Changing it makes redevelopment more straight forward.

Mrs. Martin expressed concern about creating a zoning island.

Libby Grage said other considerations are form and intensity standards for things like setbacks. The Olson building is currently an existing non-conforming structure, which can make redevelopment difficult.

Changing this would make it more straight forward to reconstruct what is currently there.

Paul Ryan asked if the Housing Authority is a government agency.

John Coleman clarified they are a non-governmental organization. They are non-profit. They have their own by-laws, which requires the Mayor to appoint the board members. They are not funded via the city general fund.

Linda Martin stated the point is changing this makes it easier to redevelop the Olson building by the Housing Authority. This makes it easier to permit and less fees.

Ms. Grage agreed. There is uncertainty when applying for a conditional use permit. The other new proposal is the Anacortes Museum property. It's currently OT and proposed to change to public designation. A museum is not a permitted use in OT, so it's currently a non-conforming use, which limits expansion. This aligns the land use designation with the current use of the parcel. The Museum has additional space needs, so making this change would allow that to occur.

Mike Mills asked if the setback requirements are different between OT and Public zones.

John Coleman said there are no minimum setbacks in the Public zone, but they are subject to block frontage standards and height requirements. It's a little more flexible in the Public zone. This change allows for the Museum to expand due to increased need for more room.

Libby Grage said she will look into this more and report back to the Planning Commission. She moved on to the land use designations stating there were some overarching updates made to this section. The changes add clarity to the intent of the section. Another change was to allow cottages in the RLD1 land use designation based on the Planning Commission discussion and to be consistent with HAP. The next change is in the OT designation. There was discussion to include cottages in this zone but due to the small lot size in OT it would be difficult to make a well-designed cottage development. For this reason, Makers recommended not including cottages in OT.

Linda Martin clarified that the Planning Commission recommendation was to make OT similar to R3 and R3a zones.

Libby Grage said another proposed change is under public use in the "special topics to explore" section to consider changing the designation of certain city and state-owned properties to Public. There are quite a few properties that the city owns where it would make more sense to make them designated as Public. There were also changes made in volume 2 to the land use background document to align with new state laws; addressing county-wide planning policies; update figures, stats & data; growth allocations & capacity and FLUM changes. She moved on to the housing element goals and policies stating staff carried over the Planning Commission reviewed changes from phase 1. There were no changes. The housing background information section was updated to be consistent with state laws; countywide planning policies; the

community profile, the HAP summary; housing inventory, production and cost trends; and analysis of housing and service needs. She moved on to the economic development goals and policies. Staff carried over the Planning Commission revised changes from phase one with no changes. There were quite a few changes to the Economic Development background. We integrated information from the Economic Development strategic plan; added a new section about the Anacortes Economic Development landscape; new sections describing other related plans; and local organizations involved in Economic Development. We updated the projected population and employment growth populations and add information about employment conditions; such as, employee travel patterns. The Transportation goals and policies had no changes. We updated the transportation background to update existing conditions data; new sections addressing active transportation and updated service standards; updated information on the inventory of public transit, air transport, and marine transport within the city; and an updated future needs analysis. She moved on to the Parks, Recreation & Open Space goals and policies. One update is an updated connectivity map showing all the areas with wetlands; steep slopes; stream corridors; schools; privately owned and dedicated open spaces; and city-owned open space & parks. There are many goals to maintain and enhance open space. In the background section of Parks & Recreation staff added a section discussing GMA requirements for that element; updated inventory of existing parks & recreation facilities; added a section on the Senior Center; updated level of service and funding information; and an updated list of recommended actions to make improvements to park facilities. There were no changes in the Environmental & Conservation goals and policies. We are choosing to retain some shoreline-related policies that were originally recommended to be removed because there is overlap with the Shoreline Master Program (SMP). In the background for the Environmental & Conservation element staff added a section discussing GMA requirements for protecting critical areas; expanded the inventory include elements of the environment (land, water, flora, fauna, and atmosphere); and minor updates to the critical areas section. In the Capital Facilities goals & policies staff carried over the Planning Commission review and there were no changes. In the background for that section, there are updates to the capital facilities inventory – including green infrastructure and city-owned marine infrastructure; updated future facility needs for water, sewer and storm; updated Fire/EMS and public schools sections; added a new section for other city buildings and services. The Utilities section goals and policies had no changes. In the Utilities section background the utility inventory and forecast of future needs was updated. In the Climate goals and policies staff carried over all the Planning Commission revised changes from phase 1. Updates included new policy to encourage industrial facilities to transition to low-carbon systems; support for transition of oil refining and gas manufacturing to low-carbon processes or industries; and adoption of regulations to ensure proper siting and design of renewable energy generation and storage facilities. The background is all new (as the element was not in the prior comp plan).

Ms. Grage moved on to the appendices. This will include the land capacity analysis & adequate provision checklists; climate vulnerability and risk assessment report; GHG emission inventory report; and racially disparate impacts analysis. She reviewed the next steps and upcoming meetings. At the August 20th meeting, staff recommends discussion of the development regulations. Then on August 27th there will be a public hearing on the draft Comprehensive Plan. Staff recommends keeping that hearing open so that the public can continue to provide comments. September 10th would be a continuation of the public hearing on the Comprehensive Plan. We may need an additional special meeting on September 17th. Then on September 24th the plan is to hold deliberations and make a recommendation on the Comprehensive Plan, which may be continued to October 1st if needed. The October 8th meeting would be a public hearing on the development regulations, which may also need a second meeting so we are holding October 15th. Staff will also be bringing development specific projects to the Planning Commission during this time.

Planning Department Update

John Coleman said there is no department update.

Linda Martin asked if there is an updated on the UGA request we submitted to the County.

John Coleman said the County officially approved their Comprehensive Plan and associated Development Regulations. That officially expanded the Urban Growth Area to include the city-owned land. They will

probably be annexed next year.

Adjournment

Linda Martin adjourned the meeting at 7:23 p.m.