

# **Lewis County Planning Commission**

## **Public Meeting**

In-Person & Virtual Meeting via Zoom

**June 24, 2025 - Meeting Notes**

**Planning Commissioners Present:** Jason Alves, District 1; Jeff Skutley, District 2; Frank Corbin, District 3; Roger Moore, At-Large; Gretchen Fritsch, District 3;

**Planning Commissioners Excused:** Bob Russell, District 2

**Staff Present:** Mindy Brooks, Director of Community Development; Megan Sathre, Administrative Assistant;

**Materials Used:**

- Agenda
- Draft Meeting Notes – June 10, 2025
- Staff Report: Development Regulations

### **1. Zoom Guidelines**

The clerk dispensed with the Zoom Guidelines.

### **2. Call to Order**

A. Determination of a Quorum

4 Commissioners were present; there was a quorum. Commissioner Corbin joined the meeting during Agenda item #6 – workshop.

### **3. Approval of Agenda**

The Chair entertained a motion to approve the agenda for June 24, 2025. Commissioner Moore made the motion to approve the agenda; seconded by Commissioner Skutley. The motion carried unanimously.

### **4. Approval of Meeting Notes**

The Chair entertained a motion to approve the meeting notes for June 10, 2025. Commissioner Moore made the motion to approve the agenda; seconded by Commissioner Skutley. The motion

carried unanimously.

## **5. Public Comment**

There were no members of the public who wished to provide comments.

## **6. Workshop - Comprehensive Plan Periodic Update – Development Regulations**

Mindy Brooks, Director of Lewis County Community Development, gave a presentation on the Comprehensive Plan Periodic Update Development Regulations. *See presentation for details.* The following questions occurred throughout the presentation.

Commissioner Alves and Skutley asked for clarification on the city Urban Growth Area subdivisions. Mindy responded, divisions of land that will create 5+ lots where any lot is smaller than 2 acres in size will not be approved. Divisions of land that will create 5+ lots where all the lots are 2 acres in size or larger will be approved. Divisions of land that create 4 lots or less of any size will be approved if they conform to the city's lot size and density standards. The goal is to reduce large lot subdivisions in the UGAs prior to annexation in order to adequately provide infrastructure.

Commissioner Skutley asked about freeway interchanges and landscaping standards. Mindy responded that most freeway interchanges are regulated by the Federal Government. In addition, Lewis County has chosen not to have landscaping standards.

Commissioner Alves asked if a 30,000 square foot footprint is adequate for hotels. Mindy responded that the maximum footprint was chosen to meet the requirements of the Growth Management Act but is likely not enough space for a hotel. Alves asked if there are exceptions to the 35-foot height requirement. Mindy responded that there are exceptions, but the Fire District would need to be involved in the planning and decisions. Alves asked how hotels can be encouraged in Lewis County. Mindy responded that the cities need to take the initiative to make those changes since they have more flexibility and own more of the I5 Interchanges. The freeway interchanges at Hwy 12 and South are owned by the county.

Commissioner Alves asked if there is currently multifamily housing in LAMIRDs. Mindy responded that most areas do not have sewer so anything that already exists was there before any zoning regulations were applied. Mindy noted that if sewer were able to go in more places the opportunity to develop would still be limited, but at this time there are no plans to add sewer in areas other than Packwood.

Commissioner Alves clarified that the sign regulations are primarily intended to allow the County to remove signs placed in rights-of-way that were not allowed to be placed there. Mindy confirmed this is correct. This also keeps large digital signs out of rural areas. Property owners are still allowed to place signs on their property for commercial business and home-based businesses as long as they meet the requirements relating to size, location, and placement. There are no limitations on what signs can say and many signs are exempt from the regulations on residential property.

Commissioner Alves asked if the Definitions code previously required a reference to use a dictionary when not more specified within the county's definitions. Mindy responded yes, the current code says that the hard cover Oxford Dictionary located in the Board of County Commissioners office is what is currently required to reference. The update to code switches it to the standard United States Dictionary, the Merriam-Webster, and digital copies may be used.

Commissioner Alves suggested that, based on community feedback, there be separate definitions for coffee stands and bikini baristas. Mindy responded that bikini baristas can be added to the definition of adult entertainment. Adult entertainment has more strict regulations on where it can be located. Mindy suggested that the Planning Commissioners make this suggestion during deliberations if they would like the Board of County Commissioners to consider it in their decision making.

### **Short Term Rentals**

Commissioner Fritsch suggested that "cabin village" and "yurt village" be included in definitions. Mindy responded that those can be added by utilizing the state definitions and Merriam-Webster definitions. If there needs to be a definition that is more specific to Lewis County, then that should be suggested during deliberations. Fritsch added that this definition may be more appropriate for some properties in Packwood, rather than being considered as a Short Term Rental. Mindy responded that there does appear to be an opportunity to define cabin village or yurt village that would allow some property owners to be outside of the STR definition. Mindy added that there will be lots of testimony on this topic at the July 8<sup>th</sup> hearing and deliberation should occur after hearing testimony.

Commissioner Fritsch asked if there are instances where STRs are being rented for more than 180 days per year. Mindy responded that the county is not looking at how many days the STR is rented, but how many days it is advertised on Airbnb, VRBO, etc. If someone lives in their residence seasonally and then rents it out the rest of the year on a rental site, it will not be taxed as a STR as long as it is advertised as available to rent on a rental site for less than 180 days (6 months). Therefore, the goal is that snowbirds would not be considered as STRs.

Commissioner Alves asked what Lewis County staff has learned from other communities about regulating STRs. Mindy responded that while Lewis County is borrowing from other places, addressing the seasonal residents in Lewis County specific and staff has not found a model to replicate. Alves asked if there could be different permits for varying lengths in STRs. Mindy responded that this would likely not address the assessor's taxation purposes.

Commissioner Alves clarified that if a person owned a STR outside of a LAMIRD they would need to get a permit but would not be subject to the 25% cap. Mindy confirmed that is correct.

Commissioner Fritsch shared a summary of what she heard from the Packwood Community during the meeting on Short Term Rentals on June 23, 2025. She voiced that the community did not want their livelihood to be taken away as many rely on the income of their STRs. Mindy added that the

community asked questions about having a “grace period” and what that might look like. Commissioner Alves commented that he does not want to take income away from an STR owner, but to create a balance in housing. However, Packwood is not going to stop growing so the number of STRs allowed will continue to increase. All industries are regulated at some point. Mindy added that the community of Ashford may already be over the 25% cap, but the Planning Commission can choose to have a different cap for a specific community. The Planning Commission can also choose any percentage of cap that they see as most appropriate.

Commissioner Alves asked how frequently the county can evaluate and make changes to the STR regulations. Mindy responded that typically it takes 5-10 years to see if the changes are bringing forth the desired outcomes, but if the STR regulations are implemented and things are going in the wrong direction they can be changed at any time.

Commissioner Alves commented that regulating an industry can make the current STRs more valuable since there would be a finite amount.

Commissioner Fritsch asked if staff could provide more maps to help the community understand whether they are in an area that would be subject to the 25% cap. Mindy responded yes, she will provide maps to the public. Mindy clarified that the current proposal applies to areas zoned Rural Residential Centers, Crossroad Commercial, Small Town Mixed Use, and Small Town Residential. Commissioner Skutley asked if there is a specific zoning where STRs must be located. Mindy responded that a single-family residence or accessory dwelling unit can be used as a STR anywhere in the county. The 25% cap would only apply to the Small Town UGAs and the zones already mentioned.

## **7. Good of the Order:**

### **A. Staff**

Mindy shared an update on the Planning Commission schedule for the rest of the year. The Comprehensive Plan Periodic Update will be moved to the Board of County Commissioners without the Critical Areas Ordinance. Planning Commission will not meet the month of August and September. Meetings will resume in October to discuss the Critical Areas Ordinance.

### **B. Planning Commissioners**

Commissioner Corbin asked about staff’s plan for filling the Planning Commissioner vacancy. Mindy responded that staff will look to fill the vacancy in August/September so a new member will be present when reconvening in October.

Commissioner Skutley asked for a hard copy of the development regulations.

## **8. Calendar:**

The next Planning Commission meeting will be on July 8, 2025, and the agenda item will be a

public hearing on the Comprehensive Plan Periodic Update Development Regulations.

## **9. Adjourn**

Commissioner Moore made a motion to adjourn. The meeting was adjourned at 7:32 pm.