

**Siskiyou County Planning Commission
Special Meeting
March 5, 2025**

The Siskiyou County Planning Commission meeting of March 5, 2025, was called to order by Chair Fowle at approximately 9:00 a.m. in the Siskiyou County Meeting Chambers, 311 Fourth Street, 2nd Floor, Yreka, California.

Present: Commissioners Hart, Melo, Lindler, Veale and Fowle

Absent:

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

Unscheduled Appearances: None

Conflict of Interest Declaration: None

Presentation of Documents; Availability of Public Records: The Chair told those in attendance to review these items in the Agenda.

Public Hearing Protocol: The Chair reviewed the Public Hearing Protocol.

Right of Appeal Statement: The Chair told those in attendance to review this item in the Agenda.

Changes to the Agenda: None

Before commencing discussion, Chair Fowle advised those in attendance that the Vision and Guiding Principles is crucial for shaping the development of and updates to the Siskiyou County General Plan. He emphasized the importance of input in order to provide guidance in creating the best possible General Plan update for Siskiyou County.

New Business:

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

Staff provided an updated version to the Planning Commission of the Draft Community Vision and Guiding Principles for the County General Plan, which incorporates 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). The updated version of the Draft Community Vision and Guiding Principles for the County General Plan has been modified to incorporate comments received from the Karuk Tribe during the general plan consultation process. 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 and Mr. Phelps.

Ms. Lang told the Commission that staff was presenting two versions in a PowerPoint presentation so they can be reviewed, discussed, and modified as needed. She reiterated that the Vision Statement and Guiding Principles for the General Plan direct the county's growth and development and establishes the foundation for all required elements of the plan, such as land use, conservation, open space, noise, and housing, and that consensus among elected officials, community members, and staff is essential for effectively shaping this framework.

Vision Statement – Attachment 1, Options 1 and 2

Mr. Phelps provided began the presentation and explained that the Vision Statement in Attachment 1, Option 1, is in paragraph format and was created after the October joint workshop. The Board of Supervisors asked for a bullet point format so staff created Option 2. Mr. Phelps read both options in Attachment 1 and told the Commission that Attachment 1 does not include comments from the Karuk Tribe.

Chair Fowle opened the public hearing to receive comments.

Public Hearing:

Deborah VanBlarcom of McCloud wanted to know what was meant by citizens' private property rights.

Ms. Lang responded that the goal is to establish a comprehensive land use code that respects private property rights, enabling residents to use their property as they wish. She said this approach prioritizes minimizing government overreach while maintaining clear and manageable processes for land use regulations. Mr. Dean added that all current health and safety regulations would be in place.

Discussion was held among the Commissioners that the general public lacks a clear understanding of the extent of existing government regulations, but if the General Plan clearly delineates approved uses based on zoning, private property owners would understand what they can and can't do and what permit would be required at the county level.

Also discussed was the fact that the county also has to comply with CEQA which requires an analysis of the level of impact a project would have on the environment, and conditions and mitigations have to be in place to cover that issue under the CEQA checklist.

Ms. Angelina Cook of McCloud suggested adding outdoor recreation and tourism to the Vision Statement as they are significant contributors to Siskiyou County's economy. She also recommended that emphasis be placed on the unique character and charm of the county's small towns, which distinguishes them from other areas in California.

Ms. Darlene Mathis of McCloud said the day before she was shown the draft vision contained in Option 1 and it included historic character, but she noticed it was not included on the one being shown today. She said she thinks agriculture in North County is important and should be preserved. She said she thinks South County has historic character and is unique and that if someone purchases a property with a historic structure, especially one listed on the historic register, they should not be allowed to demolish it without obtaining a demolition permit. She thinks the Vision Statement should include guidelines so a person who buys property with a historic structure understands what goes along with that. She said she would like to preserve what makes all the communities unique.

Before moving on, Chair Fowle asked about the current General Plan's handling of properties on the Historical Register, specifically regarding responsibilities for updates, code compliance, or demolition because it is unclear where this fits in the existing framework.

Ms. Lang said the current General Plan may not address architecture and historic buildings comprehensively, as these are often covered by specific policies. As an example, she used a use permit being submitted for weddings at a historic building. She said the project must comply with all relevant policies and would be most effectively managed through either a countywide or area-specific policy, requiring staff to review and confirm compliance with applicable regulations before presenting the project.

Discussion was held regarding whether or not the county has jurisdiction to prevent someone from demolishing a historic building. Ms. Lang said it depends on whether it has federal recognition, state recognition, or local recognition, and there are different requirements for each level of government based on the building. Discussion was held that it is also sometimes discretionary based on how one interprets the code.

Ms. Alexis Robertson of Siskiyou Land Trust said it depends on whether it's registered. She said the Trust does frequent title reports/searches for properties that they work on. Ms. Robertson said the title report itself will include the historic nature of property but not every property will say whether it has historic implications. She said if it were a recorded document, she thought the historic registry would be included in the title report which would be available to the purchaser.

Vision Statement – Attachment 1, Option 2

Mr. Phelps told the Commission that this option is the same paragraph contained in Option 1 but converted to a bullet point format.

A lengthy discussion was held regarding the unknown future of agriculture due to various factors that cannot be foreseen. Also discussed was the definition of natural resources, and it was decided to include a bullet point indicating an emphasis on private property rights and encouragement of sound stewardship of renewable resources and working landscapes.

Vision Statement – Attachment 2, Option 1

Mr. Phelps told the Commission that Attachment 2 incorporates the comments from the Karuk Tribe.

Public Comment:

Ms. Mathis said she would like to see mention of the historic character in South County and would like to see the historic character of McCloud protected. She said she would also like to see some flexibility in the zoning and building codes.

Ms. Lang said that the county's code doesn't address the designation of historical buildings. She said zoning layers, such as those for historic areas, typically dictate what can and cannot be done regarding demolition or updates and while there are state and federal processes for historic designation, the county lacks a local preservation ordinance and is not required to conduct historic reviews of buildings.

Discussion was held regarding whether or not the county has the authority to deny a demolition permit if the structure is a designated historical structure. Mr. Carroll said he didn't see anything in the county code that covers demolishing a historical structure, but properties listed on state or federal

historical registries may face restrictions. He said he thought it would most likely be up to the building official to verify with the state before issuing a demolition permit.

Through the Chair, Ms. Lang said locally designated historic districts often include specific rules regarding permissible actions, and a zoning layer for a historic area or neighborhood could hypothetically dictate what can and cannot be done, including regulations on building demolition and updates. Ms. Lang added that there is a process to have a building designated historical.

Discussion was held regarding the potential for the public to protest the demolition of a historical structure and what the ramifications would be for the property owner. Mr. Dean pointed out that one needs to be aware of the laws and codes that apply to any property they decide to buy, and there are parameters in place with what can be done to a piece of ground based on overall plans developed.

Mr. Phelps added that property owners must apply to have their buildings included in a historic district which provides tax credits for renovations, but it also imposes restrictions, such as prohibiting demolition or unapproved modifications. This is a voluntary decision made by the property owner, and most historic districts in the area are within city limits and beyond the county's authority.

Ms. Lang added that Siskiyou county doesn't have a local preservation ordinance so the county is not bound to have historic review of buildings, etc.

Vision Statement – Attachment 2, Option 2

Mr. Phelps told the Commission that this option was set up in bullet point format and incorporated comments from the Karuk Tribe.

A lengthy discussion was held regarding the definition of traditional foods and where it could be gathered. Clarification was made that the activity needs to be conducted on one's own property or on someone else's property with the owner's permission, whether it is privately owned or publicly owned, i.e., forest service land.

Mr. Jay Martin of Etna wanted to point out the potential sensitivity in distinguishing between one's own traditional foods and others' traditional foods, which could lead to complications. Chair Fowle responded that there are a lot of cultures in Siskiyou County, and each culture has their own traditions. He thought by not stating culture it is left open as all inclusive.

Chair Fowle remarked that the guiding statement serves as a vision for shaping the development of the General Plan update. It is not a law, county code, ordinance, or policy, but rather a framework to guide the process.

Ms. Cook said as far as economic development is concerned, she thought it was necessary to highlight current successes in economic development and to focus on diversifying and expanding business opportunities, particularly by supporting small businesses. She said it is also important to provide housing options for young families and workers in order to attract telecommuters and remote workers to Siskiyou County. Chair Fowle told Ms. Cook that the housing element has already been updated and it was noted that there is a shortage of affordable housing for young families, workers, etc.

A bullet point was added regarding increasing housing stock.

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

The Chair called the meeting back to order at approximately 10:35 a.m.

Commissioner Hart wanted to discuss the term open range. He thinks it is a very controversial subject and wasn't sure if it should be discussed in the General Plan. Mr. Phelps said that open range and the right to farm already exist in Siskiyou County, and their inclusion aims to preserve these practices for the future. Similarly, traditional food gathering, such as berry picking, is recognized as an existing activity to be maintained. Mr. Phelps emphasized that the vision statement is not a law but an aspirational guide for the county's future.

Commissioner Lindler wanted clarification on the bullet point regarding working with tribal partners and forest management and wanted to make sure the county was not trying to get special rules for forest management because forest management is only on private land and is regulated by the State Board of Forestry.

Discussion was held that staff received that comment from the Karuk Tribe and staff incorporated it in a way that would work with the General Plan. Mr. Phelps said the county itself is not involved in these things, but the county can help facilitate these sorts of activities.

After further discussion, it was decided that the bullet point would be "working with tribal partners to support sustainable forest management practices."

Commissioner Hart asked whether migration corridors are included in the county's zoning, and Mr. Dean said only deer wintering areas are designated.

Ms. Mathis once again wanted to stress the importance of preserving historical structures. After discussion, it was decided to add "working landscapes and historic culture" to the bullet point regarding emphasizing private property rights while encouraging sound stewardship of renewal resources.

Guiding Principles – Attachment 2

1. Hazards, Safety, and Wildfire Preparedness

Mr. Phelps said this version incorporates the Karuk Tribe comments.

Discussion was held that this principle should be more concise than the wording suggested by the Tribe and needed to be better defined because there may be language that not all sides agree on. The Commission ultimately agreed that the first two bullet points of the Guiding Principles contained in Attachment 1 are preferred.

After discussion, because it the Commission felt the Guiding Principles in Attachment 1 better reflected the ultimate goals, it was decided to go through the Guiding Principles contained in Attachment 1 first.

Guiding Principles – Attachment 1

2. Natural Resources and Scenery

Ms. Cook said she thought securing water for agricultural purposes, environmental and future generations type of approach to water management would be limiting and that promoting thoughtful and sound stewardship felt vague and could almost be struck.

After discussion, the Commission agreed to strike bullet points 3 and 4 as written because they believe the county has no jurisdiction over water law.

Mr. Dick Cowardin of Montague said he thought something should be included regarding recreational use of water.

Through the Chair, Mr. Dean said the General Plan within its parameters does not provide a mechanism for securing water for purposes such as snowmaking, agriculture, or other uses. He said it can only encourage land use that might help attract such resources but has no direct role in water management.

The Commission agreed to revise bullet point 3 to reflect that sustainable water resource management practices would be promoted to encourage agriculturally based economic development, conservation of fish and wildlife habitat, and recreation.

Attachment 1 – Guiding Principles

3. Economic Development

Ms. Mathis expressed concern about the rising cost of insurance. She said mapping has placed McCloud in a worse situation for insurance rates compared to Mt. Shasta and Dunsmuir despite McCloud having less wind and better forest service practices. She said these factors contribute to significant challenges for businesses and property buyers in the area.

Mr. Dean said the new CAL FIRE hazard maps are available for public review on the county's website, and public comments can be made for 30 days.

Attachment 1 – Guiding Principles

4. Sense of Community and Unique Lifestyle

Ms. VanBlarcom said she thought it was already decided not to include tribal partners and wondered if this item should be edited. After discussion, the Commission requested that item 2 be stricken since consultation with the tribes is already required as part of the CEQA process.

Commissioner Melo stepped out of the meeting at approximately 11:24 a.m.

Ms. Cook suggested replacing "local independence" with "regional self-reliance" in the third bullet point, as local independence seems unrealistic. She said she thinks communities are interconnected and interdependent on the movement and trade of goods and services and that community resilience as a synonym for being locally self-reliant.

Chair Fowle said an earlier discussion emphasized the distinct character of communities with each having its own unique lifestyle. He said section 4 of the guiding principles addresses the importance of preserving these unique dynamics and cautioned against shifting to a more regional or generalized approach because it might lead to dissatisfaction among communities that value their individuality, despite their interdependence. As an example, Chair Fowle said the communities of Montague and Etna were like oil and water.

Commissioner Melo returned to the meeting at approximately 11:28 a.m.

Mr. Phelps told the Commission the definition of resiliency is the ability of a community to bounce back from hardship or adversity or disaster, and he thought community resiliency should be listed under Hazard, Safety, and Wildfire Preparedness. Mr. Phelps suggested striking bullet point 3 entirely and adding in what Ms. Cook suggested as a different bullet point.

Commissioner Hart recalled his comment during the joint workshop in October regarding there being no sense of community and that he was chastised for his remarks. He said he sees citizens from across the county actively participating but wondered where the representatives are from other

municipalities. He said in spite of the county making an effort to reach out, no one is responding on the other end.

On that note, Chair Fowle thanked those folks who did attend and said that was why a special meeting was scheduled so the Commission could hear thoughts from the community. He said he was happy that McCloud was represented because one of the commissioners has been wanting to hear from McCloud for over a decade.

Ms. Cook wanted to know if there would still be the opportunity to comment as the process continued. Chair Fowle said the Commission would be adopting one of the two options, and Ms. Lang said it would be elevated to the Board of Supervisors for adoption. However, she said changes can be made until the final General Plan document is approved.

Attachment 1 – Guiding Principles

5. Land Use, Housing, and Infrastructure

Commissioner Veale commented that because it takes so long to develop a piece of land it is difficult to predict the variables, such as the housing market, interest rates, etc., and wondered why someone would invest in developing a piece of property for housing when it takes two to three years to be completed.

Mr. Phelps said the bullet points focus on forward-looking goals like improving local infrastructure for efficient transportation and reduced pollution, and promoting future development near workplaces to minimize long commutes. He said while "expanding educational opportunities" (bullet point 4) is a valuable principle, it does not align with land use, housing, or infrastructure and should be relocated to a different category. It was decided to incorporate that bullet point into Economic Development.

Discussion was held that if a business needed to provide housing for its employees, particularly seasonal housing, the business would likely be classified as an employment center. Chair Fowle suggested that the General Plan could potentially allow the county to designate specific areas through zoning where such seasonal housing could be developed to support the employment center. Ms. Jereb pointed out that farm labor housing is permitted in the AG-1 and AG-2 zoning districts as long as the people employed are employed on that property or on properties owned by same entity.

Ms. Jessica Matthews of Weed said there is a distinction between educational opportunities and workforce development opportunities and suggested that workforce development is more relevant to careers and business infrastructure, while educational opportunities are broader in scope. She proposed placing both under the category of economic development because that would address skilling up current professionals within industries that are within the county and broadening professional development, whereas educational opportunities can be increased broad scale and include those that aren't currently within certain industries or working within certain organizations.

Ms. Mathis said she thinks future zoning adjustments are needed to better support housing and related services because there are inconsistencies, such as allowing vacation rentals in neighborhoods but not in commercial zones. She said she thinks they would be better placed near hotels or downtown areas instead.

In addition, Ms. Mathis emphasized the importance of good schools to attract new residents and suggested implementing flexible zoning under government services to enable housing development closer to employment centers and to facilitate cost-effective housing construction by repurposing existing buildings.

Chair Fowle asked if bullet point 4 was included in order to emphasize the role of quality schools in order to attract housing and to be considered part of infrastructure. He thought moving it to economic development would be appropriate, but there is a recommendation to include a specific bullet point in the General Plan update that supports the development of successful schools—public, charter, or private—as essential infrastructure to promote proper land use and housing.

After discussion, it was decided it should be “continue to support local schools and health facilities” as that would include hospitals, clinics, homes for the elderly, assisted living homes, etc.

After completing review of the Guiding Principles, staff and the Commission reviewed all the changes to the Vision Statement and Guiding Principles. After discussion and review was complete, the Chair closed the Public Hearing.

After continued discussion and review by the Planning Commission, the Commission chose to adopt the Vision Statement contained in Attachment 2, Option 2, including all edits therein, as well as the Guiding Principles contained in Attachment 1, including all edits therein.

Motion: After discussion, it was moved by Commissioner Veale, seconded by Commissioner Melo, to adopt Attachment 2, Option 2, with the amendments to the second bullet point, the addition of a new point 3, addition to point 4, and addition to point 5, including all edits and amendments therein, as well as the Guiding Principles contained in Attachment 1, including all edits and amendments therein.

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

Adjournment: The meeting was concluded at approximately 12:15 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Signature on file

Hailey Lang, Secretary

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