



CITY AND BOROUGH OF SITKA

Minutes - Draft

Planning Commission

Wednesday, September 3, 2025

7:00 PM

Harrigan Centennial Hall

I. CALL TO ORDER AND ROLL CALL

Present: Darrell Windsor (Chair), Katie Riley, Wendy Alderson, Robin Sherman, Thor Christianson (Assembly Liaison)

Public: Tess Heyburn, Chris McGraw, Erin Kitka, Casey Finn, Larry Edwards, Darryl Rehkoph, Bernadette Rasmussen, Jack Navitsky, Kelli Leonard, Tom Jacobsen, Maegan Bosak, Greg McIntyre, Cathy Li (Sitka Sentinel)

Staff: Amy Ainslie, Kim Davis, Ariadne Will

Chair Windsor called the meeting to order at 7:00 p.m.

II. CONSIDERATION OF THE AGENDA

III. CONSIDERATION OF THE MINUTES

A [PM 25-15](#) Approve the August 20, 2025 meeting minutes.

Commissioner Sherman requested staff check the spelling of an applicant's name in the meeting minutes. Staff found the name was spelled correctly.

M/Riley-S/Sherman moved to approve the August 20, 2025 meeting minutes.

Motion passed 4-0 by voice vote.

IV. PERSONS TO BE HEARD

Tess Heyburn spoke under persons to be heard and said she would be impacted by the development of a bus depot on Oja Way. She said developer Chris McGraw had "made clear" his plans to construct the depot.

V. PLANNING DIRECTOR'S REPORT

Ainslie said that it was likely the Sept. 17 meeting was to be canceled given its light agenda. She said she was hoping to bring information regarding restaurant and eating place licenses to the commission the first week of October, as directed by the Assembly. Ainslie also said that staff was going to speak to uses within the CBD - central business district later during the meeting but would not be discussing any specific projects.

VI. REPORTS

VII. THE EVENING BUSINESS

B [P 25- 07](#)

Public hearing and consideration of Alaska Tidelands Survey 1728. The property is also known as submerged tidelands adjacent to Lot A, Marine Subdivision. The applicant is Halibut Point Marine Services, LLC. The owner of record is State of Alaska.

Davis reviewed Alaska Tideland Survey 1728, which defined the lease boundary area for state tidelands adjacent to 4513 Halibut Point Road. Davis explained that the Alaska Department of Natural Resources required approval of the survey by the local platting authority. Davis said the replatting was largely retroactive. The property contained the expansion of the Sitka Sound Cruise Terminal that was completed in 2021. The lease boundary area consisted of 6.18 acres.

In response to a question from the commission, staff clarified that the survey was technically a platting action, as it assigned a new legal description, but the action was largely considered administrative.

Applicant Chris McGraw said that the lease area encompassed what already existed and that no new development was being planned.

No public comment was received and no commission deliberation occurred.

M/Sherman-S/Riley moved to approve Alaska Tideland Survey 1728 in the C-2 general commercial mobile home district. The property was also known as submerged tidelands adjacent to Lot A, Marine Subdivision. The request was filed by Halibut Point Marine Services, LLC. The owner of record was State of Alaska. Motion passed 4-0 by voice vote.

C [P 25- 08](#)

Public hearing and consideration of a minor subdivision at 286 Tongass Drive. The property is also known as a portion of Lot 15, U.S. Survey 1496. The applicant is Southeast Alaska Regional Health Consortium (SEARHC). The property is owned by State of Alaska Department of Natural Resources (DNR).

Davis introduced a request to subdivide a portion of Lot 15, U.S. Survey 1496, located at 286 Tongass Drive. The subdivision action was to correct a survey that was not approved by the CBS platting authority and therefore invalid. The property in question was quitclaimed by the Department of Education and Early Development to the Department of Natural Resources with the intent to be conveyed to SEARHC. The deed required the property be used for public purposes. Davis said that the city would retain access to a communications tower located off of Taku Court, an undeveloped right-of-way northeast of the property.

SEARHC intended to demolish the existing structure on the property--Penrod Hall--but did not provide information regarding further plans.

Applicant Erin Kitka, speaking on behalf of SEARHC, said the health consortium had plans to clean up the property but that he was unaware of anything further.

No public comment was received.

During deliberation, the commission asked after the deed restriction that the land be used for public uses. Staff clarified that the requirement for public uses was to be interpreted by the state, but that the property was also within an area zoned public. Staff said that further subdivision of either 286 Tongass Drive or the remaining portion of

the lot could occur in the future.

M/Alderson-S/Sherman moved to approve the preliminary plat for a minor subdivision at 286 Tongass Drive in the P public lands district. The property was also known as a Portion of Lot 15, U.S. Survey No. 1496. The request was filed by Southeast Alaska Regional Health Consortium (SEARHC). The owner of record was the State of Alaska Department of Natural Resources (DNR). Motion passed 4-0 by voice vote.

M/Alderson-S/Sherman moved to adopt the findings as listed in the staff report. Motion passed 4-0 by voice vote.

D [VAR 25-06](#)

Public hearing and consideration of a request for a platting variance to reduce the minimum lot size and width requirements at 2011 Sawmill Creek Road in the R-1 LDMH single-family or duplex low density or single-family low density manufactured home district. The request is filled by Casey Finn. The owner of record is Finn's Excavation LLC.

Ainslie proposed a platting variance to allow for a three-lot subdivision at 2011 Sawmill Creek Road in the R-1 LDMH zone. A conceptual plat was brought to the commission at a previous meeting. Ainslie explained that the applicant wished to create a three-lot subdivision from the 42,680 square-foot property. The property was 2,420 square feet shy of a three-lot subdivision being permitted outright and was encumbered by drainage easements, as well as steep topography at the back quarter of the property. Ainslie said the applicant and staff had considered rezoning the property to R-1 allow for more lots by right, but due to the developmental challenges posed by the property's easements and topography, this was not desirable and could have resulted in additional variance requests. The platting variance also requested the minimum lot width be reduced from 80 to 70 feet.

Commissioner Alderson said she was concerned about drainage and asked staff if a drainage plan was to be submitted. Ainslie said that a drainage plan was to be pursued between the submission of the preliminary and final plats for review by the commission.

Applicant Casey Finn had nothing to add and no public comment was received.

Commissioner Sherman said she agreed with the premise of the request but not the mechanism, and said she wanted instead to change code to allow the request as a conditional use, and not as a variance. Commissioner Riley suggested she and Commissioner Sherman form a subcommittee to draft language for discussion and possible amendment to the Sitka General Code. Commissioner Riley said she believed the platting variance request was in line with the purview of the Planning Commission as charged by the Assembly, and that she saw the request as an instance in which staff was using the tools available in the best way possible to enable development.

M/Alderson-S/Riley moved to approve the platting variance reducing minimum lot size from 15,000 square feet to no less than 10,000 square feet and reducing the minimum lot width from 80 feet to 70 feet to enable a subdivision resulting in three lots at 2011 Sawmill Creek Road in the R-1 LDMH single-family, duplex, low-density, or single-family, low-density, and manufactured home district subject to the attached conditions of approval. The property was also known as Lot 1-B, Hansen-Ness Subdivision. The request was filed by Casey Finn. The owner of record was Finn Excavation, LLC. Motion passed 3-1 by voice vote with Commissioner Sherman opposed.

M/Alderson-S/Riley moved to adopt the findings required for platting variances

as listed in the staff report. Motion passed 3-1 by voice vote with Commissioner Sherman opposed.

E [MISC 25-14](#)

Permitted Uses Within the CBD - Central Business District.

Ainslie presented information regarding permitted uses in the CBD - central business district to the commission. She said the zone contained lots of legal nonconforming uses, or uses that were grandfathered in, and that while some residential uses were allowed, single-family homes and duplexes were not. She said the primary purpose of the zone was commercial, and showed where in the zoning code the use table could be found. She said that staff used the zoning table to review uses and to interpret whether any sort of proposed development was to be allowed.

In questions to staff, the commission asked specifically about how bus depots might be defined as a use. Ainslie said that she was not comfortable interpreting a potential use without first receiving and reviewing plans. She said that to define a use, the planning staff could create an interpretation to be then handed to the commission, but also that an ordinance could be used to establish a new definition. In response to a question regarding adjacent uses, Ainslie said that adjacent uses were considered when a use on a property was conditional, but that when a use was permitted by right, adjacent uses were not considered, as it was a property right.

Chair Windsor opened the floor to public comment but none was received.

No motion made.

VIII. ADJOURNMENT

Chair Windsor adjourned the meeting at 8:21 p.m.