

Lewis County Planning Commission

Public Meeting

In-Person & Virtual Meeting via Zoom

July 8, 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; Bob Russell, District 2

Staff Present: Mindy Brooks, Director of Community Development; Megan Sathre, Administrative Assistant; Tara Snelson, Assistant Planner; Kylie Peckham, Office Assistant Senior

Materials Used:

- Agenda
- Draft Meeting Notes – June 24, 2025
- Staff Presentation: Comprehensive Plan Periodic Update Development Regulations

1. Zoom Guidelines

The clerk dispensed with the Zoom Guidelines.

2. Call to Order

A. Determination of a Quorum

6 Commissioners were present; there was a quorum.

3. Approval of Agenda

The Chair entertained a motion to approve the agenda for July 8, 2025. Commissioner Russell made the motion to approve the agenda; seconded by Commissioner Alves. The motion carried unanimously.

4. Approval of Meeting Notes

The Chair entertained a motion to approve the meeting notes for June 24, 2025. Commissioner Alves made the motion to approve the agenda; seconded by Commissioner Russell. The motion carried unanimously.

5. Public Comment

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

6. Public Hearing - Comprehensive Plan Periodic Update – Development Regulations

Opening Remarks

Chair Corbin noted that oral testimony on the Comprehensive Plan Periodic Update Development Regulations will be taken until 9:00pm.

Chair Corbin asked if there was anyone in the audience who believed that the public was not notified in a timely manner. There were no responses.

Chair Corbin asked if any of the Commissioners had a disclosure to make. The Commissioners had no disclosures to make.

Staff Presentation and Questions

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

Commissioner Russell asked staff to clarify when the conversation about STRs began and how it has shifted over time. Mindy responded that there were community meetings/forums in 2022 about housing. After that, the Packwood Subarea Plan was formed, and conversation remained focused on Packwood and how STRs fit into that specific community.

Commissioner Fritsch asked about data relating to STRs. Mindy responded that the data we are using is from the Assessor's Office and Granicus. Mindy is working with the Department of Revenue to obtain more information on who has a business license to operate STRs. Commissioner Corbin asked if there has been communication with the Assessor's Office about their STR data. Mindy responded yes. Commissioner Corbin asked if staff believe there should be further studies conducted before making a recommendation to the Board of County Commissioners. Mindy responded that staff has obtained a lot of information and done enough research for the Planning Commission to make a recommendation. Mindy added that although people have voiced wanting an economic study, she does not believe there is enough similarity between regulations in different communities and those have not been in place long enough to see the full impacts that would influence market conditions.

Commissioner Corbin asked if it is permissible to apply different STR regulations to different areas of the county. Mindy responded yes, there can be different regulations applied to certain areas of the county without legal ramifications. For example, in Island County, each island has a different STR cap. However, the county will need to justify why the areas are being considered differently.

Commissioner Corbin brought up how the Assessor's office taxes STRs. Mindy responded that the Assessor is required to tax STRs based on it being a commercial Use. The Assessor contracts with Granicus to receive data about which properties are operating as STRs. If the STR regulations move

forward to require obtaining a permit from the county, the STRs can be evaluated on an annual basis. Corbin noted that the value of a property can be higher if it is available to be used as a business. Mindy noted that in East Lewis County property values have increased 300% across the board and it is very hard to determine what role STRs play in that increase.

Public Testimony

There was 1 member of the public who provided testimony on items not related to Short Term Rental regulations. Kyler Danielson provided testimony on the proposed resource land changes and that there are multiple words used for mining and not a consistent defined term.

There were 48 members of the public who provided testimony on Short Term Rental Regulations.

Topics included, but are not limited to, the following;

- Opposition to allowing only one STR on properties with two dwelling units
- Opposition to making decisions about STR regulations without more supporting data
- Opposition to the 25% capacity limit per neighborhood
- Concerns about the impacts on local economy and employment resulting from limiting the number of STRs
- Proposition to extend the 6 Month grace period if permits are required
- Concerns about the safety of the STR and the STR owner associated with requiring contact information to be posted on site
- Opposition to requiring garbage services
- Opposition to countywide STR regulations that treat each community the same
- Comments that STR owners are just as invested in the Packwood community as full-time residents
- Comments that STRs are not making lots of money. Many stated that the income of STRs is just enough to cover the costs of cleaning, maintenance, taxes, etc.
- Comments that STRs promote tourism
- Comments that STRs have improved the quality of neighborhoods and incentivized homeowners to improve properties
- Concerns that adding STR regulations won't fix affordable housing
- Concerns that STR regulations for Lewis County aren't appropriate just because other counties implement these regulations
- Comments that property owners who are still working aren't able to live in Packwood full time until retirement. The income from renting the home allows them to afford the home until they can live there full time.
- Comments that Short Term renters take better care of properties than Long Term renters
- Concerns that STR regulations are stripping away property rights

Commissioners had closing remarks that are summarized below:

- They are very appreciative of the community coming and providing testimony. And they assured the community that they take the testimony seriously, read it all and consider it when making their recommendation.
- They reminded everyone to please review all materials provided because, as evident by the testimony, there are many misunderstandings about what is being proposed. They also encourage the community to reach out to staff with questions.
- They reiterated that they want to make sure all legal STRs can remain in operation and be supported going forward. They appreciated the comments that help them understand the nuances of timing associated with a "grace period."
- Commissioner questions will be emailed to Mindy this week and will be responded to in the upcoming Staff Report. Commissioner Corbin requested that Mindy provide a response to the Futurewise testimony.

Continuation of Hearing

Chair Corbin entertained a motion to close oral testimony, keep the written testimony open until July 21 at 4:00pm, and continue the Public Hearing to July 22, 2025 for deliberations. The motion was moved by Commissioner Russell and seconded by Commissioner Alves. The motion passed unanimously.

The Planning Commissioners thanked everyone for providing testimony and made it known that it is valuable for the public to voice their opinions. Opinions do make a difference in deliberations. The Commissioners reiterated that they are a board of volunteers who care about their community. They do not wish to take away people's rights or do harm to others.

7. Good of the Order:

A. Staff

There were no items from staff for good of the order.

B. Planning Commissioners

There were no items from the Planning Commissioners for good of the order.

8. Calendar:

The next Planning Commission meeting will be on July 22, 2025, and the agenda item will be a continued public hearing on the Comprehensive Plan Periodic Update Development Regulations.

9. Adjourn

Commissioner Fritsch made a motion to adjourn. The meeting was adjourned at 10:18 pm.