

## Gearhart Planning Commission Minutes for January 8, 2026

MEMBERS: Virginia Dideum, Russ Taggard, Don Frank, Eric Halperin, Emerson Fisher, John Mesberg, and Jennifer Grey

STAFF: Chad Sweet, Garrett Phillips, and Angoleana Torres

### Minutes

The regular meeting of the Gearhart Planning Commission for Thursday, January 8, 2026, was called to order at 6:00 p.m. by President Virginia Dideum. *All Members and staff were present except Chad Sweet.*

### ELECTIONS

On **MOTION** by Grey, 2<sup>nd</sup> by Taggard, Dideum was nominated as Planning Commission President.

6 - Approved (Frank, Taggard, Grey, Halperin, Mesberg, Fisher)

1 - abstained (Dideum)

0 – Opposed

On **MOTION** by Taggard, 2<sup>nd</sup> by Halperin, Frank was nominated as Planning Commission Vice President.

6 - Approved (Dideum, Taggard, Grey, Halperin, Mesberg, Fisher)

1 - abstained (Frank)

0 – Opposed

### CONSENT AGENDA

On MOTION by Taggard, 2<sup>nd</sup> by Fisher, the consent agenda was approved as presented with corrections to the minutes. Said agenda approved Minutes for December 11, 2025, financial report for December 30, 2025.

7 - Approved (Dideum, Frank, Taggard, Mesberg, Grey, Halperin, Fisher)

0 – Opposed

### STAFF REPORT

Phillips reported that there has been a recent lull in land use applications, both those routed directly to him and those reviewed by the planning commission. He advised that staff is currently initiating work on identifying one or two potential sites that will be the focus of a DLCD-funded housing planning project.

Phillips explained that this project will be a collaborative effort involving the other cities within Clatsop County staff, and a consultant, 3J Consulting. The goal of the project is to develop housing development concepts for the selected sites. He noted that this effort is expected to unfold over the coming year.

Phillips indicated that staff is in the early stages of site identification and anticipates returning to the planning commission in the coming months with additional information as the project progresses.

He concluded by offering support to the commission, noting that staff is available to provide assistance, training, or resources related to Oregon land use planning if requested. While acknowledging the fast pace of ongoing application review and customer service demands, Phillips emphasized that staff remains available to support the commission as needed.

Dideum asked whether the presentation discussed at the previous meeting, anticipated for either the current month or the following month, was still expected to move forward.

Phillips responded that staff was unable to provide the presentation at the current meeting but stated he is confident it will occur at the February meeting. He further noted that if the DLCD representative is unavailable at that time, he could begin with an introductory presentation on Goal 18. Phillips explained that this approach would help provide context and make the DLCD representative's presentation more informative should it occur at a later meeting, potentially in March.

COMMISSIONERS REPORT – None

VISITORS COMMENTS – None

PUBLIC HEARINGS - None

UNFINISHED BUSINESS - None

NEW BUSINESS - None

INFORMATION / DISCUSSION - None

CONCERNS OF THE COMMISSION

There was discussion about the current planning commission meeting time and whether it best balances commissioner availability with public accessibility. The concern about the possibility of moving meetings to an earlier time was raised, with suggestions ranging from mid-afternoon to early evening. Commissioners acknowledged that while earlier meetings might be more convenient for some, they could limit participation by working members of the public. There was general agreement that public access is a critical consideration and that any change in the meeting time may require additional procedural steps or even require coordination with the city council. Phillips conveyed he would investigate it more. It was suggested that this topic could be explored further in a work session.

There was discussion about interpreting zoning code provisions and that the original legislative intent is unclear. Specific examples included floor area limits for cafés, distinctions among commercial uses that serve food, and percentage limitations on food sales. Commissioners noted that without a clear record of intent, some standards may appear arbitrary or be difficult to apply consistently, particularly in the context of remodels or changes in use.

Phillips responded by noting that some jurisdictions maintain annotated zoning ordinances that reference legislative history, similar to state statutes, but explained that recreating a complete historical record would likely require substantial effort and still remain incomplete. He suggested that a more feasible approach may be to begin documenting intent and annotations prospectively as future code amendments are adopted. Phillips expressed openness to the concept and indicated he would discuss it further with Chad.

The discussion concluded with recognition that both meeting logistics and code interpretation issues merit further consideration and follow-up.

QUESTIONS FOR LAND USE ATTORNEY - None

The meeting was adjourned at 6:23 p.m.

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Angoleana R. Torres, Planning Assistant

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Virginia Dideum, Commission President

