APPROVED MINUTES

Agenda

Planning Commission

Regular Meeting

CITY AND BOROUGH OF JUNEAU

Mandy Cole, Chair

June 24, 2025

I. **LAND ACKNOWLEDGEMENT** – Read by Ms. Derr

We would like to acknowledge that the City and Borough of Juneau is on Tlingit land, and wish to honor the indigenous people of this land. For more than ten thousand years, Alaska Native people have been and continue to be integral to the well-being of our community. We are grateful to be in this place, a part of this community, and to honor the culture, traditions, and resilience of the Tlingit people. Gunalchéesh!

Attorney Layne swore in the new member of the Planning Commission, Larry Gamez.

II. **ROLL CALL**

Mandy Cole, Chair, called the Regular Meeting of the City and Borough of Juneau (CBJ) Planning Commission (PC), held in Assembly Chambers of the Municipal Building, virtually via Zoom Webinar, and telephonically, to order at 7 p.m.

Commissioners present: Commissioners present in Chambers – Mandy Cole, Chair; Erik Pedersen, Vice Chair; Nina Keller; David Epstein, Jessalynn Rintala, Lacey Derr, Douglas Salik; Larry Gamez

Staff present: Jill Lawhorne, CDD Director; Sherri Layne, Attorney III; Brandon Robinson, Planner II; Jolene Murphy, Planner I;

Assembly members: Christine Woll

III. **REQUEST FOR AGENDA CHANGES AND APPROVAL OF AGENDA**

IV. **APPROVAL OF MINUTES**

A. April 22, 2025, Draft Minutes, Regular Planning Commission
B. May 13, 2025, Draft Minutes, Regular Planning Commission

MOTION: *by Mr. Epstein to approve the April 22, 2025, Planning Commission Regular Meeting minutes and the May 13, 2025, Regular Meeting minutes.*

V. BRIEF REVIEW OF THE RULES FOR PUBLIC PARTICIPATION

VI. PUBLIC PARTICIPATION ON NON-AGENDA ITEMS

VII. ITEMS FOR RECONSIDERATION

VIII. CONSENT AGENDA

USE2025 0009: Conditional Use Permit to construct new camp facilities at Echo Ranch Bible Camp.

Applicant: Gospel Missionary Union Inc.
Location: 40001 Glacier Hwy

Director's Report

The applicant requests a Conditional Use Permit to construct new staff cabins, camper cabins and associated camp facilities at Echo Ranch. Since 1981, a series of building and land use permits have been issued for expansion of the 155-acre site. Resorts and campgrounds are allowed, with Planning Commission approval, in the Rural Reserve zoning district. To streamline permitting, the applicant requests that camp facilities be preemptively approved under USE2025 0009.

Staff Recommendation

Staff recommends the Planning Commission adopt the Director's analysis and findings and APPROVE Conditional Use Permit USE2025 0009.

MOTION: *by Ms. Derr to accept staff's findings, analysis, and recommendations, and approve USE2025 0009.*

IX. UNFINISHED BUSINESS

X. REGULAR AGENDA

ARP2025 0001: Alternative Residential Subdivision Preliminary Plan to Subdivide 3.69 acres into 11 unit-lots and one parent lot on an unaddressed property in the vicinity of 10655 Glacier Highway near Wilma Avenue in a D-10 zoning district.

Applicant: Homeshore Engineering
Location: 10665 Glacier Hwy

Director's Report

The applicant requests approval for an Alternative Residential Subdivision Preliminary Plan to subdivide 3.69 acres into eleven (11) unit-lots and one (1) parent lot in a D-10 zoning district. The preliminary plan provides for a lot consolidation, a privately maintained access road, and eleven rough-graded unit-lots to be later developed into single-family homes similar in nature to those immediately surrounding the property.

Staff Recommendation

Staff recommends the Planning Commission adopt the Director's analysis and findings and APPROVE the Alternative Residential Subdivision with conditions.

Ms. Derr asked Director Lawhorne if there had been any movement on the under-permitted that was mentioned in their materials.

Director Lawhorne responded that she was not aware of any progress on that, but they may be in that permit process concurrently with this one. She noted that the Commission did not have authority over the DOT's permits, but they would need the DOT permit before building.

Mr. Pedersen asked for a brief summary of the differences between an ARS subdivision compared to a conventional subdivision. He noted it is his understanding that this process was the first where they are approving the plan and not a preliminary plot.

Director Lawhorne explained that with a traditional subdivision, the developer would install a city street to full city standard that is quite costly and does not allow much flexibility, but the alternative residential subdivision provides the opportunity to not provide a private street that requires maintenance and HOA agreements so the unit lot owners and HOA would care for the street and infrastructure, which allows the development to be more cost-effective and the lots to be smaller than the standard size requirement in that zoning district.

Mr. Pedersen asked if there were other distinctions for calling it a unit lot instead of a lot.

Director Lawhorne answered that they can or do not have meet the minimum lot size, but if they do meet the minimum lot size for the zoning district, they could have an ADU. She said another use that can be allowed in an ARS, but not applicable to this project, is childcare. She stated that when ARS has a private street, it acts more like a condominium association in a way.

Chair Cole reminded Director Lawhorne about the second part of Mr. Pedersen's question on the preliminary plan and final plan aspect.

Director Lawhorne responded that there is an alternative residential preliminary plat and final plat. The preliminary plat is just the subdivision on paper by creating the parent lot and unit lot, and the plan is where the Commission says they have more leeway in the ARS. She noted that in this instance, they are not going for bonuses and other options allowed in an ARS, which is where the plan really comes into play. She added that the plan really is more of the concept of the site, but the development, engineering, surveying, and time is costly, so the intent of tonight is to give the applicant clear direction on what they are going to approve and any changes that need to be made or addressed.

Chair Cole voiced that it is worthwhile to talk about the number of unit lots in the preliminary versus final plan since this lot is eligible for additional lots. She asked there could be any changes in the unit lot number between the preliminary and final.

Director Lawhorne confirmed that is correct that they would have to likely repost, re-notice, and start over, so the intent should be discussed tonight and made clear.

Chair Cole added that there could be differences in configuration if buffers and setbacks were still met from the parent lot, but no differences in the number of unit lots at that point.

Director Lawhorne agreed, and added that if the Commission wanted to see an increased number of units, she suggested discussing that tonight and work through that process.

Mr. Epstein inquired if accessory dwelling units are out of the question for this development.

Chair Cole answered that it is based on the minimum lot size, so they need to ask the applicant what the minimum lot sizes are. She added if they meet the 6,000 square foot threshold for D10, they could be eligible for ADUs.

Director Lawhorne agreed with that.

Toby Lockhart, with Homeshore Engineering, read over what it states in the code about ARS. He said the minimum lot size for D10 is 6,000, and in the preliminary plan it shows that all but one meet that, and the owner is not adverse to doing ADUs for some of them. He shared that they have 11 unit lots and a common lot 12, which includes the access road and cul-de-sac to allow a fire apparatus to get through and additional open space that will handle drainage ditches, water and sewer. He noted there may be some minor configuration changes to the unit lots, but there is no desire to increase the number of unit lots after tonight.

Director Lawhorne asked if the applicant wanted to pursue reconfiguring or shifting the lot line so each lot met the minimum lot size of 6,000 to where they could have an ADU on each of them.

John Armstrong, owner of Cutting Edge Development, did not think they would be opposed to moving some lot lines around to get the last lot where it also meets the 6,000 square foot.

Chair Cole asked if there were any plans sidewalks or publicly accessible walkways.

Mr. Lockhart answered that a sidewalk is not included in the current plan and they believe that with a dead-end cul-de-sac, they will not have high speeds or volumes, and the estimated ADT is under 100. In his professional judgement, he did not feel it was warranted here. He noted that they have obtained a driveway permit for several dwellings, more than the current plan reflects.

Chair Cole stated they had a note in the additional materials from DOT that said a new driveway access permit for the development due to change of use, and the driveway was considered un-permitted as they had no record of it, so it sounds like that needs to be worked out with DOT.

Mr. Lockhart expressed that he was not aware of that, but will follow up.

Chair Cole said it appears that there is a substantial piece of land and asked if it was green space.

Mr. Lockhart answered yes.

Mr. Epstein noted that each unit has two parking spaces. He inquired if people would be parking in the street or parking on their lot with the narrow approach road of 20 foot.

Mr. Lockhart responded that they put in a driveway for each of the units on a concept level in the plan, with enough room to get two passenger vehicles off of the common access and parked in front of the house.

Ms. Derr asked if he still felt sidewalks are not needed with the potential of having an ADU on each of the lots, which would double the amount of potential vehicles moving through the area.

Mr. Lockhart answered he still felt they were not needed.

Chair Cole asked about the vegetation that would separate the houses to the south and those on Wilma Ave.

Mr. Lockhart answered that the plan shows a 20 foot buffer to the west, which leaves enough room for trees and undergrowth, but he reserved judgement until they do the final grading plan at the preliminary plat phase, as they may need some of that room for the back slopes and ditches. He said they would be stabilizing the slopes and likely hydroseeding at a minimum where needed, but they will leave trees where they can.

Chair Cole asked if there would be anything visually between the 5 foot buffer space like fencing or vegetation.

Mr. Lockhart answered they do not plan to put up a fence.

Chair Cole opened public testimony.

John Hyde voiced that his major concern was the setback between the properties on Wilma and this development, that they do not destroy any timber or removal of the bedrock that could create problems for the people that live there. He was also concerned with public safety, as another development had been proposed right below Wilma towards town that could contain over 50 to 60 vehicles. He said that people drive right over the trail where people bike and walk with no guardrail when they turn left coming out of Wilma, and when coming out of the road to town, they often will pass into the oncoming lane to get around you because no one wants to wait, as Glacier Rd is the most used road in the Juneau borough. He said these properties will add more unsafe driving conditions there. He expressed that it is also on top of a hill with no visibility one way or the other, and when berms of snow are there, you cannot even see what is coming 100 feet away. He mentioned that federal regulations says there needs to be 500 feet to stop in winter weather, and DOT stated on their website that their objective is to reduce or eliminate all traffic accidents in Alaska, but this will cause more accidents. He noted that deer and bear also cross the road there all the time. He added that for this to be developed, they need to address all these issues and create improvements to make the area safe.

John Thudinga (ph), Wilma resident, voiced safety concerns. He said they live downstream from the proposed subdivision with ditches all around their houses, and they have water issues in the fall and winter. He was concerned how the drainage would work with this development, as they cannot handle any more water draining that way. The other concern he had was making left and rights turns, as visibility from Wilma is awful, mainly from Auke Bay over the crest. He voiced that having another access towards the crest will create more safety hazards with traffic.

Chair Cole asked the applicant to come back up and address comments and/or add testimony.

Mr. Lockhart expressed that the driveway permit was in place before he came on board, so he was not very familiar with it; however, the weather requirements with any driveway permit is to look at site distance and site triangles that takes into account vertical and horizontal geometry of the highway. He said that in this case, horizontally is a pretty straight shot with good site distances north and south. He stated that it is on top of a vertical curve, but he assumed they looked at that when the driveway permit was obtained. He shared that they have substantially completed the drainage study and report that will be included that the preliminary check list phase. He said since they are on top of the vertical curve, they have chosen to split the water, as there are nice big ditches along Glacier Highway, and they evaluated it for a quarter of a mile downstream and have no concerns. He believed having a 20 foot wide access and ditches on either side will help remove water from the site.

Chair Cole asked if they considered the green space on lot 12 as an access point since there is Glacier Highway access there.

Mr. Lockhart responded that as a rule, DOT likes to limited access points and did not want to add another one. He also believed there was an issue with getting that one permitted, so they opted to use it for open space and drainage.

Chair Cole asked Director Lawhorne about the cumulative driveway effect, as the residents of Wilma were correct that they just heard a subdivision permit for just south of them with the same concerns. She asked if DOT takes into account how many they are doing on that portion of land when they grant permits for driveway access like this.

Director Lawhorne expressed she did not know the answer, but they do like to use the existing permitted driveways that are already there. She said DOT is aware of the other development as well, so she imagined that they are looking at the highway itself and what they have permitted.

Mr. Epstein stated the measure of merit is trip generation in the peak hour, and if that exceeds 100, the applicant has to undertake a traffic impact analysis study and implement any mitigations needed, but he did not know if this development would generate 100 trips in a peak hour.

Mr. Gamez asked if there would be streetlights, as in the wintertime they have a lot of darkness, and he was thinking of the kids that would be living in those 11 or 12 units someday.

Director Lawhorne answered that they can put that in for the applicant to work through.

Ms. Derr asked if 5 foot buffers are common for this type of alternative residential subdivision or if the Commission could request a larger buffer between residential units to give some space.

Director Lawhorne responded that the minimum setbacks required for the parent lot are those of the underlying zoning district, which is D10, and that is their minimum requirement. She said the Commission can increase it, but noted that Wilma has the same applicable setbacks.

Chair Cole asked for clarification that in another development they spent time on vegetation cover in the buffer zone to create visual separation.

Director Lawhorne answered that is correct, and it also went for bonuses, which was another reason the Commission cared for more amenities and additives on that site. She stated that it is helpful to take into each site's surroundings, as in Ridgeview, they were mostly concerned with the lights being in the backyards. She added that in this instance, they are coming down the road and going away from Wilma. She noted that there are no setback requirements on the unit lots and the parameter buffer is required in lieu of the setback requirements, and the presumptive buffer width shall not be less than the setback of the underlying zoning district and the Commission can enlarge all or a portion of a buffer up to 25 feet in total width and can reduce buffer or portion by 75% of the setback for the underlying zoning district.

Ms. Keller shared that it looks like unit lots 11 and 10 will be close and unit lot 10 is quite far away from its boundary, but lot 11 is really close. She asked what the distance would be from the existing homes and unit lot 11.

Chair Cole asked for clarification that it would be a 10 foot separation between structures.

Director Lawhorne confirmed that sounded correct, and added that the contours for the site show that the land closest to the properties along Glacier Highway is flatter, so she wondered if the site itself dictates the best buildable sites on each unit lot. She believed they are trying to get in the housing they need on the buildable land they have and it does have topography to work within.

Mr. Salik suggested that the developer relocate the mailbox and water meter that is right as they pull into the subdivision, as they do not want someone stopping there to get their mail there while traffic is trying to get in and out of there.

Director Lawhorne expressed that USPS is not the easiest agency to work with and we typically do not have much say in where they put the mailboxes, but will do their best and will ask about the water meter location as well.

Chair Cole had concerns about the potential confusion with DOT on the existing driveway permit, but believed there is an existing permit and the confusion is on the part of DOT.

Ms. Derr voiced that she heard the concerns from the public in regard to entrance and exit onto Glacier Highway, but that it is a state maintained road, so that is not necessarily in their lane. She was concerned about the 5 foot buffer, as Wilma residents have a bit more tree coverage and there should be adequate tree buffer between Wilma and this subdivision, but looking at parcel viewer and how the houses on Glacier Highway are pushed back, they are going to be staring at each other's back windows. She noted that would frustrate her as a homeowner, so she would be in favor of increasing the buffer or requiring trees as a visual buffer between the two sites.

Chair Cole noted that the public comment on that came from Wilma and not those homeowners.

MOTION: *by Mr. Epstein to accept staff's findings, analysis, and recommendations, and approve ARP2025 0001, subject to the conditions suggested by staff.*

Ms. Derr objected and proposed a friendly amendment to limit it to 11 lots or less and to add a lighting requirement if staff is able to work through that with Streets and DOT for safety.

No objections to the amendment.

Chair Cole supported the motion, explaining that it gives them what they have in terms of the findings and that the proposal for the 11 lots and one parent lot is the max they are willing to consider, and if it was something different than those 12 lots, they would have to come back to them, and it adds the lighting component. She said it does not speak to the buffer specifically, and she is in agreement with that, because this neighborhood as proposed is in general harmony with the existing neighborhood.

Ms. Keller recommended that the wording in the recommendation read something like creating one parent lot with 11 unit lots than saying 11 unit lots and one parent lot to make it clearer and avoid confusion.

Chair Cole and Mr. Epstein accepted that as a friendly amendment.

Chair Cole asked for any objections to changing the language to "one parent lot and 11 unit lots within that one parent lot".

No objections.

Chair Cole asked for any objections to the original motion with the amended language.

The motion passed.

XI. OTHER BUSINESS

1. Comprehensive Plan Update
   "Our Juneau, Our Future"

Director Lawhorne explained that they are undertaking the Juneau Comprehensive Plan, "Our Juneau, Our Future", and they anticipate it to be completed in under three years. She expressed that the comprehensive plan is a 20-year road map on how they are going to grow, and it looks out 20 to 30 years into the future to address the broad interests that covers a wide range of polices and investments and will be community driven. She added that they need the community's input for this plan to be successful, implemented, and acted upon. The last time the comprehensive plan was adopted was in 2013, which was more of an update than a rewrite, and now it is time to lift up the comprehensive plan to be the long range vision and strategy. She talked about some of the changes that have occurred since the comprehensive plan was last adopted and how comprehensive plans result in real on-the-ground change. She went over what makes a good comprehensive plan, including a detailed assessment of existing conditions, understanding emerging trends, meaningful public engagement, consideration of alternatives, incorporating economic realities, policies that can be implemented, and a concise and uncomplicated visually engaging document. She explained that the comprehensive plan update process will be done in three phases, the listen and learn phase, the imagining possibilities phase that will take place between December 2025 and June 2026, and the developing the plan phase that will take place July 2026 to June 2027. She went over the project timeline and the roles and responsibilities of the Planning Commission, including attending public meetings and events, attending AC Committees, reviewing the draft plan and public comments, recommending action to the Assembly, and acting as the champions of the plan. Director Lawhorne discussed scenario planning and driving forces, which is to take into account all of the things that may impact Juneau and that could derail them, and how to address those scenarios if they happen, so they can pivot and keep moving forward. She stated that scenario planning raises awareness, minimizes blind spots, focuses the discussion on policies that help the community manage risk, and provides a reference case for what could happen if policies stay as they are. She talked about next steps during August 25-28, 2025, including student classroom activities, working with the Alaska Native community focus group, a possible Filipino community focus group, North/West Douglas public meeting, AC Meeting, and a possible Planning Commission presentation on public engagement feedback. In late October of 2025, they will have an AC Committee Meeting, community workshops, and a possible Planning Commission presentation on draft plan vision and guiding principles.

Ms. Keller commented that she is the liaison to the Juneau Commission on Sustainability, and they have repeatedly asked if sustainability will be considered in the comprehensive plan, so she asked if that is something they consider one of the driving forces. She noted that one thing that came to mind is their trash disposal issue.

Director Lawhorne responded that they have had communications with JCOS, and at the Advisory Committee meeting, waste disposal and system were mentioned by committee members and already flagged as a concern.

Mr. Pedersen stated there are CBJ land maps that identify the retained, dispose, keep as parks. He inquired if that was part of the last comp plan process.

Director Lawhorne stated that since she has been here the Lands Division and City Manager's Office have undertaken the Land Management Plan that says what should be retained, disposed, and kept as parks, and was adopted into the comprehensive plan. She believed that the last time that was fully updated was 2016 and believed that the Lands Division Manager is intending to do an update.

Mr. Gamez asked if there is anything in their future that they can help or regroup with the homeless.

Director Lawhorne responded that likely through scenario planning, she believed mental health, homelessness, and those types of concerns will be raised as situations to address.

XII. STAFF REPORTS

Director Lawhorne reported that she will be on leave starting Friday afternoon, and Scott Ciambor will be acting in her place. She stated that her staff is doing amazing, and the building official, permit manager, database specialist, planners, fire marshal, and general engineering manager went through Tyler Tech training last week, as they are in the process of switching their permit software system. She said they are aiming to be finished in December, but hoped to finish early. She expressed that they are looking at October for a housing forum.

XIII. COMMITTEE REPORTS

Mr. Epstein attended the June 2nd Public Works and Facilities Committee Meeting, where they did a funds transfer to Marine Park CIP from Waterfront Seawalk CIP, Mike Baker International presented an update on the Juneau International Airport Master Plan, and there was a project update on the Juneau Douglas North Crossing.

Mr. Pedersen voiced that the Douglas West Juneau Steering Committee wrapped up their work and he anticipated that the Planning Committee will see that plan soon. He stated that the Short Term Rental Taskforce wrapped up their work and will be providing a recommendation to the Assembly on potential increases in fees for short term rental operators and a potential cap of the number of units an owner can operate based on rental vacancy rates.

Ms. Rintala attended the Comp Plan AC Meeting on June 17th, and shared that she was able to meet Cascadia Partners and some of the Advisory Committee members, and it was great to see them working together. She was impressed with how they teased information out of the Advisory Committee members who were selected for having a broad and diverse wealth of knowledge to offer about Juneau. She was also impressed with the robust public participation process they outlined going forward and watching how they were able to guide discussion among members of the public. She thanked city staff for the expertise they bring to these big projects and identifying the right partners in contracting and the Advisory Committee members who bring passion for Juneau, as it was all reflected really well in the meeting.

XIV. LIAISON REPORTS

Christine Woll reported that the Assembly passed their budget for the upcoming fiscal year. She said they passed utility rate increases and approved a schedule for that for both water and wastewater for 5% per year for the next 5 years. She noted that it had been recommended that they do 10% a year, but they knew that would be a lot for the community to stomach, so they have to figure out other ways to fund the projects that will not be funded at a 5% increase. She stated they made the decision to officially move forward in raising the properties at Telephone Hill, evicting the people who live up there, and investing $5.5 million to begin redevelopment of that property. She shared that at the July meeting, they will focus on upcoming elections and figure out what is going to be on the ballot in October, as they may have up to three citizen initiatives that are being certified right now. She added that the Assembly is also considering up to three Assembly initiated ballot questions and considering asking about a seasonal sales tax and bond proposals for our utilities or schools.

XV. CONTINUATION OF PUBLIC PARTICIPATION ON NON-AGENDA ITEMS

XVI. PLANNING COMMISSION COMMENTS AND QUESTIONS

Chair Cole commented that she and Director Lawhorne have been working on the rest of the summer schedule. She said they do not have any cases scheduled for the July 8th meeting, so there will not be a meeting, but they are anticipating hearing a complicated flood plain permit exemption on July 22nd, so she suggested holding a Committee of the Whole Meeting on July 15th. She explained the reason they are not doing it on the July 8th is because Director Lawhorne cannot be there and timing issues with the permit and comments from other agencies, so they will have more information available to them by the 15th. She anticipated the meeting will be educational for the Planning Commission and there would be the opportunity for public testimony at the hearing date, in which they anticipate that night would have a lot of public participation; therefore, splitting that up into two nights makes more sense for the timeline.

Ms. Derr voiced that she will be able to attend the July 15th meeting, but she will be in travel status on the 22nd, so she would need to join remotely.

Chair Cole expressed that she was granted a Rasmuson Sabbatical for three months that will start in September, but plans to attend at least every other meeting while she is away.

She said Mr. Pedersen agreed to be the Chair during that time, but they will need to figure out who will serve as Vice Chair, clerk, or assistant clerk.

XVII. EXECUTIVE SESSION

XVIII. SUPPLEMENTAL MATERIALS

1. Additional Materials

XIX. ADJOURNMENT

The June 24, 2025 Planning Commission Meeting was adjourned at 9:01 p.m.