



South Puget Sound Habitat for Humanity

April 3, 2023

To:

Community Planning & Development Director – Leonard Bauer  
Olympia Planning Commission

601 4<sup>th</sup> Ave E  
Olympia, WA 98501  
via. e-mail

Dear Director Bauer and Members of the Planning Commission,

South Puget Sound Habitat for Humanity (SPSHFH) is a nonprofit organization that develops affordable homeownership opportunities to ensure that everyone, regardless of income, can achieve the American dream of owning a home.

SPSHFH greatly appreciates the efforts done by the Olympia Planning Commission (commission) and the Community Planning & Development Department (department) to clarify the city's permitting process. As we have continued to build more homes in our community to carry out our mission, we have increasingly found navigating the permitting process cumbersome, and often projects get held up during this process.

Any step to help streamline and clarify the permitting process and planning requirements will directly help organizations like SPSHFH more easily build affordable housing options in Olympia.

However, SPSHFH feels more can be done. We provide the following ideas that we believe will help improve the permitting process, especially for organizations that build income restricted affordable housing projects, like SPSHFH.

## **Affordable Housing Permitting Review Program**

The affordable housing crisis is only becoming worse every year. It is imperative that our community has the ability to quickly build more units – particularly income restricted affordable housing units.

A dedicated program within the permitting process for affordable housing will help ensure this. The city of Tacoma has such a program, along with a dedicated permit reviewer for affordable housing projects, that we strongly urge the commission and the department to consider replicating.

Hallmarks of this program include its priority review policy and pre-planning steps:

- **Priority Review**  
The Priority Review Policy allows qualified projects to have their permitting processes receive shorter target windows for their first two review cycles (essentially a free version of Tacoma's existing expedited option for permit review), generally resulting in review periods taking half of the previous time. 85% of permitting processes for residential sites now take 8 weeks or less but their eventual goal is 2 weeks or less. The policy also allows the permitting office to contract with third parties as needed to ensure that review target windows are being met.
- **Pre-Planning Process**  
Working closely with the Priority Review Policy, the pre-planning process allows stakeholders to minimize costs and limit delays in the permitting process by allowing the permitting office to give early, site specific feedback for participants, and aiding/facilitating participant projects as they navigate the permitting process, including creating regulatorily compliant planning documents and other materials required by the planning process.

Additionally, this program includes fee waiver policies for nonprofit affordable housing organizations, which help further the funds granted to organizations like SPSHFH meant to be spent on construction costs for affordable housing.

SPSHFH hopes the commission and the department consider this program idea and that there can be additional conversations to explore these concepts.

We believe this can be one of many ideas to help improve the permitting process to further the city of Olympia's goal of addressing the housing affordability crisis.

Sincerely,

Carly Colgan – Chief Executive Officer, South Puget Sound Habitat for Humanity

**From:** [Larry of Nottingham](#)  
**To:** [Leonard Bauer](#)  
**Cc:** [Nicole Floyd](#); [Joyce Phillips](#)  
**Subject:** Re: Olympia Planning Commission public hearing April 3  
**Date:** Monday, April 03, 2023 4:18:50 PM  
**Attachments:** [image001.png](#)

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I appreciate your response but I find your reply inadequate on several levels.

The three slides you provide don't explain WHAT is changing just the INTENT of what is to be changed. The Joyce Phillips example I provided shows what the substantive changes are, like reducing minimum parking requirements to zero for these specific property types. Not just the intent to reduce parking.

If you are saying that there are no policy changes, please explain how you are increasing "...flexibility in the permit process (part of a broader scope to review fees/regulations to identify housing cost reductions/reduce barriers)"?

Please explain how, without substantive changes, risk is reduced, as you wrote in the Commerce Housing Action Plan and Implementation (HAPI) grant application, "Improving the permit process also helps to encourage development in these areas as it reduces building costs and risk."

It is incumbent upon you as staff to provide a crosswalk to the changes claimed to reduce costs and risk and demonstrate that those changes are not substantive.

It is misleading to call process changes non-substantive. You cannot say a process change, for the sake of illustration, that says the public can only vote for 3 hours on a Tuesday starting at 3:00 am has no substantive impact on voting rights and outcomes. I can't tell from the materials you provide whether what you say are process changes have real-world substantive impact.

Likewise, who has the authority to decide on permits is more than procedural. Again, an illustration. If the person who gets to decide on a civil trial is a mediator selected by the company being sued versus being heard by an independently elected judge, it has a substantive effect on the outcome.

Also, time for notices and who gets what when and in what form are substantive. Further, they are amenable to a table or a before and after comparison list.

Finally, the material provided in the packet and the slides do not do justice to the HAPI grant statement that called for "outreach to develop support and get feedback on probable code changes". Without a comprehensible communication, accessible and understandable to the general public, that is only so much HAPI talk.

Please share these comments with the Planning Commission.

Best wishes,

Larry Dzieza

On Mon, Apr 3, 2023 at 8:41 AM Leonard Bauer <[lbauer@ci.olympia.wa.us](mailto:lbauer@ci.olympia.wa.us)> wrote:

Hi Larry,

I'm attaching a few of the slides that will be part of the presentation at the public hearing, which provide a summary of changes proposed in this ordinance. As you can see, there are many separate parts of the current code that describe permit review procedures for each individual type of permit. This ordinance proposes consolidating those into four permit types so it is easier to locate and understand the procedures. Seven different chapters of the Unified Development Code (Title 18 of the Municipal Code) are combined into one new chapter.

I have worked on trying to develop a comparison table as you suggested. However, the existing code provisions include multiple tables listing dozens of permit types and their procedures. For example, to understand a single permit's procedures it is often necessary to find that permit type in lengthy Tables in OMC 18.78.020, 18.72.100, 18.72.120, and 18.75.020. The draft ordinance combines these into four permit types based on the decision-making process (page 3-4 of the ordinance). Because multiple tables are being combined into one, I was not able to come up with a single comparison table that would draw a direct comparison for each type of permit.

I hope these slides are helpful, and I'm available to respond to any specific questions.

***Leonard Bauer, FAICP***

Community Planning & Development Director

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**From:** Larry of Nottingham <[larryofnottingham@gmail.com](mailto:larryofnottingham@gmail.com)>  
**Sent:** Sunday, April 2, 2023 4:55 PM  
**To:** Leonard Bauer <[lbauer@ci.olympia.wa.us](mailto:lbauer@ci.olympia.wa.us)>  
**Cc:** Nicole Floyd <[nfloyd@ci.olympia.wa.us](mailto:nfloyd@ci.olympia.wa.us)>; Joyce Phillips <[jphillip@ci.olympia.wa.us](mailto:jphillip@ci.olympia.wa.us)>  
**Subject:** Re: Olympia Planning Commission public hearing April 3

Leonard you wrote: "However, there might be a way to more simply describe the consolidations and changes in the permitting ordinance in a table format. I'll work on it so there's **a more visual way for people to compare before the public hearing.**"

The hearing is a short time away and I have not seen the more material you said you would provide. Did I miss it?

Thanks.

On Wed, Mar 22, 2023 at 5:20 PM Leonard Bauer <[lbauer@ci.olympia.wa.us](mailto:lbauer@ci.olympia.wa.us)> wrote:

Thanks for the suggestion, Larry. The permit processing ordinance is a consolidation of seven different sections of the Olympia Municipal Code into one section, removing quite a bit of duplication. No substantive development regulations are changing. So it doesn't lend itself as much to a direct comparison as the parking ordinance does.

However, there might be a way to more simply describe the consolidations and changes in the permitting ordinance in a table format. I'll work on it so there's a more visual way for people to compare before the public hearing.

***Leonard Bauer, FAICP***

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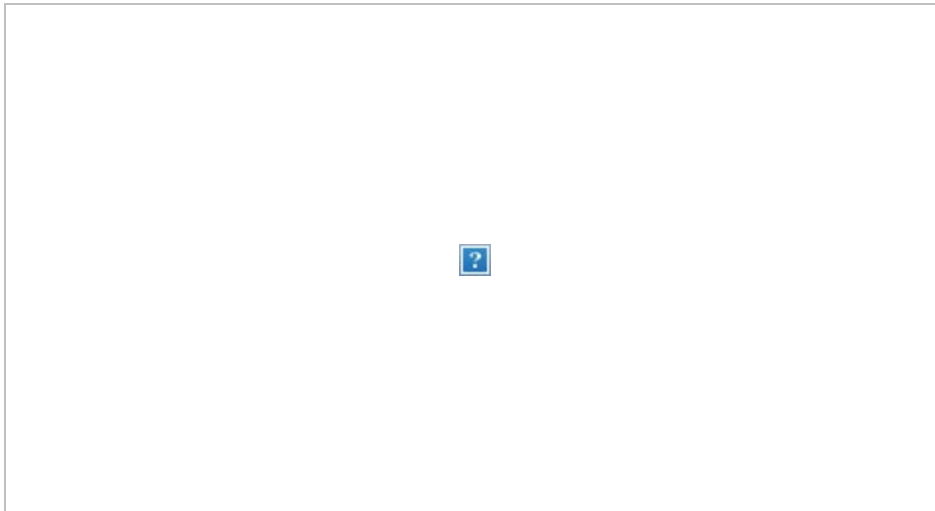
## **Working Together To Make A Difference**

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**From:** Larry ofNottingham <[larryofnottingham@gmail.com](mailto:larryofnottingham@gmail.com)>  
**Sent:** Wednesday, March 22, 2023 12:40 PM  
**To:** Leonard Bauer <[lbauer@ci.olympia.wa.us](mailto:lbauer@ci.olympia.wa.us)>  
**Cc:** Nicole Floyd <[nfloyd@ci.olympia.wa.us](mailto:nfloyd@ci.olympia.wa.us)>; Joyce Phillips <[jphillip@ci.olympia.wa.us](mailto:jphillip@ci.olympia.wa.us)>  
**Subject:** Re: Olympia Planning Commission public hearing April 3

Leonard, it would be helpful for the CNA members and the public in general be able to understand what the changes are by making it more accessible and clear.

Would you be so kind as to present a "Current" and "Proposed" comparison table such as Joyce did for the parking issue?



Joyce's chart went a long way to avoid talking past each other with different understandings of what is being proposed. Your component to the Commerce grant would similarly benefit.

Thanks.

On Wed, Mar 22, 2023 at 12:13 PM Leonard Bauer <[lbauer@ci.olympia.wa.us](mailto:lbauer@ci.olympia.wa.us)> wrote:

You are receiving this email as a “Party of Record” for proposed consolidation and clarification of land use permit processing associated with the Housing Action Plan Implementation work. If you no longer wish to be on this list, please reply to this email and ask to be removed.

Greetings.

The public hearing draft of proposed land use permitting process consolidation is available for review (see attached).

The Olympia Planning Commission will conduct a public hearing on this proposal at its meeting on **Monday, April 3, 2023**. The meeting begins at 6:30 p.m. You can attend in person at Olympia City Hall, Council Chambers, 601 4<sup>th</sup> Ave E, Olympia, WA 98501 or online, via Zoom. If you would like to attend this meeting virtually (online or via phone), please register at:

[https://us02web.zoom.us/webinar/register/WN\\_\\_DzRFe3JTfOXN1qkbdN4kA](https://us02web.zoom.us/webinar/register/WN__DzRFe3JTfOXN1qkbdN4kA)

If you have comments you would like me to share with the Planning Commission and City Council on this public hearing draft, please email your comments to me at [lbauer@ci.olympia.wa.us](mailto:lbauer@ci.olympia.wa.us).

Anyone interested is invited to participate and present testimony. There is no need to register if you will attend in person. If you would like to attend online or via phone, please register in advance using the link above. At the time you register, you will have the option to note you want to give public testimony. To assure consideration, written comments must be received prior to 5:00 p.m. on the day of the hearing. Written statements may be submitted to the Commission in care of the Community Planning and Development Department, PO Box 1967, Olympia, WA 98507-1967 or to [lbauer@ci.olympia.wa.us](mailto:lbauer@ci.olympia.wa.us).

If you require special accommodations for this meeting, please contact Community Planning and Development by 10:00 a.m., 48 hours in advance of the meeting, or earlier if possible; phone: 360.753.8314; e-mail: [cpdinfo@ci.olympia.wa.us](mailto:cpdinfo@ci.olympia.wa.us). For hearing impaired, please contact us by dialing the Washington State Relay Service at 7-1-1 or 1-800-833-6384. The City of Olympia is committed to the non-discriminatory treatment of all persons in the delivery of services and resources.

A summary of proposed changes includes:

- Consolidate all land use permit processes into four types according to the procedure for decision-making.
- Clarify the permit review process and final decision-maker for each of the four permit types: Type 1 – administrative decisions; Type 2 – administrative decisions with public hearing; Type 3 – Hearing Examiner decisions with public hearing; Type 4 – legislative decisions by City Council with public hearing.
  - Consolidate seven separate chapters covering permitting procedures into one chapter of the Unified Development Code (Title 18 Olympia Municipal Code).
  - Amend other chapters of the Unified Development Code for consistency and correcting references.
  - Remove reference to a zoning district no longer in use.
  - There are no proposed amendments to substantive development standards.

***Leonard Bauer, FAICP***

Community Planning & Development Director

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## **Comments to the Olympia Planning Commission's Hearing on the Ordinance Consolidating Land Use Permit Processes 04-03-23**

A notice of this ordinance was sent out to CNA members one week ago, and a fellow CNA member asked me for help with reviewing the "Ordinance Consolidating Land Use Permit Processes." I spent about four hours going through this and had a very difficult time. And I am someone who is familiar with the OMC and City processes. Sections are cut out, and I can tell if they are being deleted or they are duplicated somewhere else. Reference numbers are incomplete and are impossible to track.

Without a list of substantive changes - it is hard to analyze the material. This should have been summarized by staff. The wholesale rewrite is described as a simplification, but it also may be making substantive changes.

Meanwhile- the concerns are about - potential changes to level of authority, public notice requirement changes, and threshold changes for what is permitted. Those changes, if they are indeed happening, should be discussed by the Planning Commission and given due consideration separate from the simplification.

Are any changes being made to the decision authority for some types of permits? If so, then a list of those changes should be made.

Are changes being made to the notice requirements for some types of permits? If so, list those changes.

Any OTHER changes to permit processes or requirements. For example, the threshold for what types of changes are allowed for an existing permitted or conditional use.

The notification process to the Council of Neighborhood Associations is very unclear. What is the time frame, what will be the substance of the notification? This needs to be more clearly spelled out.

Why aren't increases in sizes of schools being considered cumulatively? There is a big difference to a neighborhood when a small school changes into a much larger school.

One week notification for such a complex ordinance with unclear changes AND A HEARING is just not fair to the public, and is horrible public process.

Judy Bardin  
3129 Hoadly St. SE  
Olympia, WA 98501

**From:** [Leonard Bauer](#)  
**To:** [Esther Grace Kronenberg](#)  
**Subject:** RE: Proposed permit streamlining  
**Date:** Friday, April 14, 2023 9:43:00 AM

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Hello, Ms. Kronenberg,

As presented during the multiple public presentations of the permit consolidation project over the past year, including three presentations at the Olympia Planning Commission, the purpose of this ordinance is to consolidate dozens of disparate permit types into four categories. Each of the four permit types would have a consistent process for public notice and application review, making them easier to locate and understand for applicants and interested residents.

I certainly understand that this is a lengthy ordinance and as such it may be difficult to track all of the language changes included for this consolidation. I hope this message answering your questions can help clarify.

- Schools. Your question is whether there's a limit to the number of times a school can increase in size. There is not such a limit, though a conditional use permit must be approved for any expansion greater than 10% (OMC 18.04.060.CC). Conditional use processes are described in OMC 18.48, which is not proposed to be amended by this ordinance. An amendment on page 54 of the ordinance is proposed because it is duplicative of the process descriptions in OMC 18.48.
- SEPA. There will be no changes to the City's State Environmental Policy Act (SEPA) procedures as a result of this ordinance. SEPA and its procedures are governed by state law. It requires environmental review of actions taken by a governmental entity, including granting of permits that are not exempted by SEPA. There are some changes in the ordinance to text that refers to SEPA. These changes are to remove duplications or to ensure the appropriate permit type is referenced as part of the consolidation into four permit types.
- Graphic to explain changes. The Olympia Planning Commission has requested a chart to show how existing permit types are consolidate into Types I – IV in the draft ordinance. That chart is included in the [Commission's April 17 meeting packet](#), along with a chart of changes to how public notice would be provided as a result of the consolidation.
- Building permit fees. I would be interested to see any evidence you have related to your statement that Olympia's building permit fees are several times more expensive than other Washington cities. Building permit fees for virtually all Washington cities are based primarily on the value of the construction project, per a table in the International Building Code. As a result, building permit fees are in fact very similar among Washington cities. Olympia annually conducts a review of its permit fees as compared to other Thurston County cities, and in 2022 found its building permit fees to be very comparable. In addition, an independent study of all of Olympia's permit review services in 2021 found that the city's fees recover 76% of the City's actual costs to provide those services.

***Leonard Bauer, FAICP***

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**From:** Esther Grace Kronenberg <wekrone@gmail.com>

**Sent:** Thursday, April 13, 2023 12:30 PM

**To:** Leonard Bauer <lbauer@ci.olympia.wa.us>; PlanningCommission@co.thurston.wa.us

**Subject:** Proposed permit streamlining

Hello Mr. Bauer,

I write to seek clarification as to how the proposed consolidation of 7 chapters into one changes current permit processes.

As it is now, it is very difficult to understand what has been deleted and who will have the decision making authority for different permits. It is also unclear how this will affect the City long-term. For example, is there a limit to how many times a school can increase in size? How do these changes affect the SEPA process? Can you please provide a graphic that shows exactly what changes are being proposed so the public is properly informed?

Further, can you explain why building permit fees in Olympia are several times more expensive than in other Washington cities? This appears to prejudice those smaller local builders and homeowners who might want to improve their properties over larger corporate builders who can better afford such exorbitant permit fees.

As a member of the Local Good Governance Coalition which addresses issues of transparency and accountability of our local government, I also strongly urge you to provide advance notification of such proposed changes to the neighborhood associations and the general public, and sufficient time to understand and comment upon them.

I look forward to your response. Thank you.

Esther Kronenberg  
Olympia, WA

## Gary Cooper

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**From:** Brian Butler <brianbutler@mixx96.com>  
**Sent:** Wednesday, June 29, 2022 3:40 PM  
**To:** Gary Cooper  
**Subject:** Planning process interest

Mr Cooper;

As a 30+ year city resident, one who "gave up" attempting to develop in fill on a large lot due to roadblocks, bad communication, lost files, stonewalled public records requests, and general process that is stacked against the individual, I am keenly interested in the process of revamping the planning/permit process. It is woeful in the present state.

Keep me informed, especially where public hearings are concerned, I'd like to share my experience so that some good might come from a total waste of time, energy, hope, and effort.

The city seems to have it down when expediting big developments - they go up like mushrooms - but try to develop in fill in existing neighborhoods....good luck with that.

Respectfully,

Brian Butler  
Olympia WA Taxpayer  
360-951-3313  
bb@mixx96.com