

Anacortes Planning Commission Minutes - September 10, 2025

Roll Call

Chairperson Linda Martin called to order the Anacortes Planning Commission meeting of September 10, 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

Minutes of July 9, 2025 and August 13, 2025 were submitted for approval.

Mrs. Martin pointed out a couple of typos in the Minutes for July 9, but asked for a motion to approve. Mike Mills moved to approve the minutes for July 9, 2025. Frank Jeretzky seconded. All ayes.

Will McCombs moved to approve the minutes for August 13, 2025. Jim Stoneman seconded. All ayes.

Public Comment

There was no public comment given.

Public Hearings

2025 Comprehensive Plan Update - Continued public hearing on Draft 2025-2045 Comprehensive Plan

John Coleman stated that at the August 27th Planning Commission meeting we held a public hearing on the draft Comprehensive plan document. There was lots of public input. We elected to keep that public hearing until the September 24th meeting.

Linda Martin reminded the citizens that this is the opportunity to comment about the draft Comprehensive Plan.

There was no comment taken.

Mrs. Martin continued the public hearing.

Other Business

2025 Comprehensive Plan Update - Development Regulation Amendments (Discussion)

Libby Grage introduced the Development Regulation Amendments. The purpose of tonight's meeting is to present and explain the proposed updates to the development regulations that are occurring as part of the broader Comprehensive Plan update and to identify issues for further discussion. Staff will also answer questions from the Commissioners. She reminded everyone that the Comprehensive Plan and Development Regulations are being updated as part of the Growth Management Act, which requires communities to plan for 20-years of growth. Anacortes is conducting the required periodic review and update of the Comprehensive Plan and Development Regulations to ensure consistency with state law. The Comprehensive plan is a statement of the community's vision that has goals and policies that direct and guide future growth in the city. It guides the day-to-day decisions of elected officials and city staff. It also contains the Future Land Use Map (FLUM) that shows the distribution of the planned growth in the Urban Growth Area. The Development Regulations are specific controls placed on development or land use activities. They include zoning, site and building design standards, parking, permitted uses, form & intensity standards, etc. The zoning map is a visualization of various zones, controls how a specific parcel can or cannot be used or developed. The development regulations are in Title 19 of the Anacortes Municipal Code. This includes the permit review procedures and approval criteria, zoning, land use, form & intensity, design standards, environmental protection and infrastructure requirements. She reviewed the organization of Title 19.

Ms. Grage stated that there are mandatory development regulation amendments and City Council docketed amendments, which can be found in Resolution 3161. The mandatory amendments include zoning for sufficient land capacity for all incoming housing needs; permanent supportive and transitional housing; limits on regulation of the number of unrelated persons occupying a household or dwelling unit; co-living housing; residential parking requirements limits; accessory dwelling units (ADU's); impact fees, etc. She reviewed the City Council docketed items from Resolution 3161. Those are streamlining permit review process; revisions to regulations affecting the Marine Supply building block; updates to street standards; implementation of HAP strategies & recommendations; review of permitted uses in the industrial zone; amendments to the MMU zone regulations east of Q Ave; driveway cut width standards; balcony projection allowances; shared roof deck provisions; indoor recreation uses in the LM1 zone; and unfinished items from the 2021 docket.

Mrs. Martin asked when the draft Development Regulations will be available for review.

Libby Grage said it will be available tomorrow. She will send out a notification email. She reviewed the topics that the Planning Commission will discuss at the next few meetings. She moved on to the first docketed item LEG 2024-17, the streamlined permit review process. This amendment would affect the procedures in AMC 19.20.030 which is where the various permit types and decision types for the development process are. She reviewed the various decision types. The proposal is to streamline Shoreline Substantial Development permits by changing them to a Type 2 administrative decision. Staff proposes to change the pre-application neighborhood meeting to Director discretion. She pointed out that an appeal of the Type 2 decision would be with the Hearing Examiner.

Paul Ryan asked if there is a specific process or application form for an appeal.

Libby Grage clarified that the requirements are spelled out in the Municipal Code and there is an application. She moved on to Type 1 decisions. These are straightforward permit applications. They are a Director decision. Type 3 decisions are made by the Hearing Examiner after a Director recommendation. Appeals of a Hearing Examiner decision are a closed record hearing with City Council. The proposal is to change a Shoreline Substantial Development permit Type 3 Planning Commission decision to a Type 2 Director decision. Staff also recommends changing a Shoreline Conditional Use or Variance permit to a Type 3 Hearing Examiner decision. The intent is to have the Hearing Examiner apply the criteria to projects that are more controversial and to streamline the permit process.

Linda Martin said it looks like any quasi-judicial Planning Commission decision is being recommended to be deleted. She wondered why this change is being made.

John Coleman clarified that it is no longer common for Planning Commissions to do quasi-judicial decisions. This is something that risk management and land use attorneys feel is not good practice. The Planning Commissioners are part of the community and may be moved emotionally in the decision-making process.

Libby Grage moved on to a Type 4 City Council decision. These include Binding Site Plan, Conditional Use Permits, Framework Development plans and Shoreline Substantial Development permits that are valued over 1 million. These are proposed to be moved to the Hearing Examiner as well.

Linda Martin asked if moving all of these to the Hearing Examiner will increase the cost to applicants.

Ms. Grage said staff will review the fees if these changes are approved. There are fees associated with the Hearing Examiner.

John Coleman commented that one of the obstacles to development is the unknown. Having these go before the Hearing Examiner clears that up. Generally speaking, these hearings happen quickly, which makes the process shorter.

Linda Martin referenced a staff comment in the packet to consider local appeal for Shoreline decisions.

Libby Grage explained the current process for Shoreline Substantial Development permits. They are appealable to City Council. Shoreline permits also have to be filed with the Department of Ecology, which starts a 21-day appeal period. By having a local appeal after the Planning Commission recommendation it adds an additional 14-days before staff can send it to the Department of Ecology. This could delay a project over a month. Staff felt that was an unnecessary delay.

Paul Ryan understands the delays, but feels it allows for checks and balances. A shorter review window may not allow citizens to have their voice.

John Coleman clarified that the proposal does not shorten the appeal timeline. The proposal is to eliminate one of the local appeals of a Shoreline permit because there is an appeal period at the state level.

Libby Grage reminded the Commissioners that in order to appeal at the local level a party needs to have standing as a party of record. She moved on to co-living. There was a recommendation in the HAP, but that was prior to the new state law that requires cities to allow co-housing living wherever multifamily where 6 or more units are allowed by right. She provided the definition of co-living. In Anacortes, co-housing living would be allowed in R4, R4A, CBD, C, MMU, CM and a section of MS as multifamily is allowed in these zones.

Linda Martin asked if the Olson building is the only parcel that applies in the MS zone.

Ms. Grage agreed. She reviewed the use standards in 19.3.160. These include standards for room dimensions and design. She moved on to childcare facilities. There was a request from a property owner to allow daycare facilities to be permitted in the Industrial zone. There is also a senate bill that requires cities to allow childcare facilities in all zones except Industrial. The Planning Commission needs to determine if the city should allow childcare facilities in all zones or should there be development standards for specific zones.

Paul Ryan feels this is necessary and needs to be provided close to where they live & work. These facilities should be permitted outright. The big thing is safety for the kids. In the Industrial zones, the biggest concerns would be overhead hazards and decibel levels.

Commissioners Stoneman, Currier, Mills agreed with permitting them outright and with Mr. Ryan's concerns.

Mike Mills wondered if the design standards would be enough.

Libby Grage pointed out that the city is allowed to apply reasonable standards related to pick-up/drop-off locations, but regarding hazardous uses, staff would need to do more research. There may be childcare licensing requirements that address some of those issues.

Linda Martin expressed her preference for conditional uses for these facilities.

Frank Jeretzky agreed with Mrs. Martin.

Will McCombs pointed out that the same hazards could be present in Light Manufacturing where it's permitted by right. He feels that can be mitigated by design standards.

Ms. Grage said she can bring the childcare use standards back to the Commission along with the state licensing requirements.

Will McCombs would like that. He said we want safe places for childcare in any zone.

Frank Jeretzky stated that there are several zones that may need to be conditional. He wondered how this fits into the various Port properties with that zoning. He circled back to parking for co-housing, asking if those standards would reflect multifamily and be similar to studio apartments.

John Coleman said that is applicable to the MS zone.

Libby Grage clarified that the recommendation is to meet the design standards, except for parking. This use is considered a multifamily use when interpreting applicability provisions. This is not intended to be the same as multifamily. The intent is to include in the parking section a category specifically for co-living housing type. Staff will clarify the proposed language and bring that back to the Planning Commission. She reviewed the upcoming schedule and topics.

Linda Martin expressed concern that the Commission hasn't reviewed much of Section 2 yet. She wondered when that will be presented.

John Coleman pointed out that Section 2 is mostly background information. That is not where the goals & policies are. The Commission has already reviewed that. Staff was not going to review Section 2 line by line.

Linda Martin expressed concern about adopting the entire document without having reviewed Section 2.

Mike Mills agreed that it does not need to be reviewed line by line, but it does need to be reviewed. That is the section where the glossary will be added and should be reviewed.

Libby Grage said that can be added to one of the upcoming meetings.

Planning Department Update

John Coleman said there is no update.

Linda Martin commented that 2 Commissioners attended the presentation by North Star. She asked Commissioner Mills if he wanted to speak on that.

Mike Mills said the keynote speaker became involved in housing and the causes of homelessness. The presentation was well done.

Linda Martin agreed. The presenter gave a lot of correlational data; such as weather. She found it interesting that his conclusion was causation – that the housing need is the cause of homelessness.

Adjournment

Linda Martin adjourned the Commission at 7:43 p.m.