

**Siskiyou County Planning Commission**  
**Regular Meeting**  
**January 15, 2025**

The Siskiyou County Planning Commission meeting of January 15, 2025, was called to order by Acting Chair Melo at approximately 9:04 a.m. in the Siskiyou County Meeting Chambers, 311 Fourth Street, 2<sup>nd</sup> Floor, Yreka, California.

**Present:** Commissioners Hart, Veale, and Melo (Chair Fowle was not present for roll call but arrived a few minutes later)

**Absent:** Commissioner Lindler

**Also Present:** Rick Dean, Director, Community Development Department; Hailey Lang, Deputy Director of Planning; Rachel Jereb, Senior Planner; Bernadette Cizin, Assistant Planner; James Phelps, Senior Planner; William Carroll, Assistant County Counsel; Janine Rowe, Commission Clerk

Acting Chair Melo postponed the Election of Chair and Vice Chair in order to allow Chair Fowle time to be present for the meeting.

**Minutes: December 18, 2024:** It was moved by Commissioner Hart, seconded by Commissioner Veale, to approve the December 18, 2024, Planning Commission Minutes as presented.

**Voted** upon and the Acting Chair declared the motion carried unanimously by those Commissioners present.

**Unscheduled Appearances: None**

**Conflict of Interest Declaration: None**

**Presentation of Documents:** Acting Chair Melo stated the item was outlined in the Agenda.

**Availability of Public Records; Right of Appeal Statement:** Acting Chair Melo read the items into the record.

**Changes to the Agenda: None**

Commissioner Fowle arrived at approximately 9:08 a.m.

**Minutes: November 20, 2024:** It was moved by Commissioner Veale, seconded by Commissioner Fowle, to approve the November 20, 2024, Planning Commission Minutes as presented.

**Voted** upon and the Acting Chair declared the motion carried unanimously by those Commissioners present, with Commissioner Melo abstaining since he was absent from that meeting.

**Election of Officers:**

**Chair:**

**Motion:** It was moved by Commissioner Veale, seconded by Commissioner Hart, to elect Commissioner Fowle as Chair for 2025.

**Voted** upon and the Acting Chair declared the motion carried unanimously by those Commissioners present.

At this point, Chair Fowle took over the meeting after being selected as Chair for 2025.

**Vice Chair:**

**Motion:** It was moved by Commissioner Hart, seconded by Commissioner Veale, to elect Commissioner Melo as Vice Chair for 2025.

**Voted** upon and the Chair declared the motion carried unanimously by those Commissioners present.

**New Business:**

**Agenda Item 1: Visioning and Guiding Principles Status Review – 2050 Siskiyou County General Plan Update**

Staff provided the Planning Commission with an updated version of the Draft Community Vision and Guiding Principles for the County General Plan, which incorporated changes requested by the Board of Supervisors and the Planning Commission at the Joint Workshop Session held on October 15, 2024. This update included a list of comments received from the community and the Technical Advisory Committee (TAC). Comments received during the update session will be considered in preparation of the Final Community Vision and Guiding Principles.

**Staff Report:**

The previously circulated Staff Report was reviewed by the Commission, and a presentation of the project was provided by Ms. Lang.

Ms. Lang told the Commission that the Visioning and Guiding Principles were revised after a comprehensive joint Board of Supervisors and Planning Commission workshop on October 15, 2024. Feedback from this meeting was integrated into the revised document. She said the guiding principles were reformatted into high-level, consensus-supported statements, and specific objectives and policies would be detailed throughout the process.

Ms. Lang said two options were being offered—a paragraph option (Option 1) and a bullet point format (Option 2) which was requested by the Board of Supervisors. Staff used a bullet point format for the Guiding Principles. She said the document was vetted through the internal Technical Advisory Committee (TAC) and there were no substantial comments. Feedback from the Karuk Tribe was more detailed and will likely be incorporated into specific policies rather than the Guiding Principles.

Ms. Lang said the purpose of today's meeting was to gain feedback and general consensus from the Commission to recommend the Vision and Guiding Principles to the Board, but changes can still be made throughout the General Plan process. She said the consultant team is concurrently drafting plan elements, including land use, noise, open space, and conservation elements and early discussions on zoning code updates are also underway. There are many moving parts in the General Plan preparation, and adjustments can be made as needed.

**Commission Questions/Discussion:**

Discussion was held that the Right to Farm will still be part of the General Plan. Commissioner Melo asked if the Scott Valley Area Plan is part of the General Plan update, and Chair Fowle responded that it is a separate issue.

Discussion was held that staff intends to continue collaborating on projects with the Karuk Tribe.

Vice Chair Melo expressed his frustration with the 2.5 acre minimum requirement for properties within the

sphere of influence of Mt. Shasta to have a vacation rental. He said it prevents property owners with smaller parcels from being able to obtain a use permit for a vacation rental. He said it didn't make sense to him to limit vacation rentals because the county is broke and vacation rentals are a revenue source with the TOT taxes they have to pay.

Commissioner Hart said he reviewed the comments submitted by the Karuk Tribe and wondered how to meld them into the General Plan. He said he did not know how to put together a vision statement based on the current political, regulatory, and physical climates, keeping in mind what is and what is not allowed, as well as dealing with state and federal laws. He is concerned about agriculture not surviving in the county.

A lengthy discussion was held that California is the fifth largest agricultural producer. Dairies are going away because of economics. The County has lost the timber industry and they're about to lose agriculture in the Shasta and Scott valleys even though agriculture pays the biggest property taxes in Siskiyou County.

Commissioner Veale said he thought the county would see an influx of population due to the fires in Southern California. Commissioner Hart said the population numbers haven't changed but the demographics have changed. He believes the county has become a bedroom community which does not create the sustainability of a tax-based wealth even if agriculture goes away.

Chair Fowle requested that staff and County Counsel draft language for creating safe buffer zones between wilderness and private land to enable thinning and fuel load reduction within a certain distance of private land. He emphasized that the incoming administration presents a chance to revise how wilderness lands are managed at the boundaries with private properties. This language could facilitate meetings with insurance companies to discuss fire policies, potentially allowing them to re-enter the state by verifying that fuel load risks have been minimized or mitigated on timber and agricultural properties.

Chair Fowle agreed that water is a significant challenge, but an even bigger issue for ranches and farms in Scott Valley is the lack of insurance options beyond the FAIR Plan, which is insufficient for securing operating loans. Both money and water are crucial for business survival. He said insurance is also a concern in Shasta Valley, particularly around the periphery. But the Insurance Commission and companies have identified high-risk wildfire areas with high fuel loads in Scott Valley. He said one proposed solution is to have CAL FIRE representatives inspect properties and confirm their proximity to high-risk wildfire zones which could be achieved by creating buffer zones on wilderness land, thus allowing inspections to verify that operations are safe. Chair Fowle said the community can continue to address water issues, but the insurance challenge must also be tackled to ensure businesses can operate. Without addressing insurance on the landscape, businesses face significant risk.

Chair Fowle said he was envisioning a change to federal statutes. He said it would be putting on the legislative record that Siskiyou, Modoc, Del Norte, Humboldt and other counties would enter into a formal agreement with the federal government to create buffer zones of a certain size and distance that would be managed for a certain amount of fuel load where it borders private property. This would open up areas for logging or masticators or CAL FIRE coming in and doing controlled burns. Reducing the fuel load would reduce the wildfire risk for the insurance companies' purpose. Chair Fowle said the policies need to be legislative so they could not be overridden by executive order.

For further clarification, Chair Fowle requested that staff meet with the Board of Supervisors, County Counsel, representatives from Trinity, Modoc, and other neighboring counties, congressional representatives, and the US Forest Service along with their counterparts from the Klamath and Trinity National Forests to draft language that describes buffer zones on wilderness land and codifies legislative language that allows reduction of fuel load where it borders private property.

Discussion was held regarding whether or not this was off the topic of today's Agenda. Chair Fowle said he thought it tied into the General Plan under Hazards, Safety and Wildfire Preparedness or Natural Resources. He added that the county's biggest threats are water curtailment and management of federal lands due to fire.

Through the Chair, Mr. Dean suggested that the language should be part of Hazard, Safety and Wildfire Prevention under Guiding Principles, and that language should be added to the Vision Statement that refers to large scale wildfire buffers in collaboration with the federal government. Chair Fowle said the concise statement should be to pursue partnerships with federal, private and state parties.

Mr. Carroll said perhaps the discussion wandered off from what was on the agenda, and he suggested that it be brought back as a request to staff to look into it and bring the discussion back to a future meeting.

Ms. Lang said she liked the suggestion of pursuing partnerships with federal, Tribal and state agencies because that could mean other types of projects that would benefit the county.

Discussion was held regarding the expectation for today's meeting regarding the updated Vision and Guiding Principles. Ms. Lang said staff would like to know the Commission's preference for Option 1 or Option 2 under countywide visions and whether there was anything the Commission did not like or if the Commission wanted stronger wording under guiding principles. She said it was likely there would still be modifications as the process progressed, but staff wanted to be sure things are moving in the right direction with high level priorities.

Discussion was held regarding the timeline for the different parts of the General Plan update. Ms. Lang said she would like to bring the Commission-approved Vision and Guiding Principles to the Board of Supervisors in February or March at the latest. She said staff and consultants are starting to write the plan element language as well as gearing up for the zoning code update which will be the most comprehensive portion of the entire update, and the Notice of Preparation (NOP) / Environmental Impact Report (EIR) process would be gearing up in the summer.

Commissioner Hart said he could not approve the current document as it was presented today. The Commission said they wanted to invite Karuk Tribe representatives to a meeting because the Commission wants to delve deeper into their comments and learn how the Tribe would like to see their suggestions implemented.

Through the Chair, Mr. Dean said some of the issues brought up by the Commission are beyond the purview of the County's General Plan and there is only so much that can be done to solve some issues. He said the best mechanism to move forward is by adapting the County's ordinances accordingly.

Mr. Dean gave an example of Scott Valley having an 80-acre minimum for AG-2 ground under the Scott Valley Area Plan, and that requirement should be made countywide in order to preserve agriculture. He said the purpose is to allow more opportunities for manufacturing, processing, etc., on portions of agricultural ground thus creating more opportunities for farmers to make a living. He said those are things that can be put into place, but it is impossible to control what water will do.

Chair Fowle said he is trying to be cognizant about the language used in the General Plan because it will influence future ordinances and policies. He said the Scott Valley land plan was a good idea in the 1970s and 1980s because larger acreage minimums for agriculture made sense back then, but they no longer reflect current challenges. He does not want the General Plan to create policies that prevent private property owners from adjusting acreage sizes, especially when they lack insurance and water, potentially leading to bankruptcy. The goal is to help property owners thrive in Siskiyou County by finding a cost-effective way to allow flexibility in acreage minimums without dropping them excessively.

Discussion was held about what crops are profitable and how water affects what can be grown.

Discussion was held regarding what the Vision and Guiding Principles do to help development of an updated General Plan. Mr. Dean said if manufacturing is to be encouraged in Siskiyou County, there is a need to create more manufacturing zones and parcels because the current industrial-zoned properties are limited. The focus is on increasing these zones to support manufacturing. Additionally, promoting agriculture and providing options for people to better survive is crucial. This can be facilitated by existing rules like the Williamson Act, which allows for setting aside a portion of ranch and farm land for activities such as cutting firewood or milling lumber. He said these goals can be achieved through amendments to local ordinances which would include more projects that are allowed outright without going through the conditional use permit process.

Ms. Lang added that that is why the EIR process is going to be very important in order to be able to streamline the process for many uses.

Discussion was held that the Scott Valley Area Plan needs to be revised and updated due to water issues as well as well permitting and the Public Trust Doctrine.

Concern was raised about industrial uses being allowed near formerly large properties that were divided into smaller lots in order to build homes, and Mr. Dean said there would be restrictions based on parcel size, whether or not the ground is considered to be agricultural ground, etc.

Chair Fowle said he doesn't think the consultants understand Siskiyou County, and he didn't see that comments provided by the TAC and joint workshop were reflected in the revision.

Discussion was held about when it would be possible to get representatives from the Karuk Tribe to attend a type of workshop to further discuss the revised draft Visioning and Guiding Principles. The Commission requested that staff invite all Tribes as well as the County Economic Development Council, Siskiyou Cattlemen, the Farm Bureau, and Women in Timber.

Due to the projects staff plans to present at the February Planning Commission meeting, it was decided that the Commission would schedule a special meeting and that all Tribes with whom consultation is required would be invited to attend and provide their comments. The date of March 5, 2025, was decided upon which would give staff time to prepare another revised draft to present to the Planning Commission at the regularly scheduled meeting on March 19, 2025.

The Chair called for a brief recess at approximately 10:28 a.m.

The Chair called the meeting back to order at approximately 10:33 a.m.

Further discussion was held regarding staff reaching out to the entities that the Commission wanted to invite to the special meeting. Chair Fowle said he wanted to meet with Vice Chair Melo and staff before the special meeting to formulate an agenda so a productive discussion can be accomplished at the special meeting.

Mr. Carroll advised that a motion should be made to set the special meeting on a date and time certain. Following discussion, it was moved by Vice Chair Melo, seconded by Commissioner Veale, to schedule a special meeting of the Planning Commission on Wednesday, March 5, 2025, at 9:00 a.m.

**Voted** upon and the Chair declared the motion carried unanimously by those Commissioners present.

**Items for Discussion/Direction:** Discussion was held regarding what to expect with the JH Ranch zone change amendment and use permit project being presented at the February Planning Commission meeting.

**Miscellaneous:**

1. **Future Meetings:** The next regular meeting of the Planning Commission is scheduled for Wednesday, February 19, 2025, at 9:00 a.m.
2. **Correspondence: None**
3. **Staff Comments:** Mr. Dean told the Commission that the E-regs were reinforced by the Water Board. In addition, President Biden recently designated 266,000 acres east of Mt. Shasta as a monument.
4. **Commission Comments:** Commissioner Hart asked how many reclamation plans on gravel pits are left, and Ms. Cizin said there are 25 which are going to be addressed at staff level for review and approval and then at the state level for review and approval.

Discussion was held regarding what meeting rules are being used for the Planning Commission meetings. Chair Fowle said he follows Roberts Rules of Order, but he would likely follow the Sturgis Code of Parliamentary Procedure for the special meeting.

Chair Fowle inquired about the process for Williamson Act contracts, specifically if property owners within a multi-owner contract could reach out to staff directly to request individual contracts. Ms. Cizin confirmed they could contact her, and she would review their histories and advise if they have additional Williamson Act properties that might require attention.

Regarding E-regs, Chair Fowle said the primary focus currently regarding E-regs and LCSs and its direct impact on minimum instream flows is the placement of new gauges on streams and tributaries. He said the Water Master District and Shasta RCD are collaborating with SWRCB, DWR, and USGS to identify and prioritize locations for these gauges. The purpose of the gauges in the Shasta area is to provide more accurate data for developing a model to determine minimum instream flows, enabling reach flow management rather than countywide watershed curtailments which will affect land use. Chair Fowle said the model on the Siskiyou side, to be managed by Larry Walker & Associates, is nearly complete and deemed the most accurate by the state. He said these gauges will also support reach management instead of blanket curtailments, targeting specific reaches like Reach 9, 10, or 11 in the Scott River watershed, minimizing the impact on the entire watershed.

A brief discussion was held regarding the current lack of microphones in the County Meeting Chambers, and Chair Fowle said at minimum a microphone for the speaker podium is necessary.

**Adjournment:** The meeting was concluded at approximately 10:51 a.m.

Respectfully submitted,

*Signature on file*

Hailey Lang, Secretary