



# **JOINT CITY COUNCIL & PLANNING COMMISSION**

Wednesday, March 12, 2025

## **APPROVED MINUTES**

### **MEMBERS PRESENT**

Mayor Jennifer Massey – via Zoom  
Council President Jessica Chilton  
Councilor Mark Gundersen  
Councilor Russell Hubbard  
Councilor Brandon Sundeen

Chair Jennifer Shoemaker  
Vice Chair Brooke Sisco  
Commissioner Charles Castner  
Commissioner Scott Jacobson  
Commissioner Trina Kingsbury  
Commissioner Reid Herman – Arrived via ZOOM around 5 p.m.

### **MEMBERS ABSENT**

Commissioner David B. Rosengard

### **STAFF PRESENT**

Jacob Graichen, City Planner  
Jenny Dimsho, Associate Planner

### **OTHERS**

None

### **CALL TO ORDER – 4:00 p.m.**

Council President Chilton called the meeting to order.

### **DISCUSSION TOPICS**

#### **1. Discussion of September Joint Meeting Date**

Mayor Jennifer Massey said the original conflict for the September Joint meeting date is no longer an issue and she is no longer requesting to change the meeting date from the approved 2025 meetings schedule.

#### **2. Planning Commission Proactive Item - Architectural Standards**

City Planner Graichen went over the memo included in the packet regarding architectural standards which was intended guide the discussion about priorities for the group.

First, there was a discussion about where to focus on developing standards. City Planner Graichen suggested focusing on a smaller area because starting small could help the Commission make progress and potentially, the standards could apply to a larger area in the future. Commissioner Shoemaker expressed a desire to encompass the entire historic district, not just the Riverfront District, as a starting point. She noted that trying to cover the whole city would be too ambitious and could lead to

misunderstandings and resistance from residents. Council President Chilton expressed a desire to include the Houlton Business District and getting Main Street involved.

Next, there was a discussion of what type of architectural elements to focus on. City Planner Graichen showed local, recent examples of residential development that prompted a discussion about windows and doors. He noted blank walls facing public streets and demonstrated how simple architectural features, such as windows or doors, could significantly improve their appearance. The group discussed the challenges of implementing architectural standards, including potential conflicts with state regulations and the need for clear, objective criteria for residential developments.

### **3. Planning Commission Proactive Item - Vacant Storefronts**

Commissioner Shoemaker shared research on vacant storefront policies in King County, Washington, which included registration fees, maintenance requirements, and penalties for long-term vacancies. The group discussed the challenges of defining "vacant" versus "underutilized" properties and the potential resistance from long-time property owners to new fees or regulations.

Suggestions for addressing vacant storefronts included:

1. Revisiting the inventory and initiatives of the Main Street Alliance
2. Exploring incentives and penalties for property owners
3. Considering requirements for maintaining storefronts in good condition
4. Investigating successful approaches used in other cities like Astoria, Prineville, Hood River, and Baker City

Commissioner Jacobson volunteered to connect with Main Street and gather information from other cities.

### **4. Planning Commission Proactive Item - The Plaza Square**

City Planner Graichen advised postponing discussions about the plaza square due to ongoing tensions between the city and county, including right-of-way ownership questions. He suggested allowing time for healing before revisiting the topic. The group briefly discussed concerns about the current condition of the plaza, including:

1. The unsustainable grass that gets damaged during events
2. Accessibility issues for people with mobility challenges
3. The historical design of the plaza and potential restoration options
4. The need for better drainage and irrigation

Councilor Sundeen emphasized the importance of preserving the plaza's character and suggested starting with an arborist's assessment of the existing trees. The group acknowledged that any significant changes to the plaza would require funding and coordination with the county.

Council President Chilton suggested tabling this item for the time being and focusing on the other two proactive items discussed earlier in the meeting.

### **OTHER BUSINESS**

Mayor Massey expressed appreciation for the collaborative nature of the meeting and the constructive dialogue among participants.

### **ADJOURN – 5:21 p.m.**

Respectfully submitted by Jenny Dimsho, Associate Planner.

ATTEST:

/s/ Jennifer Shoemaker  
Jennifer Shoemaker, Chair

/s/ Jennifer Massey  
Jennifer Massey, Mayor