

Portland Planning Commission

April 8, 2025

Meeting Minutes

Planning Commissioners Present

Michael Alexander, Brian Ames, Wade Lange, Mary-Rain O'Meara, Michael Pouncil (virtual), Steph Routh, Eli Spevak (arrived 12:36 p.m.), Erica Thompson, [1 open position]

Planning Commissioners Absent

None.

Presenting Staff

Patricia Diefenderfer (BPS), Ryan Singer (BPS), Kiel Jenkins (BPS); Ari del Rosario, Lance Lindahl, Andrew Aebi (PBOT); Brian Landoe, Belinda Judelman (PP&R)

Chair Routh called the meeting to order at 12:32 p.m. and noted commissioners at today's meeting.

[Documents and Presentations for today's meeting](#) [Video](#)

Items of Interest from Commissioners

None.

Director's Report

Patricia Diefenderfer, Chief Planner, BPS

- Recruitment for 5 positions on the Planning Commission. We received 85 applications including 11 for the youth commissioner position. The first round of interviews are the week of April 14, and we will provide updates to the PC as we move through the process.
- Updated Planning Commission meeting schedule: the [Tentative Agenda](#) is up-to-date. We are canceling the April 22 meeting.
- TSP Community Advisory Committee has an opening for a PC member. PBOT is forming this committee via a recruitment, which is open through April 21. If you are interested in serving on this committee, the PBOT team has a seat on the committee for a PC member. This group is advisory to staff. The PC should discuss and vote on who will represent the PC on the advisory committee.

Vice Chair Thompson: I would need some more information and to check about scheduling, but I'm not able to confirm one way or the other right in this moment.

Commissioner Spevak: Can the PC put someone in the role for now and then see who joins the commission in early July? I would encourage our Chair to take the role for now.

Chair Routh: I am happy to do this at least for now.

Vice Chair Thompson moved to elect *Chair Routh* as the PC TPS committee representative. *Commissioner Ames* seconded.

(Y8 – Alexander, Ames, Lange, O’Meara, Pouncil, Routh, Spevak, Thompson)

- Statement of Economic Interest reminder – this must be filed by April 15.
- Welcome to our visitors from Dusseldorf. Building Bridges is an international administrative exchange between the cities of Dusseldorf and Portland which kicked off yesterday. It is part of a Memorandum of Understanding signed by the mayors of both cities in 2023 to “foster close ties of cooperation between the cities and pursue common goals of sustainability and growth”. Three planning staff from the City of Düsseldorf are visiting Portland for a one-week administrative, professional exchange including workshops, presentations, discussions, and tours. Those three Dusseldorf planning staff — Petra Bradner, Jennifer Hahn, and Sabine Kring — are here today in the audience to observe the Planning Commission.

Consent Agenda

- Consideration of Minutes of the February 25, 2025, Planning Commission meeting.
- RWA #9600, Street Vacation, NE Couch Street and NE Davis Street.

Commissioner Thompson requested to pull the street vacation item from the Consent Agenda.

Vice Chair O’Meara moved to approve the remainder of the Consent Agenda. *Commissioner Lange* seconded.

The Consent Agenda was approved.

(Y8 – Alexander, Ames, Lange, O’Meara, Pouncil, Routh, Spevak, Thompson)

RWA #9600, Street Vacation, NE Couch Street and NE Davis Street

Hearing / Recommendation: Ari del Rosario, Lance Lindahl, Andrew Aebi (PBOT)

Presentation

Lance provided an overview of the vacation – NE Couch and NE Davis between the I205 right-of-way and NE 97th Ave. This is a City-initiated request, but it still goes through the same internal review process that a citizen-initiated vacation does. PBOT looks at the current and potential future needs for right-of-way to see if the area is needed for connectivity. There were no major concerns aside from an addressing of 2 private parcels that will have to change. The vacation may limit future

connections to the path, but the current Local Improvement District (LID) project and development will be no more than 1.5 blocks to the multi-use path. The proposed vacation areas have not been used since 1980. The right-of-way improvements anticipated this vacation, even pre-freeway construction.

Commissioner Spevak: So, it seems odd to build out without having the vacation addressed.

- Lance: Because the street is unimproved, City review planners, even without the vacation, would request the street be closed until developed.

Commissioner Alexander: Slide 6 looks like there was a large tree that was present in the previous photo that is gone at this point.

- Andrew: In general, there are very few trees removed in LID projects. However, we have had some issues with tree damage with on-street activities, which may have happened here. In the sections east of here, we have avoided any tree removal at all.

Commissioner Ames: What happens with the land now?

- Lance: We have basically a super-easement over it, and then it is returned to the property owners via a Multnomah County determination.

Commissioner Pouncil: I wanted to follow up on the question about ownership.

- Lance: It is an easement now, and the vacation releases almost all the City rights aside from utilities.

Commissioner Alexander moved to approve the street vacation request to City Council.

Commissioner Ames seconded.

(Y8 – Alexander, Ames, Lange, O’Meara, Pouncil, Routh, Spevak, Thompson)

The motion passes.

Portland-Gresham Urban Services Boundary (USB) Comprehensive Plan Amendments
Briefing / Hearing / Recommendation: Ryan Singer (BPS), Kiel Jenkins (BPS)

[Presentation](#)

Disclosures

None.

Ryan introduced the project. Proposed actions today are mostly technical clean-up and are very minor. But they get to the growth management strategy for Portland, the region, and the state. This is a project to ensure the amendments result in the sensible provision of services at the eastern edge of Portland’s boundary.

Kiel provided an overview of how USBs function and how this particular one interplays with Gresham. Urban Growth Boundaries (UGBs) help guide which lands are eligible for urban development. Within UGBs, USBs provide guidance on which jurisdictions provide services to which areas. The City of Portland Comprehensive Plan, Chapter 8- Public Facilities and Services, provides additional policy guidance on annexation requirements and provision of urban services.

The proposed amendments are located generally in the Pleasant Valley Area in the southeast corner of the City of Portland Urban Service Area.

The discussions have been going on for a few years between Portland, Gresham and Multnomah County. These are 4 housekeeping amendments, nothing changing policies. The inconsistencies include areas where there are 1) gaps between the USBs, 2) areas where the two USBs overlap, and 3) mapping errors.

Amendments 1 and 2 are to properties that will have their City of Portland Comprehensive Plan Map, Zoning Map, and Plan District designations removed. Amendments 3 and 4 are to public rights-of-way and do not have associated Zoning Map or Plan District amendments.

Kiel walked through the 4 individual amendments showing maps and describing their nuances.

Next Steps

- Planning Commission will make a recommendation to City Council.
- City Council will take final action on the recommended USB, Comprehensive Plan and zoning changes.
- Gresham and Multnomah County will initiate legislative processes to assign the proper zone and comprehensive plan designation to the properties removed from Portland's USB.
- Gresham and the City of Portland will update the IGA with the revised USB as an Exhibit Map.

Written testimony

None received.

Oral testimony

None.

Chair Routh closed testimony at 1:20 p.m.

Discussion

Commissioner O'Meara: Does the area correlate to payment of taxes?

- Kiel: Tax districts are changed with annexation; these amendments do not affect taxes. These are all within unincorporated Multnomah County. The addresses won't be changing, so they will stay as Multnomah County but not in either city.

Vice Chair Thompson: Are there natural resources on the private property parcels? How do we ensure these areas are still maintained?

- Kiel: There are 2 creeks, and we have been working closely with the other jurisdictions because these overlays will be removed. Gresham will apply a similar natural resource overlay zone to maintain these resources. The Pleasant Valley Plan District is an inter-jurisdiction plan area, so there was a lot of consultation when that district was developed initially.
- Ryan: We have been working at Gresham and Mult Co to ensure a date of enactment for our changes that most closely corresponds to their enactment of their land use changes. This will be on either the same day or as close to the same day as possible.
- Patricia: We can certainly write the ordinance with provisions of the effective date of the actions for this.

Commissioner Ames: What was the impetus for this? Are there other areas to be looked at?

- Kiel: Mostly housekeeping. We didn't want to do policy evaluation. In this area, there are a number of mapping errors that are mostly in Gresham's jurisdiction that they will have to work through. The 2 private properties were within areas with USB gaps, so we included them in this project to correct for those gaps.

Commissioner O'Meara moved that the staff recommendation:

- Amend the Comprehensive Plan Map to:
 - Amend the Urban Service Boundary in four locations.
 - Remove Comprehensive Plan designations from two properties.
- Amend the Zoning Map to remove zoning, overlay, and plan district designations from two properties.
- Amend the Pleasant Valley Plan District Map to remove the two properties.

Commissioner Spevak seconded.

(Y8 – Alexander, Ames, Lange, O'Meara, Pouncil, Routh, Spevak, Thompson)

The motion passes.

Items for letter to Council:

- The effective date and jurisdiction coordination should be in the letter to Council. Staff will ensure it is included in the ordinance that City Council will ultimately adopt.

Urban Forest Plan

Briefing: Brian Landoe (PP&R), Belinda Judelman (PP&R)

[Presentation](#)

Brian introduced the topic and reminded the PC staff was here about a year ago to update the Urban Forest Plan. Today is an update about what's in the plan. Staff wants to hear feedback from Planning Commissioners and share the next steps. The Urban Forestry Commission makes the recommendation to Council, but PP&R staff are still interested in this commission's feedback.

Belinda provided an overview of the plan and how it was created. This is the plan for how we preserve, plan, and care for trees. All City bureaus as well as the community share in the vision and comprehensive set of goals, recommendations, and actions to guide City management activities and decisions.

We want to be sure we are reducing the disparity in tree canopy around the city and in specific populations.

The plan has been a collaboration between 8 different City bureaus with significant input from Portlanders via open houses, surveys, focus groups, community discussions, and presentations.

Benefits, key priorities, and concerns are all aspects of the plan, and feedback was received in each of these categories. Three different advisory committees supported the work in creating the plan (Urban Forestry Commission, technical advisory group, community advisory committee) to create the goals, visions, and actions.

Top priorities that have influenced all aspects of the plan are shared on slide 6. The plan is divided into six sections (slide 7).

Belinda walked through the vision and goals of the plan (slide 9). The three tree canopy goals include neighborhood minimums, streets, and the citywide and pattern areas.

- Goal 1: Every neighborhood will have at least 25% tree canopy cover.
- Goal 2: Increase tree canopy cover over our streets to at least 35% in 20 years.
- Goal 3: Increase tree canopy cover citywide to 45% in 40 years. This goal means we need to plant one tree for every Portlander.

Chair Routh: For the PDX airport, I see less than 15% coverage.

- Belinda: PDX is actually excluded from the neighborhood count because of restrictions to planting trees there, but otherwise neighborhoods that include industrial areas are part of the 25%.

To achieve Goal 3, we also have pattern area goals (slide 14) that reflect the natural and built environment of the different areas of the city.

Commissioner Ames: Is Forest Park included in the Western Area canopy number?

- Belinda: Yes, but as you see in the pattern areas, the west side is separated into areas including the Central City, separate from the rest of the western pattern area.

There are 7 recommendations that align closely with the community priorities (slide 15).

There are about 60 actions in the plan, a handful of which are highlighted on slide 17.

For every year, staff will track and share progress on 10 performance measures. And every 3 years staff will provide a more comprehensive update for each action and a summary of challenges and opportunities for implementing the plan.

Next steps

- The 50-day comment period ends on April 13.
- Staff will then revise and take the plan to Council committees and full Council at the end of the summer.

Commissioner Ames: I worry about more outages. How much have we interacted with the utilities to make sure they have provision to maintain that may impact power to Portlanders?

- Brian: We work very closely with them as their work is done via permits with Urban Forestry. We also will be talking with them as we develop our own street tree maintenance system.

Commissioner Lange: On the north side of Fremont this morning I noticed the power concerns as there were “missing” trees. On street maintenance, is there a sunset where you lose that PCEF allocation?

- Brian: We received an initial 5-year allocation to help ramp up to what a citywide program will look like. Like all our programming, it is susceptible to changes in funding. The next 5-year allocation would need to be significantly higher since the current cost estimates are already from about 3 years ago. At the same time, we have a bit of deferred maintenance backlog, so we might see efficiencies as we improved the health of the street tree system. If we lose funding, the costs would likely go back to property owners.

Commissioner Alexander: I’m also concerned about instances where there are hazards around the state of trees. Does this plan provide health and promotion about exposing tree hazards?

- Brian: The plan notes the responsibilities that property owners are expected to take on as well as ways the City can be responsive to this – education to property owners, for example. As part of the Title 11 code amendments, we want to be sure the health and safety of the community is cared for.

Vice Chair O’Meara: On the PCEF funds, are they intended to be accessible to private property owners? What about non-profit affordable housing providers? Multi-family affordable housing properties would be an idea.

- Brian: It is intended to be an income-qualified fund. REACH is the only non-profit we’re aware of right now that does this. The PCEF funding could go to a non-profit to administrator; we could have providers on contract; it could be a rebate... so we are still working this out. We have worked on tree planting with some affordable housing providers, but there hasn’t been much progress on the preservation aspect.

- Belinda: Goal 1 intentionally doesn't have a timeline right now. We don't have the data, but it is a top priority for us, but we didn't want to promise something we didn't have full information about.

Vice Chair Thompson: On the implementation strategy goals, are the actions listed by priority level?

- Belinda: They are listed in terms of timeframe. The earlier items are on-going and mostly require less start-up since we are doing them already.

Vice Chair Thompson: Does it seem realistic from a funding standpoint?

- Belinda: We put together the actions at the end of 2024, so all the estimates were based on that. Of course we don't know our final budget, but based on the information we had at that time it was accurate and realistic.

Vice Chair Thompson: Capacity-building in the community seems like a real opportunity. Many City services are things individuals can't do, but tree planting can be leveraged for example.

- Brian: On community capacity, the first thing is that we continue to grow the partners we're working with. This has advanced over the past few years as we have 3 main contractors for plantings. With PCEF funding, we are soon to have about a dozen companies that we've done outreach and training with. Expanding to non-profit partners is also happening now.

Vice Chair Thompson: On tree canopy loss, the plan wasn't really specific. Can we get more into lessons learned? Or is this really unknown still? It's very concerning of course.

- Brian: That is feedback we've heard already, so yes. Looking at what we know about canopy change is interesting – oddly, natural areas is where we saw lots of decline, which is likely due to climate change. Middle canopy areas actually saw some growth. We know development is also an issue, but we also see cities that have higher density and more canopy than Portland. We have seen removal of healthy trees allowed in Title 11 as well. There is still an educational component we're continuing as well. We are expecting 2024 LiDAR data within the next year, which will tell more about the story of our current trajectory.

Commissioner Pouncil: Is there a strong educational component to youth and their parents/caretakers?

- Belinda: We already do have all-ages programs (e.g. Learning Landscapes and community tree-planting events). As part of this plan, we have more actions to expand our education and outreach. We also were with Multnomah Youth Commission last weekend to build more connections.

Commissioner Pouncil: There is usually low canopy on disproportionately impacted areas of the city. Are there targeted campaigns in these areas of the city?

- Brian: The expansion of outreach is happening. Because of PCEF we have the capacity to build and work with organizations in the community that better know their communities than we may. Getting youth involved has been a great part of this project.

Commissioner Spevak: Thank you for including your previous plans/versions on the website so we can compare. Trees provide mitigation and adaptation together. So I want to focus on what we can hit head-on in the plan. Legal responsibility for tree care and sidewalk maintenance and long-term funding are questions I have. If we need to have this solved to meet canopy goals, it should be

named in the report. There is mention about tree protection in industrial zones – but we have been waiting for years to see a code update to manage trees in industrial zones with a specific timeline. Finally, process-wise, can you talk a bit more? The 5% increase/decrease trend chart was great – I was wanting to see this overlaid with the vulnerability map as well.

- Belinda: We use LiDAR as well as our own staff who do a photo comparison. We are aware but could strengthen the responsibility and funding in the plan.
- Brian: We don't have specific data about sidewalk damage, but PBOT may. San Francisco included sidewalks in the maintenance plan for the city, which is something we can look at as well. Process-wise, we are hoping to get to City committees soon, then Urban Forestry Commission, then City Council.

Commissioner Ames: How do we compare re: canopy compared to other cities? Why did we choose 45% as our goal?

- Belinda: The 45% was looking at where we are with our tree canopy now and estimated availability/space for planting more. In theory we could have up to 52%. Looking at industry guidance for a place like Portland, 40-60% is the range; looking at peer cities, 40% is common, but there are cities with greater population density that have more canopy already. We chose 45% because it is both ambitious and realistic.
- Brian: Pittsburgh is about 45% with a goal of 50%. Boston and DC also stood out with these qualities.

Chair Routh: Trees in the curb zone on the corner, how does this relate to daylighting?

- Belinda: Right now we are not planting trees that would negatively impact sightlines (not 25 feet from a curblane).

Chair Routh: One of the big reasons we heard from voters in changing our form of government was the siloing, with tree planting being a responsibility in 5 bureaus. How are consolidation and coordination coming into play now?

- Brian: Some things are underway. BES tree planting has transferred to Urban Forestry. In the plan, we are looking at how we plan and establish trees. Some happen due to permitting, but there isn't a process to establish and maintain the trees to survive. For example, in the PBOT 82nd Ave project, tree work mirrors the Urban Forestry tree planting process and brings it into alignment. PP&R is moving to Public Works, hence further de-siloing our work further.

Chair Routh: This plan will go to Climate, Resilience & Land Use with the UFC recommendation, yes? If the committee's recommendation differs, how does this interplay?

- Brian: We are looking to get feedback from a few City committees so the UFC recommendation can incorporate the initial feedback.
- Patricia: We will also experience some of this with our planning projects.

Highlights from today's discussion to staff:

- *Commissioner Lange:* Funding for maintenance – ongoing and increasing. Continued conversations with utilities.
- *Vice Chair O'Meara:* Growing partnerships with non-profits, particularly scaling density with affordable housing providers. This is likely more feasible in East Portland.

- *Commissioner Spevak*: Industrials zones and recommendation to revisit Title 33 in a faster timeline than the recommended 3-5 years in the plan. Legal responsibility of trees/sidewalks. Map of heat index vulnerability and if tree canopies are getting better or worse in those areas.
- *Commissioner Pouncil*: Benefits of tree canopy and caring for them – education, particularly in marginalized communities. Being explicit about people who may have trouble paying for maintenance and how this could be alleviated.
- *Vice Chair Thompson*: Community partnerships as an important theme. Bring community opportunities into the goals and actions if that's possible. More detail on tree canopy loss trends.
- *Commissioner Alexander*: Greater articulation about funding and risk support to homeowners about hazardous tree conditions.
- *Commissioner Ames*: Utility engagement and removing people's fear about trees given recent storm losses. Comparison with similar/peer-sized cities and that Portland has some catching up to do.
- *Chair Routh*: Roads and street trees, particularly in east and west Portland, and if the plan can be a mechanism about who is responsible for sidewalk maintenance, coupled with tree investments. Recognizing sidewalk construction costs are largely stormwater – so how can a future TSP+UF conversation look at reducing costs? 82nd Ave example of how one aspect of tree canopy in the ROW can take down speeds along major corridors.

Adjourn

Chair Routh adjourned the meeting at 3:00 p.m.

Submitted by Julie Ocken