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Planning Commission Meeting  
December 5, 2024  
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**MINUTES**

**PLANNING COMMISSION MEETING**

December 5, 2024  
5:30 p.m.

City Hall Council Chambers  
313 Court Street, The Dalles, Oregon 97058  
Via Zoom / Livestream via City Website

**PRESIDING:** Cody Cornett, Chair

**COMMISSIONERS PRESENT:** Addie Case, John Grant, Carrie Pipinich and Mark Poppoff

**COMMISSIONERS ABSENT:** Maria Peña and Nik Portela

**STAFF PRESENT:** Director Joshua Chandler, City Attorney Jonathan Kara,  
Senior Planner Sandy Freund, Secretary Paula Webb

**CALL TO ORDER**

The meeting was called to order by Chair Cornett at 5:36 p.m.

**PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE**

Chair Cornett led the Pledge of Allegiance.

**APPROVAL OF AGENDA**

It was moved by Grant and seconded by Pipinich to approve the agenda as submitted. The motion carried 5/0; Case, Cornett, Grant, Pipinich, and Poppoff voting in favor, none opposed, Peña and Portela absent.

**APPROVAL OF MINUTES**

It was moved by Case and seconded by Cornett to approve the minutes of August 15, 2024 as submitted. The motion carried 4/0; Case, Cornett, Grant, and Poppoff voting in favor, none opposed, Pipinich abstained, Peña and Portela absent.

It was moved by Pipinich and seconded by Cornett to approve the minutes of November 7, 2024 as submitted.

Commissioner Case abstained from the vote stating she was absent from the November 7, 2024 meeting.

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It was moved by Cornett and seconded by Popoff to reapprove the minutes of November 7, 2024 as amended. The motion carried 4/0; Cornett, Grant, Pipinich, and Poppoff voting in favor, none opposed, Case abstained, Peña and Portela absent.

## **PUBLIC COMMENT**

### *Richard Wolfe, The Dalles*

Mr. Wolfe asked why, when he Googled The Dalles Planning Department, it comes up as the Community Development Department. Director Chandler replied the Community Development Department is effectively an umbrella department that oversees planning, historic preservation, economic development and urban renewal. Many cities have a Community Development Department, but the specific structure varies by jurisdiction.

Mr. Wolfe expressed concern with a retaining wall at the intersection of W. 3<sup>rd</sup> and W. 4<sup>th</sup> Streets, stating the wall is compromised. He asked how to correct the problem. Staff determined the wall is on private property. Director Chandler replied that unless the retaining wall is on a City right-of-way, the wall would effectively be the responsibility of the property owner.

Mr. Wolfe stated the retaining wall is a traffic barrier that has five compromised locations. There is a 10-foot drop off. The wall adjoins Parks & Recreation property and a sidewalk, which is a City property. Are both entities responsible?

City Attorney Kara responded, "I can't picture it in my mind, so I'll provide general counsel to the Commission. To answer your question, Mr. Wolfe, generally speaking – without a map in front of me or being on-site – if something is on a person's property, it is that person's responsibility. Fences are typically a civil matter. These situations are highly fact-dependent, and there is no simple, one-size-fits-all answer.

If the question is whether the government, including the City, enforces structural codes on private property, the City does not. That responsibility typically falls under state building codes, which are enforced through Wasco County."

### *Chuck Gomez, 221 E. 2<sup>nd</sup> Street, The Dalles*

Mr. Gomez shared concerns regarding the Basalt Commons project, stating the approved variance alters the original plan. The Planning Commission recommended the project based on the urgent need for rental housing, particularly two-bedroom apartments. However, the variance significantly reduced the number of two-bedroom units in favor of one-bedroom and studio apartments.

Another concern was the increase in building height from three stories to 65 feet. Despite this expansion, parking requirements were reduced. Not long ago, the Planning Commission denied a request for a mixed-use building near Ace Hardware due to insufficient parking. Yet, Basalt Commons, with 130 units, does not even provide 130 parking spaces.

Mr. Gomez stated the Planning Commission's recommendation was based on an initial parking study indicating 900 downtown spaces. However, the final survey revealed that 300 of these are used daily by downtown workers, and the remaining spots turn over an average of 5.66 times per day. Additionally, the Federal Street Plaza project will remove approximately 20 more spaces.

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These factors were not fully considered when approving the variance for increased building size and reduced parking. Mr. Gomez believed it would benefit the community to reevaluate the variance approval.

Director Chandler responded, believing some of the information presented may have been misconstrued. He offered to discuss this with Mr. Gomez, stating some of these numbers were surprising.

Director Chandler continued, stating this was not a variance approval, and there was never any consideration to decrease parking or eliminate two-bedroom units. He invited Mr. Gomez to stop by the Community Development Department with any additional information. Director Chandler will review the application with Mr. Gomez to ensure he has the correct details.

## **DISCUSSION ITEM**

### **2024/2025 Review and Outlook**

Director Chandler presented the staff report.

Commissioner Grant asked if there was data on the percentage decrease in housing units across Oregon and how that compares to The Dalles.

Director Chandler replied he did not have data on the drop in housing units for Oregon as a whole – he did not make that comparison. There has been a decline, and some communities have not experienced as significant a decrease as The Dalles.

Chair Cornett asked where the additional subdivisions were located. Director Chandler replied a 14-unit subdivision on Columbia View Drive, a 29-unit subdivision is proposed behind the hospital, and six lots are proposed off E. 9<sup>th</sup> Street, near Quinton Street.

Commissioner Poppoff asked whether the new floodplain maps account for the Union and 1<sup>st</sup> Street underpass as a potential relief channel for future flooding on Mill Creek. He noted that during the last flood, the underpass did not exist, causing water to back up behind the highway and the old levee. He suggested that if a similar flood occurred today, much of the water would likely flow through the underpass, potentially reducing flooding along 1st Street.

Director Chandler acknowledged the significant change in our downtown since 1984. The underpass does allow some water to flow out of the area, but the primary issue remains the backup at the Mill Creek tunnel, which is the main cause of flooding. The City's Public Works Department is currently working with the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers to secure funding for a study on upsizing or modifying those pipes to improve water flow during flood events.

Chair Cornett asked how much of the City is located in the FEMA floodplain area.

Director Chandler explained, we estimate that approximately 300 properties will be affected, though that number is an overestimate. Currently, under the 1984 maps, about 120 properties are included in the floodplain. Once the new maps are adopted, approximately 120 additional properties will be added.

The total count we arrived at was 299, which includes properties currently in the floodplain, those being added, and those being removed. We combine these numbers because, as part of the

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update process, we are required to issue a Ballot Measure 56 notification to every affected property owner. Since the map update is happening alongside our code update, we want to ensure that all impacted property owners are aware of these changes.

Commissioner Grant requested an update on staffing.

Director Chandler responded, we are nearly fully staffed. He then introduced our new Senior Planner, Sandy Freund. She has extensive experience in Oregon land use and has already been a great addition to our team.

Senior Planner Freund will be working with Director Chandler on long-range planning while also bringing her expertise in current planning. She will also oversee the Historic Landmarks Commission.

## ADJOURNMENT

Chair Cornett adjourned the meeting at 6:36 p.m.

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Submitted by/

Paula Webb, Secretary

Community Development Department

SIGNED:

DocuSigned by:

*Cody Cornett*

5/6/2025 | 8:02 AM PDT

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ATTEST:

*Paula Webb*

Paula Webb, Secretary

Community Development Department