

Lewis County Planning Commission

Public Meeting

In-Person & Virtual Meeting via Zoom

July 22, 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;

Materials Used:

- Agenda
- Draft Meeting Notes – July 8, 2025
- Written Testimony
- Staff Report: Development Regulations Potential Motions
- Staff Report: Short Term Rental Deliberations
- Memo to File – Response to Futurewise Testimony
- Staff Presentation

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 22, 2025. Commissioner Russell made the motion to approve the agenda; seconded by Commissioner Moore. The motion carried unanimously.

4. Approval of Meeting Notes

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

5. Public Comment

Jami Lund provided public comments on the Comprehensive Plan Periodic Update. Chair Corbin interrupted the public comment stating that oral testimony for the Comprehensive Plan Periodic Update has been closed.

6. Continued Public Hearing

A. Comprehensive Plan Periodic Update – Development Regulations

Urban Growth Area – Small Towns

Commissioner Russell moved to recommend the Board of County Commissioners approve the new Chapter 17.17, UGA – Small Towns, LCC, seconded by Commissioner Alves. The motion passed 6 to 0.

The Commissioners noted and appreciated the extensive work that has gone into the Packwood and Onalaska Subarea Plans.

Master Planned Resort

Commissioner Alves moved to recommend the Board of County Commissioners approve amendments to Chapter 17.20E, Master Planned Resort, LCC, seconded by Commissioner Skutley. The motion passed 5 to 1.

Commissioner Fritsch noted that she would feel better about moving this forward if all the landowners were aware of and in communication with the county that are subject to the Master Planned Resort in Packwood. Mindy responded that county staff have sent letters and will continue to reach out to the landowners as the process moves to the Board of County Commissioners. Commissioner Russell stated that he is in favor of the Master Planned Resort on the TransAlta property, but not the Packwood property. Commissioner Skutley noted that in the Department of Ecology's testimony, they suggested that the 40% open space requirement apply to land only – not water and land. Mindy responded that the Commissioners may choose to change that requirement, but it is not necessary. The Planning Commissioners did not choose to change the requirement at this time.

Energy Productions Facilities

Commissioner Russell moved to recommend the Board of County Commissioners approve the new Chapter 17.127, Energy Production and Storage Facilities, LCC with the following changes:

1. Remove the limitation on solar being placed on slopes greater than 7%.
2. Clarify that Figure 1 is not related to substations or transmission lines.
3. Exempt properties in the MID zone from screening and buffering standards

The motion was seconded by Commissioner Moore. The motion passed 6 to 0.

Commissioner Corbin asked staff for confirmation that energy production facilities will not be built on agricultural lands. Mindy confirmed that is correct, other than hydroelectric facilities, as they are allowed where water exists.

Commissioner Fritsch asked about encouraging energy production in East Lewis County. Mindy responded that there is currently no zone in East County that could accommodate the type of energy production discussed in LCC Chapter 17.127. However, this can be revised later if there is a property that would be suitable for this type of energy production.

Mining

Commissioner Alves moved to recommend the Board of County Commissioners approve amendments to Table 2, Chapter 17.42, Land Use Summary with the following changes:

1. Change "Mineral Extraction" to "Mining".
2. All Mining as a Permitted use in the Major Industrial District zone.

The motion was seconded by Commissioner Russell. The motion passed 6 to 0.

Land Use Table

Commissioner Moore moved to recommend the Board of County Commissioners approve amendments to Table 2, Chapter 17.42, Land Use Summary, LCC, except for the Mining changes as recommended under Topic 4, seconded by Commissioner Russell. The motion passed 6 to 0.

Urban Growth Areas – Cities

Commissioner Alves moved to recommend the Board of County Commissioners approve amendments to Chapter 17.15 UGA Cities with one change to strike the City of Napavine from subsection 17.15.040(2) and to change the zoning on the parcels in the unincorporated UGA to Rural Development District, RDD-5, seconded by Commissioner Russell. The motion passed 6 to 0.

All Other Development Regulations

Commissioner Skutley moved to recommend the Board of County Commissioners approve amendments to the development regulations listed under Topic 7 in the July 17 staff report and as shown on the screen*, seconded by Commissioner Fritsch. The motion passed 6 to 0.

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Chapter 2.25.010 Definitions	Chapter 17.110.090 SEPA
Chapter 8.41 On Site Sewage Systems	Chapter 17.142.020 Lighting Standards
Chapter 15.15.040 Setbacks	Chapter 17.142.080 LAMIRD Commercial Building Size
Chapter 15.50.035 Wireless Communications Facility	Chapter 17.142.100 Clustered Tourist Uses
Chapter 16 Subdivisions	Chapter 17.142.105 Data Processing Center
Chapter 17.05.060 Contents of Application	Chapter 17.142.107 Detached Bedrooms
Chapter 17.10 Definitions	Chapter 17.142.160 Multifamily Housing
Chapter 17.12.110 Approval Criteria	Chapter 17.142.207 Sign Standards
Chapter 17.30 Resource Lands	Chapter 17.142.210 Surface Mining
	Chapter 17x Other Minor Changes

Short Term Rentals

Mindy Brooks, Director of Lewis County Community Development, gave a presentation on the Lewis County Comprehensive Plan Periodic Update – Short Term Rentals. *See presentation for details.* The presentation went through the following big topics related to short term rentals and the commissioners discussed each one. A summary is provided for each.

25% Cap

Opinions on implementing a cap for short-term rentals (STRs) vary among the Planning Commissioners. Alves supports having a percentage-based cap but questions if 25% is appropriate, emphasizing the need to balance business growth and suggesting a 6-month to 1-year grace period. Russell supports a 25% cap, adjustable as needed, and believes it should apply countywide. Skutley opposes any cap, favoring market control and allowing rentals for more than 180 days. Fritsch supports caps due to the conversion of full-time residences into STRs but questions applying the same limit countywide, citing Packwood's limited capacity. Moore is open to a cap but wants clarity on the reasoning and suggests at least a one-year grace period. Corbin does not support approving a cap at this time. Mindy provided an opinion that making a decision on a 25% cap may be premature because Lewis County does not have empirical data from which to determine where to set the cap. She suggested requiring a permit, without caps, would allow the County to gather data that can be used in the future to set a cap if warranted.

Ownership Limits

The discussion on ownership limits for short-term rentals (STRs) revealed mixed opinions. Fritsch supports ownership limits to prevent entire neighborhoods from being bought up, citing Chelan's 6% cap as an example. Skutley opposes any restrictions that could limit the success of STR owners. Russell believes that if percentage caps aren't used, ownership limits should be implemented. Alves favors a cap over ownership limits, noting the difficulty in monitoring ownership. Moore agrees on the need for some regulation but doubts the effectiveness and enforceability of ownership limits, emphasizing that many STR owners are motivated by long-term family goals rather than profit. Corbin sees Packwood as the main concern but opposes ownership limits without strong community support. Mindy provided an opinion similar to the discussion on 25% caps, that may be premature without local data.

Health & Safety

The Planning Commissioners all agreed that Short-term rentals (STRs) should be required to operate only within legal, permitted structures to ensure the safety of guests, protect neighborhood standards, and maintain compliance with local building and health codes. The Commissioners requested that “legal structure” is defined. The Commissioners agreed that there should be an occupancy limit based on the septic system capacity.

Unique Stays

Unique Stays—such as yurts, treehouses, or converted buses—offer distinctive experiences that attract visitors and support local tourism, and they should be allowed as short-term rentals (STRs) under thoughtful guidelines. While these types of accommodations may not meet traditional building code requirements, they can still operate safely and responsibly with alternative standards tailored to their structure and use. The Commissioners agree that basic health, safety, and environmental requirements should still be upheld to ensure a safe and positive guest experience.

Good Neighbor

The Planning Commissioners agreed that solid waste management is important for short-term rentals (STRs), with support for regular pickup, secure enclosures, or other measures to prevent animal interference. On parking, there is support for keeping vehicles off the road and neighbors' property, though Moore notes parking minimums can be burdensome. Opinions on local contact information vary: Fritsch believes having a contact number is crucial, even if the person isn't local. Alves and Skutley oppose visible contact info on the property, with Alves suggesting a central group or association contact instead.

Permit Transfer

The Planning Commissioners agreed that short-term rental (STR) licenses should be transferrable, as they provide stability and long-term value for property owners, making it easier to sell or pass on a property without losing the ability to operate it as an STR. Transferrable licenses offer predictability for buyers and investors, supporting economic growth while still allowing the county to enforce safety, zoning, and operational standards.

Definition of STR

Mindy explained that the intention of the definition was to keep people who live in their structure for at least 6 months per year out of the required cap. However, if no cap is set, this portion of the definition is not necessary. Removing the 180-day portion of the definition does not exempt someone from meeting all other short term rental standards.

Chair Corbin's Proposal

Commissioner Corbin outlined his proposal that was provided to staff and the Planning Commission prior to today's meeting.

After the outline, Mindy asked for a straw poll on the following topics: no cap or ownership limits, requiring a permit of some kind to track data, include definition of legal structure, require approved water & septic, require onsite parking, require solid waste removal, annual renewal required, permit should be transferrable, some sort of steering committee or association should be established. The Commissioners generally agreed with all these items. Commissioner Moore asked that Mindy also develop a draft fee for the STR permit. Mindy will develop a revised code to be reviewed and voted on at the next meeting.

Commissioner Alves moved to continue the public hearing until August 12 at 6:00pm, in the Community Development Hearing Room, to deliberate and take a vote on the short term rental proposal, seconded by Russell. The motion passed 6 to 0.

7. Good of the Order:

A. Staff

After August 12th the Planning Commission will take a short break and resume meetings on October 14th to hold a workshop on the Critical Areas Ordinance.

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 August 12, 2025, and the agenda item will be a continued hearing on the Comprehensive Plan Periodic Update, Short Term Rentals.

9. Adjourn

Commissioner Moore made a motion to adjourn. The meeting was adjourned at 8:47 pm.