



**PLANNING COMMISSION  
Meeting Notes of October 16, 2024**

**Commissioners present:** John Carr, Joel Metlen, Gary Walvatne, Tom Watton, David D. Jones, Kathryn Schulte-Hillen, and Jason Evans

**Staff present:** Planning Manager Darren Wyss, Associate Planner Aaron Gudelj, and Management Analyst Lynn Schroder

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The meeting video is available on the [City website](#).

**1. Pre-meeting Work Session**

Chair Carr announced the topics for the regular meeting agenda and briefly discussed meeting logistics.

**2. Call To Order and Roll Call**

Chair Carr called the meeting to order. Planning Manager Wyss took roll.

**3. Public Comment related to Items not on the Agenda**

None.

**4. Approval of Meeting Notes: 09.18.2024**

Commissioner Evans moved to approve the meeting notes for 09.18.24 with a minor correction. Walvatne seconded. **Ayes: Schulte-Hillen, Evans, Watton, Walvatne, Jones, Metlen and Carr. Nays: None.**

**Abstentions: None. The motion passed 7-0-0.**

**5. Public Hearing (Legislative): [CDC-24-02: Proposed Community Development Code Amendments to Update Language for Home Occupations, Extensions of Approval, Appeals of Development Permits, Expedited Land Divisions, and Middle Housing Land Divisions](#)**

Chair Carr opened a legislative hearing for CDC-24-02, a proposal to amend the West Linn Community Development Code to provide clear and objective code language, comply with state statutes, and clarify City processes for Home Occupations, Extensions of Approval, Appeals of Development Permits, Expedited Land Divisions, and Middle Housing Land Divisions.

City Attorney Wigod addressed legal standards and appeal rights. She addressed Planning Commission conflicts of interest. No Planning Commissioner declared a conflict of interest. Wigod asked if any member of the audience wished to challenge the Planning Commission's impartiality of any member of the Planning Commission. There were none.

Associate Planner Gudelj presented the staff report. At a joint meeting with the Planning Commission on March 18, 2024, the City Council directed staff to refine code language for four code concepts and prepare an amendment package for City Council adoption. The four Code Process Concepts identified for revision were:

1. Extensions of Approval

Clarify the extension approval date, expiration date, number and length of extensions, and establish approval authority for various types of extensions.

2. Appeal Process

Require appellants to specify code criteria that are unmet or misapplied, along with justifications.

3. Home Occupation Permits  
Clarify ambiguous terms, define vehicle trip exemptions, specify rules for outdoor use and storage, and review the application process.
4. Expedited Land Divisions and Middle Housing Land Divisions  
Update code to align with state statute.

The PC held five work sessions from June 2024 to September 2024 to discuss the code process concepts, develop revised code language, and bring forward an amendment package for adoption. Based on policy decisions made by the PC during the work sessions, staff developed the code amendment package. Gudelj reviewed the proposed amendments.

Comments were provided during the work sessions from Shannen Knight and Karie Oaks, President Marylhurst Neighborhood Association. Commissioner Jones asked for clarification about the public comment from Shannon Knight about standing. City Attorney responded that community members who have submitted written or oral testimony during the any hearing on the matter will have standing.

Chair Carr requested that the word “referee” on page 24 be capitalized.

Commissioner Walvatne suggested refining the definition of "Referee" to include specific qualifications required for the role. Planning Manager Wyss responded that the current definition comes from state statute. He notes that the city would engage a land use attorney through a contract process to provide referee services. Wigod added that keeping definitions general in the code is beneficial, as it allows the city flexibility in designating a referee.

Commissioner Walvatne requested that references to “Planning Director” in Section 99.060 be amended to be “Planning Director, or designee”.

Commissioner Jones asked about the noise restrictions provisions of the amendments.

Chair Carr asked for public testimony. There was none. Chair Carr closed the public hearing and opened deliberations.

Commissioner Evans moved to recommend the City Council approve Ordinance 1755, with minor changes to capitalize the word “referee” on page 29 and add “or designee” in Section 99.060, adopting amendments to the West Linn Community Development Code Chapters 2, 37, 85, and 99. Commissioner Schulte-Hillen seconded. **Ayes: Schulte-Hillen, Evans, Watton, Walvatne, Jones, Metlen and Carr. Nays: None. Abstentions: None. The motion passed 7-0-0.**

#### 6. Briefing: [Middle Housing Two-Year Check-In Report](#)

In 2022, the city adopted middle housing code amendments to comply with state legislation. The West Linn Middle Housing Code amendments were developed through the legislative process and adopted by the City Council in June 2022. Wyss provided an assessment of the impact of middle housing code amendments in the community. This two-year check-in on middle housing outcomes is helpful to inform the City as it develops a Housing Production Strategy (HPS) to identify specific tools, actions, and policies the City plans to implement to address critical housing needs in the community.

Since adopting the new middle housing code, the City has permitted 14 middle housing projects, adding 43 new homes—nearly doubling the number previously allowed under earlier housing regulations. Most projects have been concentrated in the R-10 zone, a lower-density and primary zone within the city. Projects that preserved existing homes have generally led to smaller, more affordable units. Attached

housing projects have similarly resulted in units at lower price points. Approximately 85% of these projects are in the R-10 zone, yielding lot sizes typical in the Metro area, around 5,000 square feet. However, R-10 zone projects often result in larger, more expensive dwellings.

For the current Housing Production Strategy project, the City may want to review three key policy decisions made in the middle housing code amendments to determine if any adjustments are needed:

- Allowing detached plexes
- Increasing the floor-area-ratio (FAR) for plexes in R-10 and R-7 zones from 45% to 60%
- Removing FAR and lot coverage requirements for all middle housing types in R-5, R-4.5, R-3, and R-2.1 zones

Commissioner Evans asked about a sliding scale for System Development Charges.

Commissioner Watton noted that West Linn has significant challenges to create affordable housing and find developers who are interested in working with the city to create affordable housing.

Commissioner Jones noted that the quality of schools is a major factor in West Linn's economic success and attracting families.

#### **7. Planning Commission Announcements**

Commissioner Walvatne noted that the CCI staff liaison is being reassigned, though the new assignment has not yet been determined. Consequently, the CCI will not meet until a new staff liaison is in place.

#### **8. Staff Announcements**

Planning Manager Wyss reviewed the upcoming Planning Commission schedule. He also noted that there is a second survey open to the public for VISION43 through the end of October.

#### **9. Adjourn**

Chair Carr adjourned the meeting at approximately 7:46 pm.