



MEETING MINUTES

Bend Planning Commission

Monday, 01/12/2026, 5:30 p.m. Regular Meeting

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
- Erin Ludden
- Katie Schnur
- Nathan Nelson

Commissioners Present: All Commissioners were present. Chairperson Clinton attended remotely. Vice Chair Winters acted as Chair for the meeting.

Staff Present: Pauline Hardie, Senior Planner; Renee Brooke, Planning Manager; Colin Stephens, CDD Director; Ian Leitheiser, City Attorney; 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.

Mark Gentle, Chair of the Awbrey Butte Neighborhood District, addressed the Planning Commission regarding the Citizen Involvement Program document and community connections through the Planning Commission. The document needs work and he wants to facilitate. Submitted survey results to Commissioner Gressens with the top 3 issues from 200 responses.



Patty McCormick stated she sent an email to the Commission regarding scheduling a roundtable with all Neighborhood District Land Use Chairs. Regarding the survey, 70% indicated that tree preservation was extremely important.

3. Welcome new Planning Commissioner Katie Schnur

4. Nominations: Nominate/Elect Planning Commission Chair and Vice Chair for 2026

Vice Chair Winters nominated Chair Clinton to continue as Chair for the 2026 year. Commissioner Nelson seconded the nomination.

Commissioner Johannsen nominated Vice Chair Winters for the position as Chair for 2026. Vice Chair Winters declined the nomination.

Commissioner Gressens nominated Commissioner Johannsen as Vice Chair for 2026. Commissioner Ludden seconded the nomination. Commissioner Johannsen declined the nomination.

The Commission voted on the nomination of Chair Clinton as Planning Commission Chair for 2026. All were in favor, except Commissioner Gressens who abstained.

Commissioner Johannsen nominated Commissioner Nelson as Vice Chair for 2026. Chair Clinton seconded the nomination.

The Commission voted on the nomination of Commissioner Nelson as Vice Chair for 2026. The Commission voted unanimously in favor.

5. Work Session:

5.1. PLTEXT20250658 - Updates to Tree Preservation Standards

Work session on text amendments to the Bend Development Code (BDC) relating to the tree preservation requirements in BDC 3.2.200, Tree Preservation.

Staff: Senior Planner, Pauline Hardie - phardie@bendoregon.gov

Planner Hardie gave her **presentation**. She discussed proposed amendments to the tree preservation standards, explained existing code requirements, data collection, and developer options for tree preservation and mitigation. The Planning Commission discussed tree preservation data collected since August 2024, noting that 55 out of 766 applications were subject to the tree code, with most developers choosing to preserve trees rather than opt for mitigation. The Commission discussed the amendments to add three new exemptions for small lots and to create a discretionary track for root protection zone adjustments, which will be reviewed by the Urban Forester. Staff acknowledged the need to better promote available incentives and discussed using revenue from mitigation fees to support urban tree canopy initiatives. Public hearings will be held on January 26th and at City Council on February 4th.



Commissioner Gressens asked staff how the Tree Preservation Code training in July went. Ms. Hardie stated that the training was well received by developers with positive feedback on clarity of the code. Planning Manager Renee Brooke added that the outreach to developers as helping us build our FAQ pages.

Commissioner Nelson expressed surprise that developers are not using the incentives. Ms. Hardie stated that better dissemination is needed on incentives. Commissioner Nelson asked how in lieu fee revenue will be used. Community Development Director Colin Stephens responded that Ian Gray, the City's Urban Forester, will develop an urban tree canopy plan and plans to increase the urban tree canopy using some of the funds.

Commissioner Ludden asked what the discretionary track for root protection zones looked like. Senior Planner Hardie described two projects where the topography or the zoning (Industrial) were factors in complying with clear and objective preservation standards. Commissioner Ludden asked how defensible space requirements are interacting with tree preservation. Planning Manager Brooke responded that they are not mutually exclusive. Locations of tree preservation are not dictated by code, so it is possible to preserve trees and maintain defensible space. Where this may not be possible, then tree removal can be mitigated. Senior Planner Hardie added that she has worked with Melissa Steele, the Deputy Fire Marshall, on the code updates and that she is a valuable resource.

Commissioner Johannsen gave a tree preservation example of one tree being preserved on a project site and asked if the code is achieving its objective. Ms. Hardie stated that larger trees are prioritized and are being preserved where none would be under the old code.

Commissioner Ludden asked questions regarding the root protection zone and preserving stands of trees. Senior Planner Hardie clarified where the 25% encroachment can occur and areas it is not allowed. She stated that defining clusters of trees for preservation would not be clear and objective.

Commissioners Winters and Nelson stated their desire to include acreage in the tree preservation data. Ms. Hardie and Ms. Brooke described a new webpage that is in development that will map the tree preservation data.

6. Work Session:

6.1 Overview of 2026: Council Goals and Related Work Sessions.

Staff: Chief Operations Officer, Russ Grayson- rgrayson@bendoregon.gov

Russ Grayson, Chief Operations Officer, introduced himself, thanked the Commission for their service. There was a discussion about the disconnect between the commission's responsibilities and the city's planning processes initiated by Commissioner Gressens. Mr. Grayson gave a **presentation** to provide context for the City Council goals in this biennium. He discussed housing, economic development, climate resiliency and the launch of a new growth plan to determine the city's future over the next 20 years. Mr. Grayson outlined upcoming development code updates on Middle Housing Land Divisions, Neighborhood



Commercial siting, potential Water Overlay Zone updates, which the Commission will review soon, and updates on Engineering reviews and a list of upcoming significant land use projects. Commissioner Johannsen inquired about the Council's May 13th work session on Drainage and Density on how infill development will be handled, and provided feedback on a tree's effect on drainage detention. Planning Manager Brooke solicited ideas for training and topics that the Commissioners would be interested in for upcoming work sessions.

7. Training: Land Use Processes, Ex Parte Contacts, and Conflicts

City Attorney Ian Leitheiser provided an overview of the City's functions, its form of government and how the Planning Commission fits into this system. Mr. Leitheiser discussed the Commission's role and responsibilities, including their authority to make land use decisions, provide recommendations to the City Council, and act as a public forum for community values and strategic thinking. The importance of public involvement in the planning process was emphasized, with a recommendation to utilize the City's online land use education resources for more information.

Mr. Leitheiser covered ethics training for public officials, focusing on financial conflicts of interest, the importance of disclosing ex parte contacts and bias. Vice Chair Winters asked about potential conflicts of interest with Master Plans, which can be a gray area if Commissioners aren't aware they may be involved in subsequent development stages. Mr. Leitheiser recommended discussing this ahead of time to determine if there is a potential conflict.

8. Approval of Minutes:

The Planning Commission approved the December 8, 2025 Minutes.

9. Communications:

9.1. Reports From Planning Commissioners

Commissioner Schnur is working with Boyd Acres Neighborhood District and requested to be their liaison.

Commissioner Nelson stated his interest in the planned changes to the Neighborhood Commercial code. Commissioner Ludden agreed it is a huge topic especially on the east side of the City.

Commissioner Winters brought up the correspondence from Central Oregon Landwatch with a proposed neighborhood commercial code, and that he will try to attend the Council work session in a personal role.

9.2. Report From Planning Manager



Renee Brooke, Planning Manager, stated that future reports will periodically include recently decided administrative decisions. She gave an overview of matters coming before the Commission. Growth Management will give a high-level overview of the growth plan at the next meeting and there will be a public hearing on the Development Code updates on the tree preservation standards. February 9th will be a work session related to short-term rentals on the five properties zoned CN, followed by a quasi-judicial hearing on 260 acres at the Stevens Road Tract. February 23rd will be the hearing for the CN related short-term rentals and possibly the quasi-judicial Timber Yards Master Plan amendment. There will be additional Development Code updates starting in March. and later in the spring an Urban Growth Boundary Expansion and Comprehensive Plan amendment for a site across Knott Road from Caldera High School.

9.3. Report From Community Development Director

Colin Stephens, Community Development Director, had nothing to report.

9.4. Report From City Attorney

Ian Leitheiser, City Attorney, had nothing to report.

The meeting was adjourned at 7:50 p.m.

Minutes submitted by Cathleen Carr



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