

# Portland Planning Commission

April 23, 2024

## Commissioners Present

Michael Alexander, Wade Lange, Mary-Rain O’Meara, Nikesh Patel, Michael Pouncil (virtual), Steph Routh, Eli Spevak (virtual), Erica Thompson (virtual; arrived 5:25 p.m.)

## City Staff

Patricia Diefenderfer, Sandra Wood, Morgan Tracy; Brian Landoe, Belinda Judelman (PP&R)

*Chair O’Meara* called the meeting to order at 5:01 p.m. and provided an overview of the agenda.

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

### Items of Interest from Commissioners

*Commissioner Routh:* Today on the website I noticed the announcement of the recruitment for our ninth Planning Commissioner. I am sad that it’s not specifically for a youth commissioner, which I hope can change in the future as we have discussed in the past for the newly constituted PC. Particularly for long-range planning, the people who have the greatest stake are our young people, and that is an important way to build the bench. I am hoping in the next iteration when we are looking to recruit again we can do that as it’s critically important for developing leadership.

- *Chair O’Meara:* I agree. My sense is we want to build our “bench” of our commissioners then have more discussion at our next retreat to cement our ideas and plan.
- *Commissioner Spevak:* I agree with these sentiments, but also we don’t have a minimum age, so youth are encouraged to apply as well.

*Chair O’Meara:* RICAP 10 letter confirmation with one small verbiage edit we have completed. Commissioners confirmed the transmittal letter.

### Director’s Report

Patricia Diefenderfer, Chief Planner

#### (1) PC recruitment

- As *Commissioner Routh* noted, we are now actively recruiting for the one open position on the Planning Commission. The position was posted yesterday on the City job board. Julie will include the link in today’s minutes – please share with your networks.  
<https://www.governmentjobs.com/careers/portlandor/jobs/4479677/volunteer-non-paid-position-planning-commission>
- The recruitment is open through May 13 at 5 p.m. We are likely going to Council at the end of June so by July we’ll have a fully seated commission.

- This will fill the current vacancy as a partial term to align with our other PC terms that go through February 2027.
- We appreciate the comments around the youth commissioner position and staff feels the same value as noted. We are working on building the capacity and expertise of this commission, so we have good succession in terms of people filling officer roles, etc with a youth commissioner in the future – obviously seeing where we land with all the governmental changes Citywide.

(2) Items at Council

- Sustainability and Climate Commission proposal is at Council tomorrow (Wednesday).
- Lower Southeast Rising Plan is at Council Thursday, and Mary-Rain will be presenting the Planning Commission’s recommendation letter.

(3) Reminder of upcoming PC meeting schedule:

- May 14 will not be a full Commission meeting: we have Tax Increment Financing (TIF) district trainings, all virtual. Julie sent time slots and Zoom links so these sessions should be on your calendars.
- May 21 is our added meeting – 5 p.m. joint hearing with the Design Commission on the Montgomery Park Area Plan.
- May 28 is a regular PC meeting – 5 p.m.

Consent Agenda

- Consideration of minutes from the March 26, 2024, Planning Commission meeting.

*Commissioner Lange* moved to adopt the Consent Agenda. *Commissioner Alexander* seconded.

(Y7 – Alexander, Lange, O’Meara, Patel Pouncil, Routh, Spevak)

The Consent Agenda was adopted with an aye vote.

Portland Urban Forest Plan

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

[Presentation](#)

Brian and Belinda introduced themselves. Brian introduced this as the guiding strategic plan for how we manage trees in the city. This is different from Title 11, which we’ll come back for with a code amendment later in the year, which will be heard by both the Planning Commission and Urban Forestry Commission.

Today we’ll talk about why we plan for trees, manage trees in the city, and some issues we’re trying to get at in the process. Belinda will share information about the Urban Forestry Plan itself.

We manage how we care for and grow the urban forest – really every tree in the city... in parks, in private property, street trees, and parks. The goal is to grow our urban forest equitably. The citywide canopy coverage goal is 33% -- every part of the city covered by some part of the canopy. We are at about 29.8% right now. This may sound close, but depending on where you are in the city, it is quite variable.

Belinda: The Urban Forest Plan is an update to the existing 2004 Urban Forest Management Plan. It will be a 10-year guide for how we preserve, plant, and care for trees equitably and sustainably. We'll use it to implement and guide programs, activities, and budget to act as managers of the urban forest. We are working with the community to create the vision and help us achieve it.

The project is looking at various topics including: canopy coverage, canopy change, canopy distribution by new Council district, cover by different elements of transportation (neighborhood walkways), land use more generally, and heat & heat vulnerability.

A schedule of the three phases highlighted on slide 7; details about creating the plan and public input opportunities are noted on slides 13-14. There is a survey open now, with the first open house scheduled for tomorrow, April 24. From there, staff will continue to work with community, focus groups, additional open houses, and other tabling opportunities for outreach before creating the draft plan.

<http://www.Portland.gov/Trees/Portland-Urban-Forest-Plan>. The survey is open until May 2.

*Commissioner Lange:* How much do you use the 2004 plan? Is that a foundation still?

- Belinda: It will be a combination of understanding the vision and goals and how they are working for us... but how we also want to make changes. That plan has served its purpose, but we had to create an action plan to accompany that plan to ensure we were doing things instead of just noting them in a plan document.

*Commissioner Alexander:* In looking at canopy (e.g. with LA), have you looked at other cities that have gone through displacement, etc. What lends itself to preservation or advantages/dis? In looking at erosion of our canopy, is it in specific areas of Portland? I'm thinking of gentrification and displacement.

- Brian: We are looking at peer cities particularly in terms of how they set and try to achieve canopy goals. 2014-19 we saw canopy decline in Portland, which was a huge divergence, which came right as our Tree Code came into effect in 2015. It mirrored effects of climate change and highest levels of development in a long time. It's been interesting to see how cities map in terms of canopy cover compared to density – Pittsburgh is an interesting comparison. In terms of Portland change, we are mostly seeing it follow a bell curve so areas with highest canopy coverage had the greatest loss (e.g. SW Portland). We saw growth in middle canopy areas like NE. This is just the change, though. Underserved areas have lower canopy to start. We have the greatest discrepancy in previously red-lined areas than other cities in the US.

*Commissioner Spevak:* I was heartened that PCEF funds have been allocated to tree maintenance. I am hoping you'll look at other cities to see which maintain trees in the ROW versus those where private property owners are responsible for maintenance (including sidewalks re: roots, etc).

- Brian: Street trees in Portland are maintained by the adjacent property owner, as are sidewalks – this is unique among peer cities. We are absolutely looking at management approaches given our different outcomes. We won't get into a tree maintenance program in this plan, but it is definitely a consideration.

*Commissioner Pouncil:* Thank you for the presentation. I know trees in business districts can help influence people's spending in the area. Have you talked to business communities? Are you going to be speaking to businesses in the industrial areas as well (e.g. Portland harbor)?

- Brian: Industrial land outreach – we met with Columbia Corridor Assn, Working Waterfront Coalition, and other groups here as well as labor unions. We have had good feedback and recognize tree canopy can be a challenge in trying to balance employment opportunities, the area, and how we can work with these groups.
- Belinda: In terms of other businesses in commercial areas, we are scheduling conversations here. There has been outreach by PSU studies that we are using and learning from.

*Commissioner Thompson:* How does the Tree Code related to the accessibility of our urban environment? Have you engaged folks who have mobility differences or other disabilities that could come into play (e.g. with sidewalk issues)?

I'm also interested in how you are looking back at the current Tree Code regarding development requirements and if the current preservation and fee-in-lieu program requirements are performing as intended.

- Belinda: We had a focus group specifically with people with disability challenges and continue to engage and hear from these groups... visibility, clearance, leaf pick-up, etc have all been things we've heard.
- Brian: On the Tree Code requirement question, this is part of the assessment of why canopy has declined 2014-19. We are looking at permit data, removal, and planting, but there's lots to dig into here particularly around planting. The data we do have we can identify lots that have gone under development on specific lots and acres we've lost to development across the city. In terms of potential code changes, that's likely outside of the scope of this plan – but we will look to do an update to Title 11 after this work. So once we have updated vision and goals will then be to look at an update to the code.

*Commissioner Routh:* On the community engagement, what are efforts for TriMet ridership (corridors, trees, frequent service)?

Also, are residential trees within the scope of the plan? [yes] And what about funding for private property owners to help them take care of their trees?

- Belinda: We have looked at this with our community advisory members – and the need for canopy coverage for people waiting at stops. There are TriMet staff on the advisory committee as well.
- Brian: I don't know of remedies in peer cities, but this is a topic that has come up frequently in terms of maintenance of trees on private property. We are continuing to think about outreach strategies to help people understand the role of trees and helping them maintain their trees.

*Chair O'Meara:* The heat island mapping has been great. Related to the question, is there an intention to do storm vulnerability tracking? E.g. where we see trees falling in storms so we can start to develop a plan for extreme storm situations?

- Brian: We have mapped the tree failures from this past January's ice storm. We haven't talked about a vulnerability map, but that is a very interesting approach.

*Commissioner Alexander:* How much infrastructure development by TriMet over the past years has affected canopy? Is there an off-set required?

- Brian: There is a tree inspector for all projects, which can be difficult in a constrained roadway. There is good work happening in terms of minimizing the impacts on trees, but we are aware of canopy loss based on residents' comments.

*Commissioner Lange:* In the 2004 study it talks about looking at soil erosion and how that may be improved or preserved. Do you work in that arena to identify what can be done from an urban forestry standpoint?

- Brian: We work with BPS on updates to Title 33 and changes to the landslide map. But we haven't discussed programmatic work that could be implemented in these situations.
- Patricia: We will talk more about the Land Division Code, and trees are among the things you have to document in meeting certain standards/thresholds.

## Land Division Code Update

Work Session / Recommendation: Morgan Tracy, Sandra Wood

[Presentation](#)

[Amendments Memo](#)

### Disclosures

None.

Sandra reminded the commission of the Land Division Code Update project – we had a hearing at your last meeting, as well as a few comments received in writing via the Map App. We also discussed the Measure 56 notice that the public received, so Morgan has been fielding some of those questions still.

We heard from a couple commissioners on amendments, which we can discuss today and may vote on the package tonight.

Morgan introduced other staff who have provided information to this plan and may join me if we have very detailed questions. Tonight we will talk through the landslide hazard area mapping; Q&A; potential amendments from the memo; and hopefully a vote on the full package.

Morgan reminded the commission of the components and the three main categories of proposal.

## **Landslide Hazard Map**

It's important to note this is different from the Ezone maps. This is much more a tool for identifying submittal requirements for a land division. Our current landslide hazard data is from three sets of data from 1997 following the 1996 storm event.

The new landslide hazard data uses more updated data from DOGAMI in 2018. The new map will remove the hazard designation from many areas of the city. Those properties will no longer require a geotechnical report.

There is a challenge in incorporating the DOGAMI shallow landslide map to the City's needs as it's very sensitive to LiDAR data. To adjust this, we used a GIS tool and tested different variations to smooth these features – to capture the correct number and type of properties. We found that using a 12x12 smoothing grid worked best (slide 13).

Slide 14 was the original map – lots of little freckles all over the city, which captures too many properties. Slide 15 is much cleaner and filters the map to those parcels that are much more reasonable to need a geotechnical report for a land division.

The Potential Landslide Hazard Area map reflects area that has the slope and soil characteristics for a higher potential for a landslide... but it doesn't predict landslides.

There was concern about insurance rates for properties on this map. Some things to remember are that the base maps already exist from the state; and perhaps more critically is that the map being proposed with this project has been processed relative to the question to land division design specifically, and may not be appropriate for other uses, such as gauging insurance risk.

*Commissioner Lange:* Oregon geology also does earthquake maps – is that part of this?

- Morgan: They do have mapping for earthquake and liquefaction potential, which are different parts of this map series. I am not aware if they cross those two together at all.

*Chair O'Meara:* Thank you for this great data and information you've provided and work you've done around this question we had.

## **Amendments**

As noted in the April 19 memo, we have a list on slide 20 of the 7 technical amendments and one from *Commissioner Spevak*.

### **Amendment 1: Technical Amendments**

1.a – 1.g as a package.

*Commissioner Lange* asked about 1.g: What is local classification?

- Morgan: This is a street classification – the lowest volume type of street in terms of traffic.

Vote on Technical Amendments

*Commissioner Routh* moved to approve the technical amendments. *Commissioner Patel* seconded.

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

Amendment 1 is approved.

**Amendment 2: Eligibility for standards – Transportation Impacts**

Morgan: If we think about how clear and objective standards are for someone trying to meet transportation impacts, the Proposed Draft includes a provision that specifies when standards for the Transportation Impact requirements may be used. Single-dwelling zoned lots are eligible for between one and four units in most cases. In multi-dwelling zones, development is limited not by numbers of units, but by floor area ratios.

This change would enable multi-dwelling zones to use the same standards (slide 30). Since the transportation impact is the same between the single dwelling land division scenario and multi-dwelling zone land division that proposes lots for one to four units each, the standards should be available for these applications as well. This change revises where the clear and objective standards may be used to include multi-dwelling zones when all lots will be developed with houses, duplexes, attached houses, attached duplexes, triplexes or fourplexes.

*Commissioner Spevak*: I like the standards (as opposed to discretionary) tract, so my thinking is that they should be able to use the standards path for multi-dwelling if they are dividing. It is admittedly adding verbiage to the code, but this gives people a chance through the standards route.

Vote on Amendment 2

*Commissioner Spevak* moved to approve Amendment 2. *Commissioner Routh* seconded.

*Commissioner Lange*: Does this help clarify and simplify?

- Morgan: The only concern is about adding verbiage to the code, but staff agrees with the proposal.

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

Amendment 2 is approved.

*Commissioner Spevak*: As I hear people discuss the land division process, the biggest item I hear is not part of this process. Under current practice, you submit application for preliminary approval, then it might be 4-5 months before final approval, and only then you can submit your building permits. I hope BDS will think about considering allowing permit approval before the final land division approval to condense the timeframe for projects. This could be part of our letter to allow building permit submittal to happen in parallel with the final land division approval.

Patricia: This is something we can pass along as input to the single-permitting authority team for consideration.

Vote on Land Division Code Amendments package as amended today – slide 32.

*Commissioner Alexander* moved to approve the package as amended today. *Commissioner Lange* seconded.

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

The Land Division Code Update project is approved.

#### **Input to the letter to City Council**

- *Commissioner Spevak*: I am not totally sure about adding my comment about timing of building permits to the letter, but I would like to share that information. Sandra: I will share the information with the BDS manager; there are state rules and zoning code regulations to consider, too, so I think BDS management is more appropriate than City Council right now.
- *Commissioner Spevak*: Highlight clear and objective standards and how this creates improvements in this for projects. And that reviews have more options in terms of picking-and-choosing between standards and criteria with this.
- *Commissioner Pouncil*: I support *Commissioner Spevak’s* suggestion.
- *Chair O’Meara*: I hope to summarize the feedback we received in public testimony and the volume of calls Morgan responded to on the hotline.

Sandra also shared appreciation for the technical advisory committee members on this project as noted on page 3 of the Proposed Draft – thank you to everyone.

Adjourn

*Chair O’Meara* adjourned the meeting at 6:39 p.m.

Submitted by Julie Ocken