



CITY AND BOROUGH OF SITKA

Minutes - Final

Planning Commission

Wednesday, March 5, 2025

7:00 PM

Harrigan Centennial Hall

I. CALL TO ORDER AND ROLL CALL

Present: Darrell Windsor (Chair), Katie Riley, Stacy Mudry, Wendy Alderson, Robin Sherman, Thor Christianson (Assembly Liaison)
Staff: Amy Ainslie, Kim Davis, Ariadne Will
Public: James Lecrone, Chris Cropley, Hal Spackman, Jim Michner, Scott Saline, Austin Cranford, Trevor Newton, Jessie Rico, Jamey Cagle, Cathy Li (Sitka Sentinel)

Chair Windsor called the meeting to order at 6:59 p.m.

II. CONSIDERATION OF THE AGENDA

III. CONSIDERATION OF THE MINUTES

[PM 25-04](#)

Approve the February 19, 2025 meeting minutes.

**M/Mudry-S/Riley moved to approve the February 19, 2025 meeting minutes.
Motion passed 5-0 by voice vote.**

IV. PERSONS TO BE HEARD

V. PLANNING DIRECTOR'S REPORT

Ainslie told the commission that an appeal had been filed regarding the body's decision on the subdivision request at 305 Islander Drive. The appeal was to come before the Assembly, who would decide whether to make a decision on the appeal or hand the subdivision request back to the Planning Commission.

Ainslie said the land study remained underway and that the Planning Department had received a preliminary report from PND Engineers and was getting a better idea of utility infrastructure in different areas identified. She said too that the commission was to have full agendas the next two meetings.

VI. REPORTS

VII. THE EVENING BUSINESS

B [CUP 25-03](#)

Public hearing and consideration of a conditional use permit for a short-term rental at 1972 Halibut Point Road in the R-1 MH single-family, duplex, and manufactured home district. The property is also known as Lot 8-B2, Subdivision of a Portion of Lot 8, U.S. Survey No. 2417, excepting the most

northerly 100 feet. The request is filed by Jill and James Lecrone. The owners of record are Jill and James Lecrone.

Davis introduced a request for a conditional use for a short-term rental at 1972 Halibut Point Road in the R1 MH single-family, duplex, and manufactured home district. Davis said the owner-applicant was requesting use of his three-bedroom, two-and-a-half bath, single-family house as a short-term rental in the summer months, with a maximum of six guests. The applicant planned to live in the downstairs apartment when the house was to be rented out. Davis noted that the house was next door to a short-term rental.

Applicant James Lecrone told the commission that he had meant to request the commission for use of either the main house or the apartment, depending on the travel schedule of his wife and the number of guests in a booking. During commission discussion, the panel said they did not mind Lecrone using either unit, so long as both units were not rented at the same time.

One public comment was received and included in the packet materials. It requested the applicant include more language in the renter handout regarding garbage handling. Staff said at the meeting that Lecrone had been advised to improve language in the renter handout regarding trash handling.

During its discussion, the commission amended the third condition of approval to include that per additional information provided at the hearing, it was clarified that there were two dwelling units in the home, both of which could be used as a short-term rental, but only one could be used as a short-term rental at any given time.

M/Riley-S/Sherman moved to approve the conditional use permit for a short-term rental at 1972 Halibut Point Road in the R1 MH single-family, duplex, and manufactured home district, subject to the amended conditions of approval. The property was also known as Lot 8-B2, Subdivision of a Portion of Lot 8, U.S. Survey No. 2417, excepting the most northerly 100 feet. The request was filed by Jill and James Lecrone. The owners of record were Jill and James Lecrone. Motion passed 5-0 by voice vote.

M/Riely-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.

C [VAR 25-01](#)

Public hearing and consideration of a zoning variance request to increase the maximum allowable height from 35 feet to 120 feet for a communication tower at 112 and 116 Nancy Court in the R1 single-family and duplex residential district. The properties are also known as Lots 1 and 2, Briggs Subdivision. The request is filed by Richard Peterson for Tlingit and Haida, Tidal Network. The owner of record is James Penrose.

Ainslie introduced a variance request for a height increase from 35 to 120 feet at 112 and 116 Nancy Court to accommodate the construction of a communications tower. Staff said the applicant intended to build a 110-foot tower with a ten-foot lightning rod at 116 Nancy Court. 112 Nancy Court would be maintained as a buffer. Staff noted that the tower would create a visual impact for neighboring properties.

The commission asked staff whether this use would be allowed in the zone, as code stated that a communications tower was permitted as an accessory use but did not speak to communications towers as principal uses.

Chris Cropley, director of Tidal Network, spoke as the applicant and said the location

at 116 Nancy Court was a prime spot for a communications tower. He said the location was identified after a town-wide search and would allow the organization to build one less tower in Sitka. Cropley said Tidal Network was building 30 towers across Southeast Alaska as part of a grant-funded initiative to improve broadband in the region. He said the organization would work to mitigate wildlife impacts and adverse impacts to the stability of the slope during construction. He said the tower would not be harmful to health. Cropley said that if the permit was denied, the organization would need to reevaluate but might still opt to build a 35-foot tower at the location. He said options in commercial zones were also explored, but adequate land was not identified or available for purchase. Trevor Newton, also speaking as the applicant, said that the current plans were to construct the tower as close to the front and east property lines as possible. Chair Windsor asked if the tower could be constructed nearer to the rear of the property. Newton said building closer to the rear of 116 Nancy Court would pose engineering issues.

Commissioner Riley asked if the organization planned to construct other towers in residential zones. Cropley said it did. He said Tidal Network worked primarily with Starlink, and that the tower would support Starlink access, primarily, but that fiber would be run as hybrid or backup to the tower. He said other networks could lease space on the tower and may use fiber, as well. Riley also asked the applicant to send FCC compliance information and coverage maps to the commission.

Neighboring property owners Jon Martin, Hal Spackman, and Austin Cranford all spoke under public comment against the construction of the tower. Letters from neighbors Mike and Taylor Viera and Clayton and Larissa Nellis were read into the record. Main neighborhood concerns were about effects on property values, views sheds, health and possible slope instability.

During deliberation, the commission again brought up concern regarding code stating the tower must be an accessory use. The body requested postponement of the item so staff could seek a legal opinion regarding the phrasing in the general code. The commission also directed staff to create a map of all communications towers in Sitka.

Following the vote to postpone the item, the commission recessed at 8:38 p.m. and reconvened at 8:48 p.m.

M/Sherman-S/Riley moved to postpone to the April 2, 2025 Planning Commission meeting the public hearing and consideration of a zoning variance to increase the maximum allowable height from 35 feet to 120 feet for a communications tower at 112 and 116 Nancy Court in the R1 single-family and duplex residential district. The properties were also known as Lots 1 and 2, Briggs Subdivision. The request was filed by Richard Peterson for Tlingit and Haida, Tidal Network. The owner of record was James Penrose. Motion passed 5-0 by voice vote.

D [ZA 25-01](#)

Discussion of zoning code changes for cruise related docks.

Ainslie opened discussion of zoning code changes for cruise-related docks, a topic resulting, in part, from recommendations from the Tourism Task Force adopted by the Assembly in April 2024. Tourism Task Force recommended creating a definition for cruise-related docks and then making such docks a conditional use in all zones where the docks were allowed outright.

Following Ainslie's introduction, the commission suspended the rules and allowed public comment on the discussion item. Jim Michener, who identified himself as the

former chair of the Tourism Task Force, said there were multiple places in town where people could build cruise docks if they wanted to, and said that another recommendation from the Tourism Task Force had been to zone Katlian Bay.

Jamey Cagle, CEO of Allen Marine, said he understood the desire for a code change and asked that the commission respect Allen Marine's preexisting operations and titles to tidelands.

Scott Saline said he was nervous that allowing other docks to function as lightering facilities would lead the city to shut down its own lightering facility, causing a decrease in city revenue with no impact on tourism.

Two written comments were submitted by Andrew Thoms and Chandler O'Connell. Both requested conditional use permits for cruise docks serving vessels carrying more than 15 passengers in all zones where commercial use docks were permitted outright.

During commission discussion, the panel asked staff about zoning Katlian Bay. Staff said this action was an Assembly-approved recommendation from the Tourism Task Force. The commission also deliberated on whether to create a new definition for cruise-related docks, as opposed to putting more restrictions on the preexisting definition for commercial docks. The commission said a new definition for cruise-related docks was preferable, as it wouldn't create unnecessary process for docks used for smaller operations, like charters. It also asked that lightering docks be included when considering a definition for cruise-related docks.

Ainslie said that staff would do more research regarding possible definitions and impacts regarding cruise-related docks in preparation for the next round of discussion.

No motion made.

VIII. ADJOURNMENT

Chair Windsor adjourned the meeting at 9:34 p.m..