



PLANNING COMMISSION

Tuesday, January 13, 2026 at 6:30 PM
HYBRID: Council Chambers & Zoom (details below)

AGENDA

- 1. 6:30 P.M. CALL TO ORDER**
- 2. TOPICS FROM THE FLOOR** (Not on Public Hearing Agenda): Limited to five minutes per topic
- 3. CONSENT AGENDA**
 - A. Planning Commission Minutes Dated December 9, 2025
- 4. PLANNING DIRECTOR DECISIONS** (previously e-mailed to the Commission)
 - B. Lot Line Adjustment-LLA.1.25-290 N 5th (Duhrkoap)
- 5. DISCUSSION ITEMS**
 - C. Planning Commission Vacancy Interviews
 - D. Interview with Patrick Birkle
 - E. Interview with Jay Echternach
 - F. End of Year Summary Report
 - G. Quarterly Planning Department Report
 - H. Joint Planning Commission/City Council Meetings Update
- 6. PROACTIVE ITEMS**
 - I. Architectural Standards
 - J. Vacant and Underutilized Storefronts
- 7. CITY COUNCIL LIAISON REPORT**
- 8. FOR YOUR INFORMATION ITEMS**
- 9. ADJOURNMENT**

NEXT REGULAR MEETING: Tuesday, February 10th 6:30pm

VIRTUAL MEETING DETAILS

Join Zoom

Meeting: <https://us06web.zoom.us/j/85700929946?pwd=Ei73Wn9La6Y9sxL6Ra52ThZ0SLTlr.1>

Meeting ID: 857 0092 9946

Call in: 486688

The meeting location is accessible to persons with disabilities. A request for an interpreter for the hearing impaired or for other accommodations for persons with disabilities should be made at least 48 hours before the meeting to City Hall at 503-397-6272.

Be a part of the vision and get involved...volunteer for a City Board or Commission! For more information or for an application, go to www.sthelensoregon.gov or call 503-366-8217.



PLANNING COMMISSION

Tuesday, December 9, 2025 at 6:30 PM

DRAFT MINUTES

Members Present: Chair Jennifer Shoemaker
 Vice Chair Brooke Cisco
 Commissioner David B Rosengard
 Commissioner Charles Castner
 Commissioner Scott Jacobson
 Commissioner Reid Herman
 Commissioner Trina Kingsbury

Members Absent: None

Staff Present: City Planner Jacob Graichen
 Communications Officer Crystal King
 Community Development Administrative Assistant Angelica Artero

Council Members: Councilor Mark Gundersen
 Councilor Russ Hubbard

Others: Julie Pelletier
 Brian Delashmutt
 Jeff Heller
 Darrel Smith
 Adrienne Linton
 Patrick Birkle
 Sid Hariharigat
 Ray Jones
 Lucy Frost
 William Doster
 Lee Rigdon
 Jay Echternach

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

2. **TOPICS FROM THE FLOOR** (Not on Public Hearing Agenda): Limited to five minutes per topic
 None.

3. CONSENT AGENDA

A. Draft Minutes dated October 14, 2025

Motion: Upon Commissioner Jacobson's motion and Commissioner Sisco's second, the Planning Commission voted to approve the draft minutes dated October 14, 2025

AYES: Commissioner Jacobson, Commissioner Kingsbury, Commissioner Herman, Commissioner Rosengard, Commissioner Castner, Vice Chair Sisco **NAYS:** None.

4. PUBLIC HEARING AGENDA

B. 6:30pm Annexation A.1.25 Sykes Roa/Morton Lane (Stuzman)

Chair Shoemaker opened the public hearing at 6:30 PM. City Planner Jacob Graichen presented the staff report. The applicant and owner, Susan Stutzman, was requesting annexation from Columbia County into the city of St. Helens with R-7 zoning to match surrounding properties. Graichen explained that the property is surrounded by city limits, creating an island of county property. He noted the property has wetlands and riparian areas, as well as a 100-foot wide BPA easement running through it. Susan Stutzman, the applicant who resides in Olympia, Washington, explained that she and her sister inherited the property in 2021 from their mother who grew up in St. Helens.

In Favor

Jeff Heller spoke in support, identifying himself as the applicant's cousin and noting that his family owns adjacent property. **Neutral**

None

Opposition

There was no oral opposition to the application, but a letter of opposition was submitted, which the city planner provide to the Commission.

Applicant response

The applicant, Susie Stutzman, addressed the commission and explained that she supported annexation to allow for future development that would be compatible with city planning standards, police protection, and water/sewer.

End of Oral Testimony

Close of the Public Hearing & Record

Deliberations

During deliberations, the Commission discussed the appropriateness of R-7 zoning to match surrounding properties. They examined whether the annexation would create any issues for neighboring properties and concluded it was a logical annexation since the property was surrounded by city limits.

Motion: Upon Commissioner Rosegard's motion and Commissioner Kingsbury's second, the Commission moved to approve the annexation based on the recommendation by staff. They recommend the R7 zone.

AYES: Commissioner Castner, Commissioner Herman, Commissioner Jacobson, Commissioner Kingsbury, Commissioner Rosengard, Commissioner Sisco **NAYS:** None.

C. 7:06pm Subdivision Preliminary Plat SUB.2.25 Seal Rd (Davis)

Chair Shoemaker opened the public hearing at 7:06pm. City Planner Jacob Graichen presented the application for a 28-lot planned development preliminary plat subdivision on Seal Road. The heavily forested 4.5-acre property includes wetlands and would be developed using the planned development overlay adopted in 2007, which allows for flexibility in design and smaller lot sizes than standard R-5 zoning. Graichen explained that there were multiple access considerations, including emergency access challenges, and the proposal included several tracts for wetlands, stormwater facilities, and a private park.

Wayne Hayson from Pioneer Design Group represented the applicant, explaining the subdivision design, which included two types of streets: a standard 50-foot wide right-of-way and "skinny streets" with a reduced 40-foot right-of-way and parking on only one side. He addressed concerns about fire access, explaining that the Fire Marshal provided recommended options of either installing sprinklers in the homes or providing emergency vehicle access via Seal Road.

In Favor

Delashmutt, Brian spoke in favor of the application as the owner. He explained to the Commission that his parents bought the property 40 some years ago and other matters. H

Neutral

Halstead, Jeff & Oran, Donovan Jeff Halstead, resident of 605 Seal Rd spoke of concern that he wanted to keep his turn around and driveway. He expressed concern that property that was promised to them from the family is being taken away from him without discussion. He owns property that is lot 25 of the proposed subdivision, and the lot has an accessory structure on it that he wants to keep.

Bonn, David Shared parking & traffic concerns, construction costs, and expressed that utilities should be limited to electric supply only—no gas.

Rigdon, Lee Commented that the accessory structure and turn around was there in the 1980's.

Opposition

Frost, Lucy Mentioned she lives adjacent to lot 1 of the proposed subdivision. She mentioned that there is an accumulative amount of water that streams on lot 1 anytime there is a significant amount of rainfall. Parking and traffic congestion were another concern, difficulty for emergency access, and worry of property values decreasing.

Jones, Ray Expressed that he is opposed to some of the issues that he does not feel has been fully vetted out with the subdivision plans. Property values, trees, replanting, and sewer capacity were among the few things that he addressed with concern if the subdivision were approved.

Pelletier, Julie Concern over digging up the wetland area, sewer capacity and worry about access to homes if sewer needed to be dug up due to the road being only one lane.

Applicant Response

Delashmutt, Brian Clarified that Mr. Halsted will get the turn around on lot 25.

Hayson, Wayne Expressed that a family dispute over the design on the turn around is not approval criteria for the subdivision, and that they are confident that there is a turn around on the property. Hayson explained that this new subdivision will have lesser impact on facilities than most of the existing homes.

Deliberations

The Commission considered several things. Regarding the existing accessory structure that would be located on proposed Lot 25, the Commission agreed with staff recommendation that the 605 Seal Road property file a consent to annex and the portion of the subject property not within city limits do the same, to allow the accessory structure to continue with the Subdivision.

The Commission allowed taller walls for the open space/wetland/storm water tracts as a condition of approval.

The Commission agreed with staff's recommendation that a mailbox cluster for the subdivision include a slot for the 605 Seal Road property.

Because of lack of data for proper review (wetland and tree inventory) the Commission finds that if there are improvements to Seal Road other than the sanitary sewer extension, they need to review that for consideration.

The Commission was ok with a recommended change to the tree plan condition with clarification about trees on neighboring properties with their tree influence zone (roots, etc.) within the subject property.

The Commission recognized and implemented the Fire Chief's recommendation that automatic sprinkler systems be necessary unless a second means of suitable emergency access is established.

Otherwise the decision was as recommended by staff per the staff report, more-or-less.

Motion: Upon Commissioner Rosengard's motion and Commissioner Jacobson's second, the Commission granted approval for the Subdivision preliminary plat.

AYES: Commissioner Herman, Commissioner Jacobson, Commissioner Kingsbury, Commissioner Rosengard. **NAYS:** Commissioner Castner

Motion: Upon Commissioner Kingsbury's motion, seconded by Commissioner Sisco, the Commission made a motion for signature.

AYES: Commissioner Herman, Commissioner Jacobson, Commissioner Kingsbury, Commissioner Rosengard. Commissioner Sisco **ABSTAINS:** Commissioner Caster

D. 10:29pm Conditional Use Permit CUP.2.25/Sign Permit S.19.25 1771 Columbia Blvd

Chair Shoemaker opened the public hearing at 10:29pm. City Planner Jacob Graichen presented the application for a conditional use permit and sign permit for a new police station at 1771 Columbia Boulevard. He explained that while a police station is a permitted use in the Houlton Business District, the fenced area was being classified as "outdoor storage," requiring a conditional use permit. The proposal included an 8-foot security fence, a public plaza along Columbia Boulevard, and improvements to all street frontages.

Sid Hariharigat and Adrian Linton from Mackenzie represented the applicant, explaining the site design featured a public plaza with basalt columns, landscaping, secure gated access points, and a single-story 11,300 square foot building with masonry walls. They noted the building was originally designed for the previously proposed Caster Road site but was being adapted to this location, requiring the relocation of a sewer line.

In favor

Birkle, Patrick Former City Councilor Patrick Birkle, who spoke in strong support of the application. He shared that during his time on the council, he believed they were given poor information by the

former police chief regarding site selection. He expressed relief that the project was now moving forward at what he considered a more appropriate location that would enhance the Houlton Business district.

Walsh, John City Administrator John Walsh mentioned that the covered parking for the officers is being built with the assistance of a grant.

Neutral

Opposition

Applicant Response

Deliberations

During deliberations, the Commission discussed the 8-foot security fence and its necessity for police operations, the aesthetics of the chain-link fence with privacy slats, and tree species and landscaping considerations, particularly along 18th Street where utilities might conflict with trees.

The Commission agreed that the application met all criteria and that the 8-foot fence was justified for security purposes. They added conditions regarding the green strip between the street and sidewalk along 18th Street and approved the engineering department's request to move the Cowlitz access eastward or as a potential alternative, recess the driveway gate to allow a depth between the street and gate of at least one vehicle.

Motion: Upon Commissioner Rosengard's motion, and Commissioner Castner's second, the Commission made a motion to approve the conditional use permit and sign permit with the discussed conditions.

AYES: Commissioner Castner, Commissioner Herman, Commissioner Jacobson, Commissioner Kingsbury, Commissioner Rosengard, Commissioner Cisco **NAYS:** None.

Motion: Upon Commissioner Cisco's motion, seconded by Commissioner Castner, the Commission made a motion for signature.

AYES: Commissioner Castner, Commissioner Herman, Commissioner Jacobson, Commissioner Kingsbury, Commissioner Rosengard, Commissioner Cisco **NAYS:** None.

5. PLANNING DIRECTOR DECISIONS (previously e-mailed to the Commission)

E. Agenda item was noted but not discussed.

6. DISCUSSION ITEMS

Planning Commission Interviews

City Planner Graichen announced that the scheduled interviews with Patrick Birkle and Jay Echternach would be postponed to the next meeting due to the late hour.

7. PROACTIVE ITEMS

F. Architectural Standards

G. Vacant and Underutilized Storefronts

No updates provided.

8. CITY COUNCIL LIAISON REPORT

No updates from Councilor Gunderson.

Councilor Hubbard provided brief comments about the police station project, noting his excitement for what it would bring to the Houlton Business district.

9. FOR YOUR INFORMATION ITEMS

Chair Shoemaker noted this was her last meeting as a commissioner and thanked all commissioners for their service.

10. ADJOURNMENT

There being no further business before the Planning Commission, the meeting was adjourned at 11:32p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Angelica Artero

Community Development Administrative Assistant



CITY OF ST. HELENS PLANNING DEPARTMENT

MEMORANDUM

TO: Planning Commission
FROM: Jacob A. Graichen, AICP, City Planner
RE: Planning Commission Applicants / Interviews
DATE: January 2025

This memo and its attachments are intended to aid Planning Commissioners' efforts for considering and interviewing new candidates.

The list of candidates to interview is on the meeting agenda. Generally, those on the interview list have been reviewed, at least cursorily, for eligibility with applications received before the pool of applicants was determined to be adequate by the Council liaison. If a prospective candidate is ineligible, such as having an occupation that two other Commissioners have, they are not included on the list. Still, we want to consider eligibility in case we missed something with the initial review. **This memo provides details on eligibility and other matters.**

There are several sources of requirements for Planning Commission vacancy appointments:

- **City of St. Helens Resolution 1648 (attached to this memo)**
 This addresses rules about filling vacancies, term limits, and similar details and applies to all City of St. Helens boards, commissions and committees.
- **Chapter 2.08 St. Helens Municipal Code (see excerpts below)**
 This Chapter applies specifically to St. Helens Planning Commission. Some sections apply to filling vacancies such as SHMC 2.08.020 - 2.08.040.
- **Oregon Revised Statute 227.120 and 227.030 (see excerpts below)**
 The ORS allows a city to create a Planning Commission and provides some guidance.

In addition, as of November 2014 (via Ord. No. 3176) the Planning Commission (PC) may serve as the **Historic Landmarks Commission** (HLC) when thus appointed. The PC and HLC have been combined since c. 2015, thus, any new Planning Commissioner is required to have:

a demonstrated positive interest, knowledge, or competence in historic preservation

St. Helens Municipal Code

2.08.020 Membership.

The commission may consist of up to seven members. The councilmember in charge of planning shall be entitled to sit with the commission and take part in its discussions, but shall not have the right to vote. The following regulations shall also apply to the planning commission:

- (1) Planning commission members may be compensated only by resolution from the city council.
- (2) No more than two voting members shall be engaged principally in the buying, selling, or developing of real estate for profit as individuals, or by members of any partnership, or officers or employees of any corporation that is engaged principally in the buying, selling, or developing of real estate for profit. No more than two voting members shall be engaged in the same kind of occupation,

business, trade or profession.

(3) A member of the planning commission shall not participate in any commission proceeding or action in which any of the following has direct or substantial financial interest: the member or his spouse, brother, sister, child, parent, father-in-law, mother-in-law, any business in which he is then serving or has served within the previous two years, or any business with which he is negotiating for or has an arrangement or understanding concerning prospective partnership or employment. Any actual or potential interest shall be disclosed at the meeting of the commission where the action is being taken.

2.08.030 Term of office.

Members of the planning commission shall be appointed by the city council for a term of four years from the first calendar day of the year in which their existing appointment to the position expires. The members of the present planning commission are hereby reappointed for the unexpired term of the office they presently hold.

2.08.040 Vacancies and removal.

Appointments to fill vacancies shall be for the remainder of the unexpired term. A member may be removed by the city council after a hearing for misconduct or nonperformance of duty. A member who is absent from three consecutive meetings without an excuse as approved by the planning commission is rebuttably presumed to be in nonperformance of duty, and the city council shall declare the position vacant unless finding otherwise following the hearing.

Oregon Revised Statutes

227.020 Authority to create planning commission.

(1) A city may create a planning commission for the city and provide for its organization and operations.

(2) This section shall be liberally construed and shall include the authority to create a joint planning commission and to utilize an intergovernmental agency for planning as authorized by ORS 190.003 to 190.130. [Amended by 1973 c.739 §1; 1975 c.767 §2]

227.030 Membership.

(1) Not more than two members of a city planning commission may be city officers, who shall serve as ex officio nonvoting members.

(2) A member of such a commission may be removed by the appointing authority, after hearing, for misconduct or nonperformance of duty.

(3) Any vacancy in such a commission shall be filled by the appointing authority for the unexpired term of the predecessor in the office.

(4) No more than two voting members of the commission may engage principally in the buying, selling or developing of real estate for profit as individuals, or be members of any partnership, or officers or employees of any corporation, that engages principally in the buying, selling or developing of real estate for profit. No more than two members shall be engaged in the same kind of occupation, business, trade or profession. [Amended by 1969 c.430 §1; 1973 c.739 §2; 1975 c.767 §3]

Sample Interview Questions

Use these as you see fit and try to make every effort to ask all candidates the same questions. For example, if a question not listed below is asked, ask it of all candidates.

1. Why are you a prime candidate for the Planning Commission?
2. The Planning Commission is like a sports team with a variety of folks, whose combined knowledge and experience make the team stronger. What will you bring to the Planning Commission to strengthen it?
3. What do you know about the Planning Commission?
4. What do you know about St. Helens?
5. What is your availability for meeting attendance and preparation for meetings?
6. What is your experience dealing with conflict of interest and bias?
7. How can you be a voice for the city?
8. Describe your civic participation and/or involvement in city government.
9. The Commission has determined to be proactive. What does this mean to you?
10. After your time on the Planning Commission, what do you want your legacy to be when you leave?
11. What is your experience with Oregon land use planning?
12. Do you have any questions for us?

City of St. Helens
RESOLUTION NO. 1648

**A RESOLUTION ESTABLISHING GUIDELINES FOR THE APPOINTMENT
OF ST. HELENS BOARD, COMMITTEE AND COMMISSION MEMBERS,
SUPERSEDING RESOLUTION NO. 1521**

WHERAS, the City Council wished to establish the same guidelines for recruitment, interviews and appointments for all City boards, committees and commissions, and adopted Resolution No. 1521 on August 12, 2009; and

WHEREAS, Resolution No. 1521 established general recruitment, selection and appointment guidelines for appointments to the City of St. Helens boards, committees and commissions; and

WHEREAS, the Council wishes to update the guidelines adopted in Resolution No. 1521 to better meet the needs of the City.

**NOW, THEREFORE, THE COMMON COUNCIL OF THE CITY OF ST. HELENS
RESOLVES AS FOLLOWS:**

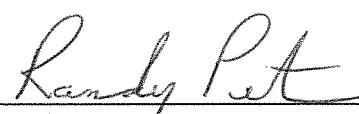
1. The City Recorder shall send a press release to the local newspaper of record announcing all board, committee and commission vacancies as they become available. A "vacancy" is defined as an unoccupied position, resulting from a voluntary resignation or involuntary termination. A member whose term expired does not create a vacancy, unless that member is resigning at the end of his/her term or the majority of the board, committee or commission wishes to terminate said member.
2. Any individual or group is encouraged to submit names for consideration to the City.
3. All new applicants shall submit a written application to the City Recorder's Office.
4. Members wishing to continue their appointment for another term will inform the City Recorder but need not submit a new application. If a member has served two consecutive full terms, a press release shall be sent to the local newspaper of record, each subsequent term expiration thereafter, to solicit new applications for that position. The incumbent may be reappointed at the discretion of the interview panel and City board, committee or commission. If an individual has been off a City board, committee or commission for a year or more, they must complete a new application.
5. The recruitment period to the board, committee or commission shall be for a finite period. At the end of the advertising period, the Council liaison shall determine if the pool of candidates is sufficient to continue with the selection process or may continue the recruitment period for a set or unlimited period until it is determined there is a sufficient pool of candidates.
6. The Council liaison to the board, committee or commission shall be responsible to assemble an interview committee. The interview committee shall be responsible to make recommendations via the Council liaison to the Mayor and City Council.
7. Appointments must comply with any ordinances, bylaws, Charter provisions, or state or federal laws concerning the board, committee or commission. In the event of any inconsistency between these policies and a chapter relating to a specific board, committee or commission, the specific chapter shall control.

8. In order to become more familiar with each applicant's qualifications, the interview committee may interview all or a shortlist of applicants for a position. The number of applicants to be interviewed is at the interview committee's discretion. The interview committee also has the discretion to reject all applications in favor of re-advertising if no applicants are found to be suitable for the board, committee or commission.
9. Reappointments to a City board, committee or commission shall be considered in accordance with the guidelines listed in this section, together with the type of service the individual has already given to the board, committee or commission and his/her stated willingness to continue.
10. Consideration should be given to residents outside the City when the board, committee or commission or function serves residents outside City boundaries.
11. Board, committee or commission members shall not participate in any proceeding or action in which there may be a direct or substantial financial interest to the member, the member's relative or a business with which the member or a relative is associated, including any business in which the member is serving on their board or has served within the previous two years; or any business with which the member is negotiating for or has an arrangement or understanding concerning prospective partnership or employment. Any actual or potential conflict of interest shall be disclosed at the meeting where the action is being taken.
12. Board, committee or commission vacancies are filled by appointment of the Mayor with the consent of Council. Board, committee or commission members shall serve without compensation except the Planning Commission that may receive a monthly stipend at the discretion of the City Council.
13. Individuals appointed to one City board, committee or commission shall not serve on any other City board, committee or commission during the term of their appointment; provided, that the Council may waive this limitation if it is in the public interest to do so.

PASSED AND ADOPTED by the City Council on this 18th day of December, 2013, by the following vote:

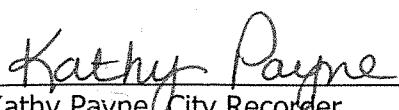
Ayes: Locke, Carlson, Conn, Morten, Peterson

Nays: None



Randy Peterson, Mayor

ATTEST:



Kathy Payne, City Recorder

Comparison of Land Use Actions by Year

Planning Commission Public Hearings & Planning Administrator Decisions

Land Use Action	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020	2021	2022	2023	2024	2025
Accessory Structure	6	8	7	8	3	4	2	1	2	2
Annexation (Processed)	1	2	2	2	0	11	0	3	3	5
										0
Annexation (Submitted, Not Processed)	1	0	1	3	3	1	2	2	2	2
Appeals	1	1	1	0	10	1	1	2	1	3
Architectural Character Review	0	0	1	1	1	0	4	7	4	0
Map/Text Amendment	4	2	2	5	1	1	0	2	2	0
Auxiliary Dwelling Unit	0	0	0	1	3	0	-	-	-	0
Conditional Use Permit	7	6	5	3	5	2	2	5	2	2
Conditional Use Permits (Minor Modification)	0	1	0	0	1	1	1	0	2	0
Development Agreement	0	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Expedited Land Division	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Extension of Time	1	1	4	5	5	0	4	3	6	3
Historic Resource Review	1	0	0	1	2	0	1	1	3	0
Home Occupations ¹	4	1	3	4	3	2	2	2	1	1
Lot Line Adjustment	3	3	3	11	2	3	3	2	4	1
Non-Conforming Use Determination or Unlisted Use	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	0	1	0
Partition	2	2	6	2	5	2	4	3	3	1
Planned Development	0	0	1	0	0	0	2	0	0	0
Revocation	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Sensitive Lands Permit	4	3	5	0	1	1	9	6	3	5
Sign Permit ²	24	22	13	15	5	13	10	17	13	19
Sign Permit (Temporary)	-	12	10	10	4	3	5	6	8	11
Sign Exception/Variance	0	0	1	0	0	0	1	0	0	0
Site Design Review	4	7	6	7	7	6	11	3	7	6
Site Design Review (Minor)	6	8	10	7	4	6	8	5	8	6
Site Design Review (Scenic Resource)	4	0	1	0	2	0	5	0	1	0
Street Vacations	0	2	0	1	2	0	3	1	0	0
Subdivisions	1	3	2	0	1	1	2	0	0	2
Subdivision Final Plat Approval	0	0	3	1	2	0	1	0	0	0
Variances	9	7	6	16	18	4	7	5	13	5
Temporary Use Permits	2	5	13	12	9	8	4	7	8	5
Tree Removal Permit	1	1	0	0	1	0	0	0	0	0
										0
Other Public Hearing Subjects (i.e. Periodic Review)	0	0	0	0	1	0	0	0	0	0
Columbia County Referrals	0	9	6	2	1	3	4	1	3	0
Total Land Use Actions	86	106	113	117	102	73	99	84	100	77

1 - This includes Home Occupation (Type II) prior to 2019 & Home Occupation (Type I) removed in 18/19

2 - Temporary Sign Permits were included in Sign permits prior to 2017

QUARTERLY REPORT TO COUNCIL

Item G.

Meeting Date: January 7, 2026
Prepared by: Jacob A. Graichen, AICP, City Planner
Department: Planning
Division: Community Development
Reporting Period: October to December 2025
CC: City Administrator John Walsh / Planning Commission



1. General Operations

- **October:** In early October I received a message of concern from a county citizen about a Tree of Heaven infestation on the corner of US30 and Pittsburg Road. I had not heard of this species before but researched the tree and checked the site out and determined the concern is legitimate. I let our Public Works folks know because we have recently donated property to the city in this area and Code Enforcement as noxious vegetation is a nuisance in our code.

Right: many young Trees of Heaven are visible close to Pittsburg Road by US 30. **Below:** Tree of Heaven leaves have glandular teeth at their base as shown in the photo taken in the same area as the photo to the right.



- **October:** Engineering is starting to work on street lighting standards. I will assist some; first meeting this month.
- **October:** We received a new annexation application. There are more steps in these than other land use processes. This month I created the map and legal description for Oregon DOR Preliminary review, which is my typical first step for Annexations. This one is moderately complex in this regard.
- **November:** PSU published its 2025 preliminary population estimates. Here is an excerpt showing St. Helens:

Population Estimates for Oregon Cities (Vintage 2025)							
Incorporated City/Town	Estimates Base	Revised Population Estimate	Preliminary Estimate				
	April 1, 2020	July 1, 2020	July 1, 2021	July 1, 2022	July 1, 2023	July 1, 2024	July 1, 2025
Sodaville	360	365	360	360	360	360	360
Spray	139	141	141	141	141	141	141
Springfield	61,935	61,940	62,042	62,379	62,508	63,263	63,304
St. Helens	13,847	14,108	14,240	14,203	14,371	14,472	14,552

Interestingly, Springfield, a much bigger city, increased by 41 people compared to St. Helens' 80-person growth.

The certified population estimates will be posted by PSU online by the end of the day on December 15, 2025. *I did not check this for this report.*

- **November/December:** I have been a professional local government planner since 2001, working for both cities and counties. Though exceptions, typically this is a time to work on projects that we don't otherwise have time for. 2025 was about trying to keep up; the combination of being the only planner, the Arcadia Mill sale, a death in the family and everyday tasks made this year's fourth quarter extra tough.

Also, continuing legislative changes for Oregon Land Use laws, feels impossible to keep up with combined with everything else. But this is the sentiment of many Oregon land use planners.

Note that the typical land use planner per capita is 1 per 5,000 population. Currently, St. Helens has one for its almost 15K population.

- **Notable administrative Planning Department permitting:**

- **December:** Final inspection for 325 Strand Street. Though not 100%, this one has a striking before/after comparison and thus, report-worthy.





- **Pre-application / early assistance meetings:**
 - **October:** Held a pre-app meeting for potential reuse of former Rite-Aide suite for farm-type store. Some site reconfiguring is proposed.
 - **October:** Held a pre-app meeting for potential new police station at 1771 Columbia Boulevard.
 - **October:** Prepared right-of-way vacation materials for a potential proposal at N. 14th Street and Oregon Street.
 - **November:** Early assistance meeting for potential remodel of Safeway. This is related to the reuse of former Rite-Aide suite for farm-type store, which was discussed at an October pre-application meeting.
 - **November:** Held a second pre-application meeting for the City's Millard Road property for a proposed residential subdivision. The first was in July of last year when there was a surveyor involved with a plan at the time as a high-level concept with scant inclusion of city code in the proposal. Now, about 16 months later, there is more of a development team who are working on refinements of the plan.
- **Planning Commission had their normally scheduled monthly meeting on October 14, 2025.** Outcome:
 - Held a public hearing and approved a Variance for reduced yard (setback) at 34891 Roberts Lane.
 - Held a public hearing and approved a Variance for reduced yard (setback) at 130 Ivy Lane.
 - The Commission considered an Architectural Review for modifications proposed at 201 S. 1st Street and recommended approval to staff.
 - The Commission discussed its attendance policy. More discussion anticipated at future meeting(s).
 - The Commission discussed the quarterly joint City Council/Planning Commission meetings, recommending only one scheduled joint meeting in the early part of the calendar year for 2026. Other meetings could be “as needed.” This will be a conversation with the Council at some point.
 - The Commission discussed two Commissioner term expirations. Commissioner Sisco wishes to continue; the Commission approved a motion accepting this. Commissioner Shoemaker does not want to continue after 2025, so we’ll need to recruit.
 - The Commission had the opportunity to review and discuss the previous quarterly report from the Planning Dept.
- **Planning Commission cancelled their normally scheduled monthly meeting on November 12, 2025.**
- **Planning Commission had their normally scheduled monthly meeting on December 9, 2025.** Outcome:
 - **This was a marathon meeting lasting 5 hours!** Note that this date was within the initial hard grieve time after the death of a close family member, so was particularly challenging.
 - The Commission held a public hearing and recommended approval of an annexation between Sykes Road and Morton Lane to the City Council. The Council will see this in January.

- The Commission held a public hearing and conditionally approved a 28-lot planned development preliminary plat subdivision at the west end of Seal Road (a private road). Making Seal Road public may be a topic for the Council in early 2026.
- The Commission held a public hearing and conditionally approved the new Police Station at 1771 Columbia Boulevard.
- We scheduled Commission candidate interviews but ended up postponing them given the length of the meeting, otherwise interviews would have been close to midnight!
- **Planning Commission's normally scheduled quarterly joint meeting with the City Council and Planning Commission on December 10, 2025 was cancelled.**
- **Development Code Enforcement.**
 - **December:** Attended municipal court on December 11 and 18 for an ongoing (about a year now) issue on the 100 block of S. 15th Street.
- **Geographic Information Systems (GIS).**
 - **October:** Provided zoning data to the state (DLCD) for their statewide zoning layer. Previous (and I think the first time) was in 2023.
 - **November:** Quarterly data updates.
- **Related City Council actions / decisions (Planning Commission FYI):**
 - **December:** After discussion with the Planning Commission in October to reduce the annual quarterly joint meetings with the Council, staff discussed this with the Council. The final verdict will be to have two pre-scheduled joint meetings: one in March and the other in September.

2. Staffing & Personnel

- **October:** Attended LOC's Municipal Fundamentals training.
- **October:** Attended annual OAPA Planning Conference.
- **October:** Attended CPR/First Aid training for city employees.
- **October – December:** The Planning Commission will have a vacancy as of the end of 2025 so recruitment efforts conducted. Due to an exceedingly busy December for both the Commission and staff, the efforts will continue into January 2026.
- **November – December:** Attended virtual classes for the City of St Helens Respectful Workplace Learning Plan.
- **December:** Attended annual legal issues for planners workshop.

3. Projects & Initiatives

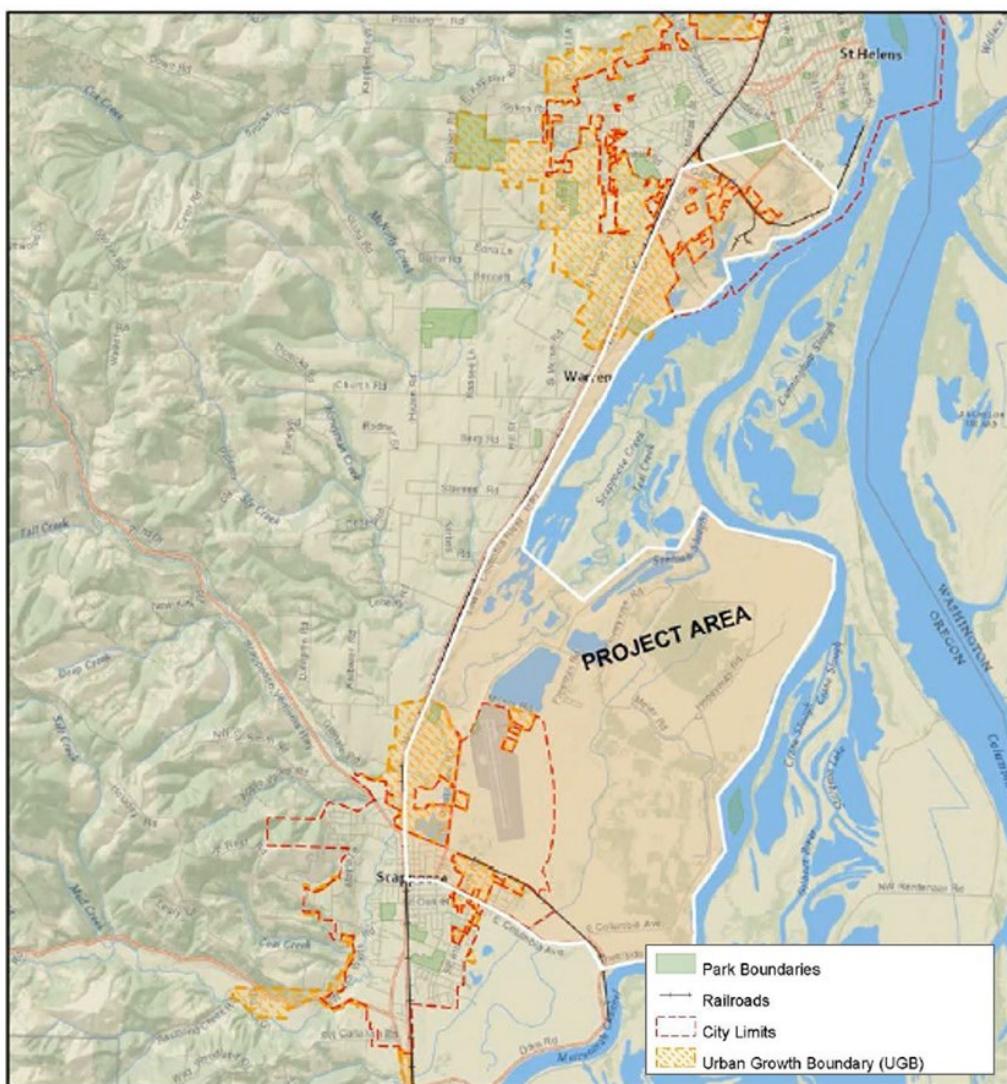
A. Ongoing Key Projects

- **Riverfront District, Mill Subdistrict** development (former veneer mill property): **November:** Attended the first of a series of staff level meetings with Romano Capitol that will occur over the next several months. Preliminary market study (updated from approx. 10 years ago is promising—great potential here).

- **Parks Commission's Woodland Reserve.** Staff technical support for the SHIBP Woodland Reserve concept. [No update this quarter.](#)
- **ODOT Community Paths Program: St. Helens Scappoose Trail Refinement Project –** \$405k to study a trail route refinement project (30% design) from St. Helens to Scappoose. Consultants selected in early 2025. [Engineering will take this over but planning will continue to support the effort.](#)

[November:](#) Work order contract finally approved after a slow process with the state. ODOT in contract negotiations since March. Project duration is 1.5 years (78 weeks).

[December:](#) First team meeting occurred and monthly virtual meetings will commence in January. The map below shows the study area (outlines in white).



- **ODOT TGM Program: Transportation Systems Plan –** TBD \$\$ for new Transportation Systems plan. City Engineering is lead, with Planning providing support. [No update this quarter.](#) I can't believe how slow this is going!

- **New Water Reservoir** – City Engineering is lead, with Planning providing support. [October](#): Effort to narrowing down potential sites (originally 7 sites, now 3) continues. Preparation for a November 13th public meeting discussed. Various documents reviewed related to site selection. [November](#): Site selection fact gathering continues (e.g., Geotech borings, property owner outreach). Public engagement meeting occurred.
- **Utility Master Plan Development Code Amendments** – These amendments based on the recommendations of the Wastewater (2021), Stormwater (2021), and Water (2022) plans. So now, several years have passed. [No update this quarter](#).
- **SHIBP Project Arcadia** – My role is technical support to the City Administrator (acting Community Development Director) on this matter, mainly pertaining to document exhibits.

[October – December](#): Continue to provide technical support for proper exhibits and such related to the sale of the mill to Arcadia. There have been revisions to the document exhibits, some from the surveyor team because they found their errors. So, tracking this has been a bear. In fact, reviewing the draft final documents from our legal team in early December, all of the legal descriptions were outdated versions! Pays to be organized.

The Arcadia transaction effort involved much more of my time in this quarter than anticipated.

- **SHIBP PGE Parcel** – Continue working with consultants on proposal for professional services for some design and survey work to carve off the mill for project Arcadia and to create a new PGE Parcel for a new sub-station. Next step is still a final agreement between the city and PGE. This was the next step last quarter too, and still in process.

[November](#): City met with PGE to work out final details of a draft site readiness statement of work (SOW). Some added clarification language about permitting and an exhibit identifying the area needed for transmission line feasibility analysis should be all that is left for the SOW. However, the transmission line feasibility will result in a broader scope of work and will need to be updated.

[December](#): Working with PGE and the city's consultant team for the broader scope of work for transmission line routing. The final agreement effort will continue into 2026.

- **Housing Capacity Analysis / Housing Production Strategy** – For St. Helens, the due dates on these are:
 - **Housing Capacity Analysis (HCA): due December 31, 2028**
 - **Housing Production Strategy (HPS): due December 31, 2029**

This will be different than the previous, because it will need to go through the new Goal 10 OHNA process. Staff will probably need to look at grant opportunities around June 2026 for this to keep on schedule. [No update this quarter](#).

- **Food cart/pod rules.** Currently, only allowed by Temporary Use, the goal is to create rules for permanent use and maybe improved temporary provisions. This issue goes back to 2015 when we made the decision to start allowing these kinds of uses via the city's Temporary Use provisions. So, this is about a decade old issue. **No progress has been made in this reporting period.**
- **Flood code amendments related to Endangered Species Act.** In 2009 FEMA was sued based on floodplain rules violating the Endangered Species Act. In 2016 the National Marine Fisheries Services (NMFS) issued a biological opinion that Oregon's flood plain policies jeopardizes several threatened species such as salmon. In July 2024, FEMA announced a new program of pre-implementation compliance measures (PICM) for short term measures to be effective Dec. 1, 2024, separate from the long term, estimated for completion in 2027. Basically, flood development is supposed to include impacts to fish habitat, not just the loss of human-made structures.

No updates this reporting period.

B. Upcoming Projects

- Nothing new, not otherwise mentioned above.

4. Upcoming Events & Important Dates

- No noteworthy events, special meetings or significant deadlines to mention.

Attachments

- Annual land use permit summary is **attached**.
- Below is the department's strategic plan, updated based on the department being solo for now:

PLANNING DEPT STRATEGIC PLAN --- SHORT (green) --- MEDIUM (yellow) --- LONG (pink) UPDATED: 12292025	
GOAL AREA (BASED ON '22-'24 PLAN)	PROJECT TITLE
	CURRENT PLANNING - <i>Includes permits, aothorizations, annexations, etc.</i>
	CUSTOMER SERVICE - <i>Time is money for applicants! Also, internal custome service with other departments.</i>
Goal 3 - Livable & Safe Community	ArcGIS Desktop to ArcGIS Pro transition (Support for Desktop ends in early 2026)
Goal 5 - Long Term Planning	Development Code Amendments related to Sanitary, Storm and Water Master Plans
Goal 4 - Economic Development	ODOT Community Paths Grant (in process)
Goal 4 - Economic Development	St. Helens Industrial Business Park Planning (PGE and Project Arcadia efforts)
Goal 5 - Long Term Planning	Riverfront Redevelopment Efforts (Discussions underway with potential developer)
Goal 4 - Economic Development	Managers Attend Professional Development Opportunities
Goal 3 - Livable & Safe Community	New Transportation Systems Plan
Goal 4 - Economic Development	Food cart/truck/trailers rules (>10 years over due now)
Goal 4 - Economic Development	Flood code amendments related to BIOP (Endangered Species Act)
Goal 4 - Economic Development	Economic Opportunities Analysis (EOA) Post Adoption Tasks (adopted in 2025)
Goal 1 - Effective & Efficient Organziation	Planning related FAQ phamplets/videos
Goal 3 - Livable & Safe Community	CLG Grant (New cycle begins December 2025 with applications due ~Feb 2026) - \$16K for 2026 cycle.
Goal 3 - Livable & Safe Community	Right-of-way street vacation policy
Goal 3 - Livable & Safe Community	Housing Production Strategy (related to HNA but not a land use action)
Goal 5 - Long Term Planning	Housing Needs Analysis Update per 2019 HB 2003
Goal 5 - Long Term Planning	Revisit UGMA with County
Goal 5 - Long Term Planning	Parks & Recreation Master Planning
Goal 1 - Effective & Efficient Organziation	Update city Charter for no-vote annexations
Goal 3 - Livable & Safe Community	Addressing policy update (Last city-specific address policy is from 1929, yes nineteen hundred and twenty nine)
Goal 4 - Economic Development	Develop incentives for designation as a local historic landmark
Goal 5 - Long Term Planning	Historic resources inventorying

Comparison of Land Use Actions by Year

Planning Commission Public Hearings & Planning Administrator Decisions

Land Use Action	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020	2021	2022	2023	2024	2025
Accessory Structure	6	8	7	8	3	4	2	1	2	2
Annexation (Processed)	1	2	2	2	0	11	0	3	3	5
Annexation (Submitted, Not Processed)	1	0	1	3	3	1	2	2	2	0
Appeals	1	1	1	0	10	1	1	2	1	3
Architectural Character Review	0	0	1	1	1	0	4	7	4	3
Map/Text Amendment	4	2	2	5	1	1	0	2	2	1
Auxiliary Dwelling Unit	0	0	0	1	3	0	-	-	-	-
Conditional Use Permit	7	6	5	3	5	2	2	5	2	2
Conditional Use Permits (Minor Modification)	0	1	0	0	1	1	1	0	2	0
Development Agreement	0	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Expedited Land Division	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Extension of Time	1	1	4	5	5	0	4	3	6	3
Historic Resource Review	1	0	0	1	2	0	1	1	3	0
Home Occupations ₁	4	1	3	4	3	2	2	2	1	1
Lot Line Adjustment	3	3	3	11	2	3	3	2	4	1
Non-Conforming Use Determination or Unlisted Use	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	0	1	0
Partition	2	2	6	2	5	2	4	3	3	1
Planned Development	0	0	1	0	0	0	2	0	0	0
Revocation	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Sensitive Lands Permit	4	3	5	0	1	1	9	6	3	4
Sign Permit ₂	24	22	13	15	5	13	10	17	13	19
Sign Permit (Temporary)	-	12	10	10	4	3	5	6	8	11
Sign Exception/Variance	0	0	1	0	0	0	1	0	0	0
Site Development Review	4	7	6	7	7	6	11	3	7	6
Site Development Review (Minor)	6	8	10	7	4	6	8	5	8	6
Site Development Review (Scenic Resource)	4	0	1	0	2	0	5	0	1	0
Street Vacations	0	2	0	1	2	0	3	1	0	0
Subdivisions	1	3	2	0	1	1	2	0	0	2
Subdivision Final Plat Approval	0	0	3	1	2	0	1	0	0	0
Variances	9	7	6	16	18	4	7	5	13	5
Temporary Use Permits	2	5	13	12	9	8	4	7	8	5
Tree Removal Permit	1	1	0	0	1	0	0	0	0	0
Other Public Hearing Subjects (i.e. Periodic Review)	0	0	0	0	1	0	0	0	0	0
Columbia County Referrals	0	9	6	2	1	3	4	1	3	0
Total Land Use Actions	86	106	113	117	102	73	99	84	100	80

1 - This includes Home Occupation (Type II) prior to 2019 & Home Occupation (Type I) removed in 18/19

2 - Temporary Sign Permits were included in Sign permits prior to 2017