APPROVED MINUTES

Agenda
Planning Commission
Regular Meeting
CITY AND BOROUGH OF JUNEAU
Mandy Cole, Chair
August 12, 2025

I. LAND ACKNOWLEDGEMENT – Read by Chair Cole.

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!

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 7:03 p.m.

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

Commissioners absent: Adam Brown, Lacey Derr

Staff present: Jill Lawhorne, CDD Director; Irene Gallion, Senior Planner; Madeline Carse, CDD Administrative Assistant; Sherri Layne, Attorney III; Nicole Lynch, Attorney III; Minta Montalbo, Senior Planner; Brandon Robinson, Planner II; Ilsa Lund, Planner II

Assembly members: None

III. REQUEST FOR AGENDA CHANGES AND APPROVAL OF AGENDA - Agenda was approved.

IV. APPROVAL OF MINUTES

A. July 15, 2025, Draft Minutes, Planning Commission Committee of the Whole

MOTION: *by Mr. Epstein to approve the July 15, 2025, Planning Commission Committee of the Whole Meeting minutes. The motion passed.*

V. BRIEF REVIEW OF THE RULES FOR PUBLIC PARTICIPATION

VI. PUBLIC PARTICIPATION ON NON-AGENDA ITEMS

VII. ITEMS FOR RECONSIDERATION

VIII. CONSENT AGENDA

SMF2025 0002: Final Plat approval for Phase 1B of Pederson Hill Subdivision.

Applicant: Tlingit and Haida Regional Housing Authority

Location: Glacier Hwy

DIRECTOR'S REPORT

The applicant requests a final plat review for Pederson Hill Subdivision, Phase 1B. The approval would authorize the development of 30 residential lots and two (2) public use lots, including rights-of-way and a pedestrian thoroughfare (Wild Rose Walk). The subdivision is consistent with the approved preliminary plat (SMP2016-0002)**.**

STAFF RECOMMENDATION

Staff recommends the Planning Commission adopt the Director's analysis and findings and APPROVE Final Plat SMF2025 0002.

MOTION: *by Mr. Salik to accept staff's findings, analysis, and recommendations, and approve SMF2025 0002. The motion passed.*

IX. UNFINISHED BUSINESS

AME2019 0015: The proposed Text Amendment would update the City and Borough of Juneau's Comprehensive Plan by adding the Downtown Douglas / West Juneau Area Plan as an attachment.

Applicant: City and Borough of Juneau
Location: N/A

DIRECTOR'S REPORT

The draft Downtown Douglas / West Juneau Area Plan (the Plan) is a 20-year vision for development and growth in the area from the Juneau-Douglas Bridge to Sandy Beach. The Plan includes five main elements to set forth the goals and actions that support its vision of a community that is: connected, prosperous, healthy and active, cultural and artistic, and sustainable and green.

STAFF RECOMMENDATION

Staff recommends that the Planning Commission APPROVE the Downtown Douglas / West Juneau Area Plan as an addition to the CBJ Comprehensive Plan and forward their Notice of Recommendation to the City Assembly.

Director Lawhorne explained this is a continuation of the Commission's discussion at the last meeting. She discussed the proposed substitution language for Goal 5.3, which is "Maintain the character and enhance the safety of current and future neighbors on and around 5th Street and Douglas, " and Action A would read, "Retain existing land use and zoning for CBJ-owned, platted parcels along the undeveloped 6th Street right-of-way." Therefore, they would retain the existing land use and not put it into parks. Action B reads, "Conduct public outreach to the surrounding neighborhoods to inform and solicit input from CBJ residents prior to disposal and in accordance with CBJ code," and Action C, "Conduct appropriate evaluations of existing and potential conditions of these parcels prior to development." She explained there were concerns with the area and topography, and these steps would allow public process for the neighbors to air concerns and ensure they are addressed through the development process. Director Lawhorne stated that with regard to the exercise maps that have caused confusion, they could either remove them or come up with clarifying language to put as a disclaimer for the maps.

Chair Cole thought they were going to delete Goal 5.3 altogether, but appreciated the suggested language.

Mr. Pedersen supported the suggested changes, as he thought it was a nice balance and does more than just deleting 5.3. It would also allow development of that to go through the sufficient public process to make it a responsible development.

Chair Cole still favored deleting it altogether, partly because she was concerned about setting up any neighborhood with a special process outside of their normal code just because the neighbors are particularly attached to the outcome of that neighborhood, because that is probably the case for every neighborhood in CBJ. Therefore, it is cleaner to simply eliminate the goal. She added there may also be a case that comes up in the future where the zone should be appropriately changed that makes sense for development, and this may put artificial barriers up for that.

Mr. Epstein wondered if eliminating Action A would change her mind.

Chair Cole felt it was really an issue of doing the same work they would do for any development proposed in any neighborhood with that land use designation, and she is opposed to in any way designating that piece of property as special or distinct from all the other properties in Juneau.

Director Lawhorne continued talking about the other changes. She said the next issues to discuss were whether or not to delete the confusing maps and to either delete the two traffic calming renderings from the appendix or put them back next to Goal 1.2, Action B. She liked the idea of putting it back, because images usually help people understand what they are trying to convey.

Ms. Keller agreed that with the traffic, it would be great to put them where they are being discussed like suggested. In regard to the maps, if they did not want to delete them entirely, it would be helpful to make it very clearly stated that those images were from the development process.

Chair Cole agreed that the maps are confusing and the Steering Committee also had a member that felt that way. She said they do have other maps that demonstrate the parcels, neighborhoods, and land uses as they are, and felt that they should have accurate maps that show what is currently designated in the plan.

Ms. Keller asked if it was possible to create a map of the final result of the plan as part of the Comprehensive Plan.

Director Lawhorne responded that was a good question and she would be happy to make a note and look into that.

Chair Cole noted that it looks like they have some consensus around removing the process maps and moving the traffic maps.

Director Lawhorne then discussed Mayflower Island. She stated that she thought it worked itself out as the process with Douglas moved on and people became more aware of the CBJ needing to be the pass through, and the Assembly has already committed to giving Mayflower to DIA.

Chair Cole asked the Director if she supported keeping 2.4, the Assembly goal to support DIA in acquiring Mayflower and deleting 4.2 about the development scale.

Director Lawhorne answered yes.

Mr. Pedersen supported the deletion of Goal 4.2, Action C.

Chair Cole commented that she had concerns about them talking about equity and then putting the piece in about Downtown Douglas being originally established as Edwardsville in 1881, when prior to that there were native people caring for the land, as it later talks about the Village and the burning of the Village. She suggested adding the piece about the Village prior to the statement of Downtown Douglas in 1881 as more of chronological history than as an aside at the end of the plan.

Mr. Pedersen expressed that he was sure there were people in that area, but did not know if that particular village predated 1881, so he hesitated making an assumption of that and putting it in the plan if it was not true.

Chair Cole agreed that she did not want to put it in as fact if it was not.

Mr. Epstein suggested finding an expert to ask and see what is right.

Ms. Keller was in full agreement that they should add that to the history, but they also need to look at what it really was.

Director Lawhorne stated that the challenge the difficulty in getting people to agree on what the correct history was, as they always struggle when it comes to talking about the Village and the fires in Douglas. She said they need to have some strong engagement and dig into heavy issues like the history. She suggested adding that the town itself was more speaking to the mining era, which was in 1881.

Chair Cole's main issue was this was in the beginning of the plan and the piece about the Indian village was toward the end of the plan, so maybe inserting it with better formatting right before, would make her more comfortable with the talk of equity.

Mr. Epstein shared one option is to do away with the first paragraph altogether since the heading is Planning Boundaries.

Chair Cole explained they are not talking about sending the plan back to the Steering Committee, but they can give good direction so that when they pass this onto the Assembly they understand the places they had concerns and may choose to engage further in refining the plan or staff may be able to alter some things. She did note that where many of their neighborhood plans have more advisory language, this plan has some pretty concrete actions. She asked Mr. Pedersen why that is. She was also a little concerned about the specificity of the language in a couple of places.

Mr. Pedersen believed a lot of the members of the Steering Committee felt strongly about certain items, which may have been some of the items that had the most discussion around them.

Director Lawhorne expressed that while a plan should be visionary, it also needs to be achievable, and they do not want pie in the sky. She used an example of Mt Jumbo Gym, which is a site they know so well and has been well discussed, which is probably why they have such strong specific ideas on how to improve or better use that site.

Chair Cole asked if the city should limit any of its options by adopting a plan with those granular actions. She noted she is comparing this to all the neighborhood plans she has seen since she has been on the Commission. She inquired about if someone came up with a good plan contrary to the specific action in this plan, would that mean that it is out of conformity with the plan.

Director Lawhorne responded that depending on the situation, some of the pieces of the place requiring zoning or other development tools typically need another public process to make a zone change happen or make a development permissible. Using the example of Mt Jumbo Gym, if someone came up with an amazing idea for it, they could still take it into consideration when speaking to development of sites. She explained that each action is not its own ordinance, and the plan itself is adopted into the Comp Plan, so it is a guide. She noted that having actions in the plans are great, because it does support a lot of grant and other funds they may seek.

Chair Cole pointed out that there are quite a few that include funds as part of their action. She asked Director Lawhorne if she was concerned about those.

Director Lawhorne answered no, as it is still a guiding document and they are going to strive to be better shepherds of their plans moving forward with their long range planning team, and she is looking forward to having more project management over the actions and working more closely with the CIP Program and other departments.

Mr. Pedersen admitted that he gave guidance to the Steering Committee at one point that if there were items that were really important to them, that they should include them, and if they are in the plan, then the plan could be used as backup for a grant, funding requests, or be worked into the City's CIP budget. He explained someone could use the plan to block an action, but in general, having those actions in the plan will provide backup.

Chair Cole appreciated the discussion, but still preferred consider, explore, and then use the same sentence than implement, fund, or allocate, but she understood why they are advocating for that and said she could live with it as long as they are all on the same page that other ideas may come not specific to the action located there. She added that she wanted to stay away from using the plan to block other ideas.

Ms. Rintala expressed that as a person who relies on these area plans for guidance, she wanted to be sure that the guidance they are recommending is really robust.

Chair Cole summarized the meeting so far for CM Rintala, as she was just now able to join the meeting. She then asked if there were any other places they should look at in the plan prior to going through and voting on each of the changes.

Mr. Salik voiced that on page 325 of the packet, it talks about installing speed tables, and wondered if that would be included in the removing the traffic calming language.

Mr. Epstein shared that is speed table or speed hump and the speed limit on 3rd Street is 30 mph, and he believed it would be more effective to look at the speed limit rather than putting a potential hazard in the roadway or install rectangular rapid flashing beacons. He suggested engaging DOT, as that is a state highway.

Commissioner Salik said he was fine with that, as the point of his comment was to potentially remove the whole raised pedestrian crossing.

Mr. Pedersen voiced it would simplify things by just deleting that one particular note located on that page that talks to the raised pedestrian crossing.

Ms. Keller commented that it did not look like it is spelled to be an action, and she saw two different maps for traffic calming showing two different examples, with one being those midblock crossings and the other being conventional crossings. She said it looks like they are using them as examples of what traffic calming could look like.

Chair Cole asked Director Lawhorne if she thought of anything there needed to be remove that is prescriptive or were they just examples and do not need to be altered.

Director Lawhorne did wonder if the public may read it more similar to Mr. Salik, so she would be happy to look at the specific language and see how they can make it more general and clear.

Ms. Keller suggested keeping it as an example but take out the specific streets, which would probably help with the confusion.

Mr. Salik concurred with Ms. Keller.

Chair Cole agreed that taking out the specific roads would make it a lot clearer, on top of moving the traffic maps to make them more general. She then went over the list of changes she has that seemed to have general consensus.

Mr. Pedersen suggested they go through all of the different items and ask if there are objections after, and if there are none, they can vote on that together. However, if there are one or two that have an objection, they can put those as amendments when making the motion.

Director Lawhorne agreed with Mr. Pedersen's process as long as everyone was clear that if there is something they do not agree with, someone will need to make an amendment on those things.

Chair Cole expressed the general consensus actions, including deleting 4.2, Action C, removing the process maps, and moving the traffic maps to the related section and making them more general.

Everyone agreed on those.

Chair Cole then went over the controversial list, which included moving the Indian Village page up to where the equity and planning boundaries piece is and deleting the first half of the paragraph about Edwardsville, and either deleting 5.3 altogether or adopting the alternative language suggested by CDD. She asked if there were any comments on 5.3.

Mr. Pedersen expressed that he could see the benefit of going either way on that one. He said if they went to the proposed language from the director, it may be more in line with the will of the Steering Committee, but he also can see the merit of it seeming odd to treat this neighborhood differently than all the other ones.

Ms. Rintala shared that her thoughts on 5.3 were that it would make more sense to remove the goal entirely.

Chair Cole explained what would likely happen is when they moved to recommend the plan to the Assembly with the consensus changes as outlined, they would suggest an amendment to delete 5.3 altogether and then vote on it. In regard to the Village and Edwardsville discussion, they have a tangible suggestion by Mr. Epstein to delete the first paragraph in the couplet of paragraphs. She said that other suggestion was to move the part that talks about the Douglas Island indigenous history up to the same place as the planning boundary to signal that history does not start in 1881, even though they do not know exactly what the area looked like in 1880. She asked if anyone had any other suggestions on that.

Director Lawhorne asked if they wanted to keep the last sentence that says, "The City of Douglas was incorporated in 1902, then merged with the City of Juneau in 1970 to form the CBJ"?

Ms. Keller suggested adding that the City of Douglas is on native land or add what we know and start the paragraph with it and then go through the history of it following that, even if they do not know the exact dates of that.

Chair Cole said she wanted to avoid making the mistake that is outlined in the equity section of this plan that says there has been policy for years that was ignored and caused oppression, but she did not have the exact language. She stated they may have to pass it along to the Assembly, with recognizing the problem and suggesting several ways to overcome it, but they might need wordsmithing in order to get there.

Ms. Keller added wanted to have the history in it, as it is important to Douglas, and suggested include everyone and everything and not erase it.

Director Lawhorne voiced that in hearing this discussion and the difficult discussions they have had for decades on this, she appreciates the suggestion of striking that first paragraph and starting at "Downtown Douglas is situated," etc., and then taking strong note of this discussion and working through this in the Comprehensive Plan with citywide community engagement. She was not sure that people agree on what we all know and it all comes down to that. She also suggested that the motion ask for there to be a focus on this discussion through the Comprehensive Plan process.

Chair Cole felt they now had general consensus on that and asked if anyone objected to that. There were no objections.

[The Commission took a 3-minute at ease]

Chari Cole asked if everyone agreed to deleting 5.3. There were no objections.

MOTION: *by Mr. Pedersen to accept staff's findings, analysis, and recommendations, and approve AME2019 0015 and incorporate all changes discussed at this meeting today and forward it to the Assembly with the recommendation to adopt as an addition to the CBJ Comprehensive Plan. The motion passed.*

X. REGULAR AGENDA

XI. OTHER BUSINESS

XII. STAFF REPORTS

Director Lawhorne reported that there is a request for Patterson Hill to be signed tomorrow. She announced that they have a Commission Meeting on August 26th, likely at Centennial Hall, which is the night Cascadia, the Comprehensive Plan consultants, will be in town that whole week, where they will join the Committee for the meeting and at a work session, and they are scheduled to attend several other meetings. She said the work session should be interesting and engaging, and they will cover scenario planning, as well as other things. She felt strongly that it should be recorded and available to the public so they can listen in since they are discussing the Comprehensive Plan. Director Lawhorne shared that they have a planner position open. She added that she was also thinking to send the notice of the work session in the Friday report to the Assembly so they will be are of it and give them an opportunity to listen in too. She also noted they are having a housing forum in November, where they will offer several credits to builders and realtors, but it will not be open to the public. She said that in early January, their Tyler Tech Permit Software System should be coming online.

Chair Cole expressed that the next August will be her last meeting as Chair, as she will be stepping down during her sabbatical, and Mr. Petersen will take over as chair and will likely designate the rest of the officers.

Director Lawhorne voiced that they have no cases for either September meeting, but they are expecting a bigger and larger application from Juneau Hydropower likely in October.

XIII. COMMITTEE REPORTS

Mr. Epstein reported that the Public Works and Facilities Committee held a meeting a week ago and discussed CIP fund transfers and closeouts, offroad vehicle parks, and had a lengthy discussion on capital transit and its service to North Douglas.

XIV. LIAISON REPORTS

XV. CONTINUATION OF PUBLIC PARTICIPATION ON NON-AGENDA ITEMS

XVI. PLANNING COMMISSION COMMENTS AND QUESTIONS

XVII. EXECUTIVE SESSION

XVIII. SUPPLEMENTAL MATERIALS

XIX. ADJOURNMENT

The August 12, 2025 Planning Commission Meeting was adjourned at 8:42 p.m.