



CITY AND BOROUGH OF SITKA

Minutes - Final

Planning Commission

Wednesday, January 21, 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 (via Zoom), Katie Riley (Assembly Liaison)
Staff: Amy Ainslie, Kim Davis, Ariadne Will
Public: Jack Navitsky, Kelly Leonard, Suzan Brawnlyn, Tess Heyburn, Kristina Cranston, Roy Anderson, Ronda Anderson, Bernadette Rasmussen, Darryl Rehkopf, Justin Peeler, Sherri Blankenship, Gail Johansen Peterson, Larry Edwards, Phil Burdick, Pat Swedeen, Shannon Haugland (Sitka Sentinel)

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

II. ELECTION OF OFFICERS

Commissioners nominated Darrell Windsor for Chair and Robin Sherman for Vice Chair.

M/Alderson-S/Sherman moved to elect Darrell Windsor as chair. Motion passed 5-0 by voice vote.

M/Alderson-S/Frank moved to elect Robin Sherman as Vice Chair. Motion passed 5-0 by voice vote.

III. CONSIDERATION OF THE AGENDA

IV. CONSIDERATION OF THE MINUTES

A [PM 26-01](#) Approve the December 17, 2025 meeting minutes.

M/Alderson-S/Sherman moved to approve the December 17, 2025 meeting minutes. Motion passed 5-0 by voice vote.

V. PERSONS TO BE HEARD

VI. PLANNING DIRECTOR'S REPORT

Ainslie said staff was to work on code change related to telecommunications towers in the new year. She said also that staff was continuing to work on the land study and was to soon begin work on the 2025 Short-Term Rental Report.

VII. REPORTS

Assembly Liaison Riley said a discussion and direction item was scheduled for hearing by the Assembly the following Tuesday regarding a possible code amendment that would change how the city was able to dispose of land. Riley said the aim was to allow for the disposal of land for housing needs to take place more easily. She requested input from the commission and said that, if the Assembly liked the idea and an ordinance was drafted, the draft would appear before the Planning Commission for consideration.

VIII. THE EVENING BUSINESS

B [CUP 25-17](#)

Public hearing and consideration of a request for a conditional use permit for a public transportation facility at 408 and 410 Oja Way in the CBD central business district. The properties are also known as Tract E, U.S. Survey 404 and the northern portion of Lot Four (4), Block Ten (10), U.S. Survey 1474. The owners of record are the Orthodox Church of America and Matt Lawrie. The request id filed by Chris McGraw (Sitka Dock Company).

Chair Windsor recused himself from the review and adoption of the findings, as he had been absent during the consideration of the request on December 17, 2025. Acting Chair Sherman presided.

Ainslie provided an overview of findings staff had drafted pertaining to the Planning Commission's denial of CUP 25-17 for a public transportation facility (related to bus shuttling operations) in December. Staff read aloud the draft findings, which the commission did not amend prior to voting.

Acting Chair Sherman did not hear public comment on the item. The commission said it did not feel the findings left anything out.

Chair Windsor reassumed the position of Chair following the vote to adopt the findings for CUP 25-17.

M/Alderson-S/Foss moved to adopt the findings as submitted in the January 21, 2026 meeting packet and affirmed that the date of adoption for these findings constituted the date of the Planning Commission's final decision on CUP 25-17. Motion passed 4-0 by voice vote.

C [CUP 26-02](#)

Public hearing and consideration of a conditional use permit for a marijuana retail facility at 327 Seward Street in the CBD central business district. The property is also known as Lot Two-B (2-B), Block Two (2), Swan Creek Subdivision. The request is filed by Michelle Jones. The owner of record is the Edward and Joyce Martin Joint Living Trust.

Davis and Ainslie presented a conditional use permit request for a marijuana retail facility at 327 Seward Street. Staff said the request was for a 183-square-foot retail space with a proposed drive-through window. The property also housed three restaurants, two cafes, and an office space, all within the same building. The CUP was a prerequisite for AMCO licensing and endorsements.

Staff overview focused primarily on the use of the facility by cruise passengers and internal traffic patterns. Staff noted the location was likely to be popular among cruise passengers and that its popularity could have an impact to odors in the area given that cruise passengers would not have a private place to consume purchased products. Guidance on how to construct a condition of approval to mitigate odors resulting the use was provided in the staff report. Staff also recommended directional signage and

for the applicant to work with Google Maps to provide the safest walking routes possible for visiting pedestrians. Staff identified this safest route as the sidewalk along the north side of the property.

Further, staff provided extensive information regarding a proposed drive-through. An existing drive-through led from Lake Street to the property and served an existing cafe. Staff noted the existing two-lane driveway was substandard and that use of the driveway by an additional drive-through could present problems related to access and safety. Staff recommended not approving the drive-through or else allowing it subject to approval by the city engineers. Staff said marijuana retail facilities were subject to 500-foot buffers between "sensitive uses," such as churches and correctional facilities. Staff had measured distances to two nearby churches and the city-state building at 304 Lake Street and found all three were outside the 500-foot buffer, but noted also that whether the buffer requirements were met was ultimately to be determined by the state. Following a commission question, staff clarified that the applicant could request an amendment to the permit to include the drive-through if the commission did not approve the drive-through portion of the permit at the hearing.

Applicant Michelle Jones said she had nothing to add and was comfortable with the commission approving the permit without the drive-through element.

Under public comment, Sherri Blankenship, who owned the neighboring Highliner Coffee Company, said she fully supported the permit application without the drive-through. Suzan Brawnlyn and Justin Peeler said they both supported the permit without the drive-through, as well. Brawnlyn mentioned the difficulty emergency vehicles could have in accessing the property if an additional drive-through was added. No further comment was received.

During deliberation, the commission said it had concerns with the drive-through aspect but less so with odor issues. It did not add any conditions of approval associated with odors but did add a condition of approval denying the drive-through and amended a condition of approval regarding signage to include additional signs directing pedestrian traffic.

M/Sherman-S/Alderson moved to approve the conditional use permit for a marijuana retail facility at 327 Seward Street in the CBD central business district subject to the attached conditions of approval. The property was also known as Lot Two-B (2-B), Block Two (2), Swan Creek Subdivision. The request was filed by Michelle Jones. The owner of record was the Edward and Joyce Martin Joint Living Trust. Motion passed 5-0 by voice vote.

M/Sherman-S/Alderson 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.

D [MISC 26-01](#)

Discussion of Annual Short-term Rental Report.

Will requested the commission review questions for the annual short-term rental response survey prior to its submittal to short-term rental conditional use permit holders. She said there were two types of questions in the survey--mandatory questions such as bed tax remitted and nights rented, and optional questions such as what the unit was used for in the off season and who was renting it short-term.

The commission asked about the purpose of two of the questions on the survey, which asked about short-term rental user groups and which appeared very similar. Staff said

it would work to combine the questions. Staff said the purpose of the optional questions was to get a better understanding of how short-term rentals were impacting housing stock. Staff suggested adding a question regarding duration of stays in short-term rentals. The commission also requested staff include further information about short-term rentals that were not subject to reporting requirements or conditional use permits.

No motion made.

E [MISC 25-19](#)

Sitka Land Suitability and Feasibility Study Phase I Summary and Recommendations.

Ainslie presented the findings from Phase I of the Sitka Land Suitability and Feasibility Study. She provided an overview of the nine sites originally considered and the decision criteria that had led to the scorings each site had received at the conclusion of Phase I. She explained the sites fell into three categories, with two sites ranking far above the rest (Osprey Street and Sitka High School), three in the middle (Benchlands, Harbor Mountain Road, and Gavan Hill), and three that were not to be considered further at that time (Upper Edgcombe Drive, Herring Cove/Green Lake Road, and Indian River). She then reviewed next steps for each of the five sites that were to continue to be studied. Ainslie said there was the possibility to stop and conduct cost estimates for the development of each site before continuing but that more detailed analysis regarding landslide debris flows could drastically skew such estimates.

Foss said she was opposed to consideration of landslide mitigation measures regarding the Benchlands. The commission commended the work in the report and asked how many phases it was to have. Ainslie responded it was to have two, but potentially three, phases. Chair Windsor requested the next presentation regarding the land study be conducted as a work session.

No motion made.

IX. ADJOURNMENT

Chair Windsor adjourned the meeting at 9:22 p.m.