

# **Lewis County Planning Commission**

## **Public Meeting**

In-Person & Virtual Meeting via Zoom

**October 14, 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; Natalie Kamieniecki, Long Range Planner; Megan Sathre, Administrative Assistant;

### **Materials Used:**

- Agenda
- Draft Meeting Notes – August 12, 2025
- Staff Report: Critical Areas Ordinance
- Draft Critical Areas Ordinance

### **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 October 14, 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 August 12, 2025. Commissioner Moore made the motion to approve the meeting notes; seconded by Commissioner Russell. The motion carried unanimously.

## 5. Public Comment

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

## 6. Workshop

### A. Critical Areas Ordinance

Natalie Kamieniecki, Long Range Planner for Lewis County Community Development, gave a presentation on the Critical Areas Ordinance. *See presentation for details.*

Commissioner Russell expressed concerns about the requirement to post signage identifying wetlands, noting his opposition to the provision. Natalie clarified that the requirement applies specifically to short plats. Mindy explained that similar requirements are standard in other agencies and jurisdictions and emphasized that wetland buffers must remain undisturbed. When asked by Alves if the signage could be temporary, Mindy confirmed it could not and suggested that an alternative approach would be to place these features within a separate tract managed by a homeowner's association. Alves inquired about the signage specifications, and Mindy referenced LCC 17.38.270, which allows screening, fencing, or other appropriate delineation methods. Russell added that through the short plat process, the property is usually sold, sometimes multiple times so the owners may choose to ignore the signage regardless.

Mindy noted that there will be provisions in the code that both staff and commissioners may disagree with but are required by the Growth Management Act and Best Available Science, and it is important to focus on which issues warrant further challenge or could withstand an appeal. Throughout the Critical Areas Ordinance update, the county's goal is only to add things that are necessary to conform to State requirements, nothing more.

Commissioner Skutley asked how the code is enforced. Mindy responded that Lewis County code enforcement is complaint based. If a neighbor makes a complaint, staff will start an investigation.

Commissioner Russell expressed concern about danger trees provision. Russell asked if the 14-day timeline about danger trees was new. Mindy responded yes, that Public Works made the request for this. Russell noted that homeowners also have to deal with hazard trees but should not be permitted to do so in Critical Areas. Mindy responded that in LCC 17.38.060 it defines danger trees and if someone is cutting down trees that don't meet this definition it will become a code violation. However, if a tree does meet the definition of hazardous and it needs immediate action, a homeowner can take action and then do the paperwork afterwards to ensure their property is safe and then meet the county's regulations for permitting tree removal.

Commissioner Corbin asked who follows up on the mitigation and monitoring requirements outlined in LCC 17.38.080 and 17.38.090. Mindy responded that mitigation and monitoring plans are already required to be submitted to the county by the property owner on a prescribed basis. The change to the code is that Public Works is seeking more flexibility with smaller projects. Skutley followed up asking when the state gets involved in the mitigation and monitoring. Mindy

responded that it is a case by case basis.

Commissioner Corbin asked about the added provision for home based businesses in the wetlands. Mindy clarified that initially, a property owner who starts a home based business is automatically placed in a higher impact level. However, the county argued that home based businesses should be considered the same as residential use because the business is within the home.

Commissioner Russell expressed concern about the changes to LCC 17.38.270 (2). Russell asked where this information came from. Mindy responded that she would look into it and get back to him.

Commissioner Fritsch asked who the code is referring to when it states "Administrator" and "Director." Mindy responded that "Administrator" is the Lewis County Community Development Director or their designee, such as the Hearing Examiner. "Director" is the Lewis County Community Development Director, which is currently Mindy Brooks.

Commissioner Russell expressed concern about current commercial development as well as farmers in the VSP program that have Type F streams that are argued as "ditches." Russell asked if this code applies to pre-existing streams. Mindy responded that the code does not specify that it is pre-existing. Russell would like the code to be clearer so that pre-existing Type F streams cannot be disqualified because the Port has purchased the property. Mindy responded that she would take this back to the consultant for further research and reflection.

The Planning Commission will hold a Public Hearing for the Critical Area Ordinance. This would normally take place on Tuesday, November 11<sup>th</sup>, but due to this being a holiday, the Commission needs to choose another day to maintain the necessary timelines. The Planning Commission decided the hearing will take place Monday, November 10<sup>th</sup> at 6:00pm.

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

### **A. Staff**

Mindy Brooks shared that the BOCC approved Comp Plan Development Regulation and went into effect on October 1<sup>st</sup> except for STRs and signage. There was no testimony on Short Term Rentals at the BOCC hearing, which means that the Planning Commission's recommendation adequately addressed the public's concerns. The Short Term Rental policies will go into affect January 1<sup>st</sup>.

County staff are working on creating a new "advisory groups" code that will apply to Planning Commission, as well as the future Short Term Rental advisory committee.

The City of Chehalis and the County will be holding a joint hearing on annexing the majority of the Chehalis UGA.

The City of Centralia enacted a moratorium on distribution warehouses in Urban Growth Area.

## **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 October 28, 2025 and the agenda item will be a workshop on the Critical Areas Ordinance.

### **9. Adjourn**

Commissioner Alves made a motion to adjourn. The meeting was adjourned at 7:31 pm.