



CITY AND BOROUGH OF SITKA

Minutes - Final

Planning Commission

Wednesday, April 1, 2026

7:00 PM

Harrigan Centennial Hall

I. CALL TO ORDER AND ROLL CALL

Present: Darrell Windsor (Chair), Robin Sherman (Vice Chair), Wendy Alderson, Margaret Frank, Jacquie Foss, Katie Riley (Assembly Liaison)
Staff: Amy Ainslie, Kim Davis, Ariadne Will
Public: Larry Edwards, Ben Lawrie, Alicia Gassman, Maggie Malicoat, Kai Malicoat, Tonya Griffith, John Dunlap

Chair Windsor called the meeting to order at 7:01 p.m.

II. CONSIDERATION OF THE AGENDA

III. CONSIDERATION OF THE MINUTES

A [PM 26-05](#) Approve the March 18, 2026 meeting minutes.

**M-Alderson/S-Sherman moved to approve the March 18, 2026 meeting minutes.
Motion passed 5-0 by voice vote.**

IV. PERSONS TO BE HEARD

V. PLANNING DIRECTOR'S REPORT

Ainslie said in her report that she had attended the Northwest Managers Conference the past two days and had hosted a panel titled "Blowing Up Your Zoning Code to Encourage More Housing." She shared a few insights from the conference with the commission.

VI. REPORTS

B [MISC 26-04](#) 2025 Annual Short-Term Rental Report

Will presented the commission with the 2025 Annual Short-Term Rental Report. She said there were 64 total permits in 2025, that the commission issued eight, and that seven deactivated or became inactive. She said 54 permits were active as of January 2026. She said four permits had not reported remitting bed tax and that sales tax had been contacted. She said the total implied revenue from a CUP for a short-term rental had risen slightly but that nights rented had slightly decreased and provided information on marketing data, enplanement, and use data. The use data section included information regarding alternative uses of short-term rentals and visitor characteristics. Will said that since the 2022 short-term rental code change, more respondents have

reported living on the property with the short-term rental unit and fewer have reported using professional services to manage short-term rentals. At the request of the commission, staff had added two new questions: one question asked permit holders to rank the kinds of visitors hosted from most to least; another question asked permit holders to select the average duration of short-term rental stays.

The commission said during discussion it appeared a market solution was needed given the popularity of short-term rentals among vacation and leisure travelers. The commission commented on the complexity of independent travelers, which are often perceived as better for Sitka's economy, and mentioned possible incentives to leverage short-term rentals as a way to create more long-term rentals. Following a commission question regarding the managers conference, Ainslie said many communities (including Sitka) had added a requirement that a short-term rental be rented only when it was a permit holder's primary residence. She said a court case was soon to be heard by the Ninth Circuit that challenged this requirement. Vice Chair Sherman asked if the city could join an amicus brief and Ainslie said she would speak with the municipal attorney.

VII. THE EVENING BUSINESS

- C [VAR 26-01](#) Public hearing and consideration of a request for a minor variance to reduce the side setback from fifteen feet to one foot for placement of a shed at 339 Wortman Loop in the R-1 LD single-family and duplex residential low density district. The property is also known as Lot Nineteen-B (19-B), Buckland Subdivision. The request is filed by Cara Lawrie. The owner of record is Cara Lawrie.

Davis introduced a request for a variance to decrease a side setback from 15 feet to one foot at 339 Wortman Loop. The applicant was looking to construct a ten-foot-tall, three-sided, unpowered woodshed. Davis said the development of the lot and topography limited locations where the structure was feasible.

Ben Lawrie, who spoke on behalf of the applicant, said in response to a commission question that no foundation would be poured for the structure, which was to be entirely on his property.

During public comment, neighbor Tonya Griffith said the applicant had been doing a lot of development on the lot without proper permitting and said the applicant was encroaching onto neighboring properties. She said she and the applicant were in litigation over construction over their shared property line.

Following public comment, Lawrie said there was no known pending litigation and said a previous encroachment dispute was resolved in 2023. He said that he removed some gravel that had crossed the property line with permission from Griffith.

The commission asked staff during deliberation about any pending litigation and development without proper permits. Staff said the legal department had found no open litigation or court orders that would prohibit the issuance of the variance. Staff also said it had found record of a variance to allow for the construction of what the commenter had described as improperly permitted in a written comment. Staff explained the shed would not require a building permit.

M-Alderson/S-Foss moved to approve the zoning variance for a reduction to the side setback from fifteen to one foot in the R-1 LD single-family and duplex

residential low-density district subject to the attached conditions of approval. The property was also known as Lot Nineteen-B (19-B), Buckland Subdivision. The request was filed by Cara Lawrie. The owner of record was Cara Lawrie. Motion passed 5-0 by voice vote.

M-Alderson/S-Frank moved to adopt and approve the required findings for variances involving minor structures or expansions as listed in the staff report. Motion passed 5-0 by voice vote.

D CUP 26-04

Public hearing and consideration of a conditional use permit for a food truck at 328 Lincoln Street in the CBD central business district. The property is also known as Lot One (1), Columbia Bar Subdivision. The request is filed by Greg Haag. The owner of record is Drew Wilson.

The applicant was not present and the item was not heard.

M-Sherman/S-Foss moved to postpone public hearing and consideration of a conditional use permit for a food truck at 328 Lincoln Street under case file CUP 26-04 to the next Planning Commission meeting. Motion passed 5-0 by voice vote.

E [CUP 26-06](#)

Public hearing and consideration of a request for a conditional use permit for a short-term rental at 719 B Lake Street in the R-1 single-family and duplex residential district. The property is also known as Lot Fifteen-A (15-A), Resubdivision of Lots 14 & 15, Block 11, Sirstad Addition 2. The request is filed by Alicia Gassman. The owners of record are Alicia and Edward Gassman.

Davis reviewed a request from the owners of 719 Lake Street to use their two-bed, one-bath B unit as a short-term rental. She said renters were to be instructed on proper trash handling and that staff recommended the applicant remove reference to on-street parking in the renter handout. Ainslie disclosed that she was an abutter and had worked on the request to the least extent possible.

Applicant Alicia Gassman said she would tell guests not to park on the street. The commission requested she update garbage handling instructions, which she agreed to do.

No public comment was received and the commission did not deliberate.

M-Foss/S-Sherman moved to approve the conditional use permit for a short-term rental at 719 B Lake Street in the R-1 single-family and duplex residential district subject to the attached conditions of approval. The property was also known as Lot Fifteen-A (15-A), Resubdivision of Lots Fourteen (14) and Fifteen (15), Block Eleven (11), Sirstad Addition Two (2). The request was filed by Alicia Gassman. The owners of record were Alicia and Edward Gassman. Motion passed 5-0 by voice vote.

M-Foss/S-Sherman moved to adopt and approve the required findings for conditional use permits as listed in the staff report. Motion passed 5-0 by voice vote.

F [CUP 26-05](#)

Public hearing and consideration of a request for a conditional use permit for short-term rental of an accessory dwelling unit at 2406 Halibut Point Road in the R-1 MH single-family, duplex and manufactured home district. The

property is also known as Lot C-Seven (C-7), Kuhnle Subdivision. The request is filed by Maggie and Kai Malicoat. The owner of record is Maggie Dunlap.

Ainslie provided review of a request for short-term rental of an accessory dwelling unit at 2406 Halibut Point Road. Vice Chair Sherman was a neighbor and had provided written public comment, and recused herself from discussion of the item. Ainslie said she would first provide code guidance and then provide the proposed rental information if the commission desired. The ADU had received approval from the commission on April 19, 2023 under case filed CUP 23-10 and VAR 23-03. The applicants were now applying to waive the requirement that the unit be used as a long-term rental.

Ainslie said that the ADU code (SGC 22.20.160 (C)) stated ADUs were not to be rented for fewer than 90 days at a time, and the short-term rental code (SGC 22.25.010 (C)(1)(f)) did not identify ADUs as units eligible for short-term rentals. She said that even given the provision regarding the waiving of ADU requirements in SGC 22.20.160 (D), she felt the intent of the code was clear and that as staff she could not recommend approval. She noted also that a past case (CUP 23-14) had sought to waive the STR requirement but was denied that waiver. Another request (CUP 24-09) sought to rent out a property's main house short-term while the property owners lived in the ADU. That request was approved. Ainslie said the commission could make an interpretation that would allow for the short-term rental of the ADU if it desired.

During deliberation, Alderson said that she remembered telling the applicants in 2023 that she would not vote in favor of any future request for rent the ADU short-term. Foss said she felt the intent of the code was clear but that she would support a code change allowing the request to move forward with a sunset date. She said this could allow for applicants to recoup construction costs while also ensuring the unit will provide some sort of long-term rental in the future.

Applicants Maggie and Kai Malicoat told the commission they were aiming to request a middle ground so that they could have an easier time keeping up with their living costs. They said they were open to putting a sunset date on the permit but had not requested it initially since they did not know how they would need. They said they believed there were likely others in the same situation and stressed the financial difficulties of living in Sitka as a young family. They said if issued, they would begin renting the ADU short-term in July and August of this year. They said they were planning to rent the ADU short-term only three months of the year and would provide long-term housing the other nine months.

John Dunlap spoke during public comment. He said he understood the general intent of the ADU code to be to benefit both the property owner and the broader community and said the whole community has watched young people struggle with the financial and supply challenges of housing in Sitka. A written comment in support of the proposal with conditions was received from Robin Sherman and Rob Allen and was included in packet materials.

Assembly Liaison Riley mentioned ADU code changes she was working on and hoped to bring to the Assembly. The commission requested further discussion of Riley's proposed code changes at its next meeting.

M-Foss/S-Alderson moved to postpone the conditional use permit for a short-term rental at 2406 Halibut Point Road in the R-1 MH single-family,

duplex, and manufactured home district indefinitely. Motion passed 4-0 by voice vote.

VIII. ADJOURNMENT

Chair Windsor adjourned the meeting at 8:29 p.m.