

MEETING NOTICE

TOWN OF LA CONNER PLANNING COMMISSION

Tuesday, September 19, 2023 6:00 p.m.

Location

Lower Maple Center
104 Commercial Street, La Conner, WA
And by Zoom
Information below and on the Town website

Agenda

1. CONVENE
2. PUBLIC COMMENT (Topics not otherwise on the Agenda) – Time Limit 3 Minutes
3. MINUTES
 - Approve minutes from the September 5, 2023 meeting
4. OLD BUSINESS
 - Status Report: Talmon Development
 - Status Report: Public Participation Program
 - Status Report: Transportation Element
5. NEW BUSINESS
6. CLOSING COMMENTS

Topic: Planning Commission Meeting

Time: Sep 19, 2023 06:00 PM Pacific Time (US and Canada)

Join Zoom Meeting

<https://phadowud-online.zoom.us/j/86003765360?pwd=Z2pnajdGV1hIUmk3Q1hZcmJFR3ZoZz09>

Meeting ID: 860 0376 5360

Passcode: 427767

One tap mobile

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TOWN OF LA CONNER
PLANNING COMMISSION MEETING
September 5, 2023

The Planning Commission meeting was called to order at 6:01 p.m.

Commissioners present: Carol Hedlin, Marna Hanneman, Bruce Bradburn, John Leaver, Sommer Holt

Commissioners absent: None

Staff: Michael Davolio, Ajah Eills

PUBLIC COMMENT:

Leslie Smith spoke in favor of keeping the Talmon Development on the agenda for future meetings and requested that any update be covered in detail. She also requested that the Town Administrator hold an equal level of knowledge about the project. She is in support of strong short-term rental regulations and mentioned that she has several neighbors who rent long term, among them a school principal and an EMT.

MINUTES:

Commissioner Bradburn moved to approve the minutes from the August 1, 2023 meeting. Seconded by Commissioner Hanneman. Discussion opened; Commissioner Holt requested an amendment of the minutes to clarify her comments from the previous meeting. **Motion to approve minutes with amendments carried unanimously.**

OLD BUSINESS:

There was no new information about the Talmon Development. There was a discussion about the height limit of the project and discussion of the process that all building permit applicants go through in La Conner. There was discussion of the role of the Town Council in approving the development.

Staff discussed the ongoing solicitation of public comments regarding short-term rental regulations, including an open house or community mingle in October designed to spark discussion. Staff discussed their participation in the "Braves Day" event which welcomed students in the La Conner School District back to school.

There was an ongoing and wide-ranging discussion of the pros and cons of short-term rentals, which included mention of a data analytic company, comments related to housing availability, community make-up, hotel/motel taxes, and a moratorium on new short-term rentals in the residential zone.

Staff presented new potential high density housing regulations, combined with an update to the PURD regulations that simplifies and combined planned unit residential development with high density housing. Discussion of the proposed regulations ensued. Commission asked for additional time to review the proposed regulations.

NEW BUSINESS:

Staff presented information on the Housing Element update in the Comprehensive Plan update.

COMMISSIONER COMMENTS/STAFF COMMENTS:

Planner Davolio said that he connected with a famous architect that could help interpret housing developments during a trip to Langley.

The next Planning Commission meeting will be on September 19, 2023.

With no further business Commissioner Hanneman moved to adjourn the meeting at 7:44 p.m. Seconded by Commissioner Bradburn. **Motion carried unanimously.**

Chair

Date

MEMORANDUM

TO: Planning Commission
FROM: Planning Staff
SUBJECT: Transportation Issues
DATE: September 12, 2023

As you know, the staff has been actively working on updates to several elements of the town's Comprehensive Plan. Based upon several public comments about parking issues in the Commercial zone, and especially on South First Street, we have been looking closely at the Transportation Element. As we began this discussion, several issues came up. Each of these issues will need to be addressed.

- South First Street parking. The staff has done a survey of parking on South First Street, comparing the actual number of on-street and off-street parking spaces to the number of spaces that each existing use is required to have. Surprisingly, the number of existing spaces is sufficient to meet the regulatory demand. However, the required number of spaces has been shown to be inadequate during peak tourist season. In the past, several suggestions have been made in an effort to increase parking availability, and therefore access, to the Central Business District. Those ideas have included:
 1. Add time restrictions on parking to discourage employee and business owner parking.
 2. Add parking enforcement.
 3. Add paid parking, both on-street and off-street.
 4. Provide better advertising for existing off-street parking.
 5. Transform South First Street to one-way driving. This suggestion has been recommended in every traffic control plan that the town has considered in the past 50 years. This will add parking opportunities by creating angle parking on one side of the street. However, this will also increase traffic on other streets, most notably South Second Street.
 6. Close South First Street to all traffic between 10:00 a.m. and 7:00 p.m., and provide a shuttle. This raises the question of who pays for the shuttle, and who staffs the shuttle?

Each of these suggestions creates the potential for impacts that would need to be addressed. For example, changing South First Street to one-way traffic, or closing the street to all traffic, will result in significant traffic increases on North First Street and on South Second Street. In addition, many of these suggestions would require the expenditure of funds that have not been budgeted.

- Safe Routes to School. In discussions with the school district, several questions were raised regarding the safety of children walking or bicycling to school. We will continue discussions with the school district to identify areas of concern, and bring these issues to the town to be addressed.
- Multi-modal routes. Safe bicycle routes are not just for school children. The county has established bicycle lanes to and from La Conner on county roads, but little has been done within town limits. Other modes of transportation also need to be considered.
- Sidewalks. There are sidewalks in most of our commercial districts, but not so much in residential areas. The town requires new developments to build sidewalks along the frontage of those developments, but residents frequently ask for more. There are programs in place that would allow the town to build sidewalks in residential areas at the request of the neighborhoods, to be reimbursed by the residents of those neighborhoods over an extended period of time. However, such programs do not appear to have the support of neighborhoods.
- Bus access. There is minimal bus access to and from La Conner. This lack of access means that residents who work out of town need to rely on cars for transportation to and from work.
- Enforcement. The town is limited in its ability to enforce many of the solutions described above. Our Code Enforcement Officer, who is also our Fire Chief, cannot be expected to spend his days writing parking tickets.

Other issues may also need to be discussed. We will rely on our public involvement process to encourage citizens to raise issues of concern.