

Minutes

Bend Planning Commission

Monday, December 8, 2025, 5:30 P.M. Regular Meeting



COMMUNITY
DEVELOPMENT

The hybrid meeting started at 5:30 P.M., in-person and online.

The public was invited to watch online at: www.bendoregon.gov/planningcommission

1. ROLL CALL:

- Margo Clinton – Chair
- Scott Winters – Vice Chair
- Bob Gressens
- Suzanne Johannsen
- John LaMotte
- Erin Ludden
- Nathan Nelson

Commissioners Present: All Commissioners were present.

Staff Present: Ian Leitheiser, City Attorney; Colin Stephens, CDD Director; Renee Brooke, Planning Manager; Austin Somhegyi, Senior Project Engineer; Damian Syrnyk, Senior Planner; and Russ Grayson, Chief Operations Officer.

2. VISITORS:

The Chair opened the floor for comments on non-agenda items. Attendees were encouraged to fill out a speaker slip and approach the podium, or raise their hand online, to provide comments.

Patty McCormick of the Awbrey Butte Neighborhood District announced the new Chair of the Awbrey Butte Neighborhood District Board, Mark Gentle, and encouraged the Commission to organize an open roundtable or workshop with land use chairs and neighborhood representatives to address key topics collaboratively.

Lon Leneve and Robin Church, of Project Wildfire Neighborhood Coalition, recommended that Bend adopt Oregon's R327 wildfire mitigation code, which establishes ignition-resistant construction standards for new residential buildings and accessory structures. R327 has been adopted by the City of Sisters and is under review by Deschutes County. Implementation in Bend would align with regional efforts and City Council goals for wildfire resiliency. Adoption could reduce future wildfire losses, stabilize insurance availability, and protect affordability and economic stability. Research shows these measures add less than 3% to construction costs while preventing significant long-term financial and safety impacts.

Vice Chair Scott Winters asked if since the language of R327 states that the city needs to identify and notify the state of where the standards apply, then does the

code not apply to the entirety of Bend? Church explained that the recommendation is that the city adopt the code and apply to the entirety of the city due to the significant risk of conflagration.

3. LEGISLATIVE PUBLIC HEARING:

3.1. PLTEXT20250591 – Bend Comprehensive Plan Amendment

Proposed amendments to the text of the Bend Comprehensive Plan, including: 1) adoption of a 2025 Stormwater Public Facility Plan to replace the 2014 Stormwater Public Facility Plan as Appendix H to the Comprehensive Plan; and 2) amendments to the text and policies of Chapter 8 of the Comprehensive Plan, Public Facilities and Services, to update the Storm Drainage Facilities and Systems section.

Staff: Senior Project Engineer, Austin Somhegyi – asomhegyi@bendoregon.gov
Damian Syrnyk, Senior Planner – dsyrnyk@bendoregon.gov

Chair Clinton convened the hearing at 6:12 P.M.

Senior Planner Syrnyk and Senior Project Engineer Somhegyi presented proposed text amendments to Bend's Comprehensive Plan to improve stormwater management and support growth. The recommendation to adopt the 2025 Stormwater Public Facility Plan (PFP), replacing the 2014 version as Appendix H, and to update Chapter 8 text and policies on Storm Drainage Facilities and Systems. These amendments include updated asset inventories, permit language, utility fee details, amendments to several existing policies to remove outdated language, and one new policy addressing climate change resilience, drainage, and density. The PFP provides a factual basis for water quality and stormwater planning, identifies infrastructure needs, and includes a capital improvement program. No changes are proposed to the Bend Development Code, zoning map, or Comprehensive Plan map. Adoption will ensure compliance with Oregon Administrative Rules and Statewide Planning Goals, aligning stormwater systems with growth and resilience objectives.

Commissioner Johannsen asked why the inventory of the stormwater pipes shows “unknown” for most of the system. Somhegyi explained that with 80 miles of stormwater pipe to inventory using closed-circuit television (CCTV) cameras, they focused on just the 7 miles that drain directly to the river. The Master Plan does recommend doing additional real-time assessments of pipes using CCTV. Johannsen asked if there are records of new pipes, and Somhegyi confirmed this to be correct.

Commissioner Gressens asked for clarification on what federal or state permits allow the city to complete the stormwater projects. Somhegyi explained that the Environmental Protection Agency, through the powers granted from the Clean Water Act, issues National Pollution Discharge Elimination System permits to states. In Oregon, the Department of Environmental Quality (DEQ) administers these at a local level. The State of Oregon also facilitates the Water Pollution Control Facilities permit based on state legislation.

Commissioner Johannsen noted that the maps provided appear to only be of publicly owned stormwater systems. Somhegyi confirmed that the Bend Comprehensive Plan specifically addresses City of Bend maintained systems and that private stormwater systems have a separate permitting process not being discussed in this plan.

Commissioner LaMotte asked if private developments were able to use public Right of Ways (ROW) for stormwater management if the development had constraints. Somhegyi explained that in some cases code does allow for this, which the appendix of the Stormwater Master Plan covers. On a lot-by-lot basis, developers may have the ability to claim hardship and work with city staff to come up with a resolution. Somhegyi stated that this is an ongoing conversation that includes addressing runoff at the subdivision level and ensuring the development code allows for the solutions.

Commissioner LaMotte asked if there was data on the efficacy of stormwater management on residential properties. Somhegyi described how the underlying geology, landscaping, plus the maintenance of the onsite drainage system determines efficiency. There are many variables during the subdivision development stage making it difficult to predict how a system will perform, which is why the team is discussing a subdivision-level approach that is easier to maintain rather than 50 individual facilities. Commissioner Johannsen then asked if subdivisions would no longer be allowed to do mass grading and compaction without having the drainage installed at the infrastructure stage? Somhegyi described taking a two-fold approach: providing developers with flexible management options while ensuring drainage facilities are built to perform and remain maintained. This includes adding regulatory measures and subdivision-level strategies to guarantee long-term functionality and compliance.

Commissioner Nelson inquired about if Bend's unique geology had cost advantages or disadvantages, compared to other cities. Somhegyi believes we are fortunate to have good infiltration, which reduces the need for extensive pipe networks that are costly to install and maintain. This approach saves money, avoids right-of-way challenges, and provides more flexibility for future infrastructure options. Chair Clinton mentioned that the organization she works with provides services in Bend and Portland and they would prefer Bend. Even though the upfront development costs are more due to the bedrock, the costs for water detention facilities long term are significantly less.

Commissioner Ludden wanted to know if the private development facilities would transition into city ownership. Somhegyi responded that a major part of the discussion is creating publicly owned infrastructure to manage private stormwater runoff in key redevelopment areas like the Bend Central District.

Chair Clinton opened the public testimony portion of the hearing. There were no public testimonies provided.

Chair Clinton closed the public hearing at 6:47 P.M. and the Commissioners deliberated.

All Commissioners expressed that they enjoyed the thorough information provided and appreciated how comprehensive the reports are.

Commissioner Johannsen commented that ten years between updates to the stormwater plans was a long duration considering how much expansion the City of Bend experienced in that time.

Commissioner Johannsen moved to recommend approval of PLTEXT20250591 amendments to the Bend Comprehensive plan, including:

- 1) Adoption of a 2025 Stormwater Public Facility Plan as the Goal 11 Public Facility Plan for stormwater, and replacing the 2014 Stormwater Public Facility Plan as Appendix H to the Bend Comprehensive Plan, and;
- 2) adoption of conforming amendments to the text of Chapter 8 of the Comprehensive Plan, Public Facilities and Services, to update the storm Drainage Facilities and Systems section and policies, allowing for minor corrections or clarifications from staff.

The motion was seconded by Commissioner LaMotte. The motion passed unanimously.

Commissioner Ludden was nominated to bring the recommendation of the Commission to the City Council on December 17, 2025.

4. APPROVAL OF MINUTES:

The Planning Commission approved the [October 27, 2025 Draft Minutes](#) and [November 10, 2025 Draft Minutes](#).

5. COMMUNICATIONS:

5.1. Reports From Planning Commissioners

Commissioner LaMotte reiterated the importance of adopting Oregon's R327 wildfire mitigation code as there is confusion across the community at large on how best to address wildfire threats within the City of Bend. Commissioner Nelson echoed the sentiment and supports adoption of R327.

Commissioner Gressens reported meeting informally with the Awbrey Butte Neighborhood District and preparing to meet with the Summit West Neighborhood District board, which had completed an informal survey of 40 respondents. Takeaways included the importance of maintaining neighborhood services, with emphasis on complete communities on the east side.

Commissioner Ludden reported that the survey results from Old Farm neighborhood also demonstrated a want for neighborhood commercial development and expressed frustration that other areas were receiving it while they were not. She also noted that many residents felt they lacked a clear process to provide input to the city and were concerned their voices were not being heard.

Vice Chair Winters reported meeting with Kristen from Central Oregon Land Watch to discuss neighborhood commercial, noting that advocacy groups were exploring the issue. Winters asked City staff for updates on the topic.

Vice Chair Winters reported meeting with the incoming Fire Marshal who seems receptive to code updates that allow for single-point stairs in multi-story residential buildings.

Commissioner Johannsen reported meeting with the land use chair for Old Bend Neighborhood District and the desire for work sessions.

Russ Grayson, Chief Operations Officer, reported that wildfire planning is a Council goal and a Council work session is scheduled on June 24 to determine whether to adopt higher building code standards and development code changes. Grayson mentioned that the dates for wildfire discussions might be bumped forward due to the urgency of the matter. Grayson also outlined a January 14 Council work session on neighborhood commercial to seek Council direction on clarifying state legislation, considering development code updates, and exploring incentive programs to encourage services and retail in targeted areas.

5.2. Report from Planning Manager

Renee Brooke, Planning Manager, reported that the Union Master Plan applicants withdrew their item from the upcoming Council agenda, and the December 22 Planning Commission meeting will be canceled due to the holiday season and lack of agenda items. She noted that January and February would include several items, including focused tree code amendments based on Council direction, and confirmed that interviews were underway to fill a vacant Planning Commission position, with an appointment expected at the December 17 Council meeting.

5.3. Report from Community Development Director

Colin Stephens, CDD Director, had nothing to report.

5.4. Report from City Attorney

Ian Leitheiser, City Attorney, had nothing to report.

The meeting was adjourned at 7:29 P.M.

Minutes submitted by Kaylin Landry.