



City of Othello
Planning Commission Meeting
May 19, 2025
Zuleica Morfin

CALL TO ORDER

Chair Chris Dorow called the meeting to order at 6:02 pm.

ROLL CALL

Commissioners Present: Chair Dorow, Daniela Voorhies, Ruth Sawyer, Rob Simmons, Jose Garza, Alma Carmona. **Remote:** Maria Martinez

Staff: Community Development Director Anne Henning, Building and Planning Secretary Zuleica Morfin

Attendees: Bob Carlson, Mike Livingston, Council member John Lallas

PUBLIC INPUT

None

MINUTES APPROVAL

April 21, 2025 minutes approved. M/S Simmons/Carmona

ZONING UPDATE/HOUSING ACTION PLAN STRATEGIES - OMC 17.09, 17.20 17.56 - DEFINITIONS, SETBACKS, EAVE OVERHANG, HOUSE WIDTH, COTTAGE HOUSING, TOWNHOUSES, LANDSCAPING

In 2021, Othello adopted a Housing Action Plan that identifies strategies, actions, and policy tools to increase housing supply and affordability. Since that time, the city has implemented some of the strategies but there are still many we haven't explored, and housing availability and affordability continue to be concerns. At the Dec. 19, 2024, and Feb. 18, 2025 meetings, the Planning Commission discussed some simple changes to the Zoning Code that could increase the buildable area or eliminate development barriers, to potentially create additional housing. These include setbacks, house width, eave overhang, landscaping, townhouses, and cottage cluster/bungalow court.

Previously, Commissioners had discussed not requiring garages for townhouses, but if built, they would need to be accessed through an alley. Chair Chris Dorow said if they were going to require parking he'd like to create space elsewhere. Commissioner Rob Simmons said he thought townhouses looked nice when there's a whole street of them or a few blocks of them. He said townhouses would fit better in a planned development, Chair Chris Dorow agreed. Commissioners were in favor of adding a category to the use chart to allow townhouses and cottages only by planned development.

In February, commissioners had discussed reducing front setbacks in all the zones, except suburban zones, allowing living space and porches to be closer to the street, but not the garage which would still need the 20ft setback for parking. Commissioner Rob Simmons had a concern that if they were going to reduce the side setback from 15ft to 10ft it would possibly create a situation which conflicts with the clear view triangle of 50ft. Ms. Henning said any buildings would have to meet both requirements.

Ms. Henning explained that there are currently definitions for "Building Height" and "Height of Building." Even though they were adopted in the same ordinance in 1995, these definitions conflict with each other.

She recommended the second definition, "17.09.380 "Height of building" means the vertical distance at the center of a building's principal front, measured from the established grade to the highest point of the roof beams in the case of flat roof, to the deck line of mansard roofs, or to the center height between eaves and ridges for gambrel roofs. For building set back from the street line, the height may be measured from the average elevation of the finished grade along the front of the building." It is more complicated than the other definition, but it is consistent with how the Building Code measures height.

Commissioners discussed that the existing zoning code sets a limit of 2 or 3 stories but does not set a height limit in feet. This was specifically done in a previous update of the code. Commissioners agreed to leave it the way it was.

A manufactured home is currently defined in the zoning code as a mobile home. Ms. Henning said that definition doesn't work because those are two very different things. She provided two options and recommended one that was clear and short, "Factory-built dwellings built to the national manufactured housing construction and safety standards act of 1974." She recommends a similarly clear definition for mobile home. Commissioners asked if the state definition of "designated manufactured home" needs to be included in the definition. Ms. Henning explained that we are using that to require that a manufactured home placed on a residential lot must be 2 or more sections. That is a regulation that goes in a regulatory section, the Residential Zones. The basic definition of what a manufactured home is goes in the Definitions section. Commissioners asked how this works for a manufactured home park. Manufactured home parks are currently not allowed in any zones, but the ones that currently exist are grandfathered in.

Council Member John Lallas mentioned that in Olympia he saw a sample of a tiny house on wheels, and it was very nice. Chair Dorow suggested the Commission look at this issue further when they discuss housing again in the future.

Ms. Henning directed attention to OMC 17.56.100 "Wells". This section is about window wells and stairwells, so Commissioners agreed the title should be changed. Commissioner Rob Simmons asked whether stairwells and window wells should be allowed in a side yard or front yard, just not in the setback. Ms. Henning agreed that would be a good clarification. Commissioners agreed. The text will be corrected by adding "setback": "side yard setback" and "front yard setback" instead of "side yard" and "front yard".

Council Member Lallas mentioned it would be helpful to have a Zoning Map on the wall, like there used to be before the remodel. Commissioners also requested to have paper copies of the map.

REPORTS

The April Building and Planning Department Report was included in the packet.

ADJOURNMENT

Having no further business, the meeting was adjourned at 7:16pm. Next meeting is Monday June 16, 2025.



Date: 6-16-2025

Chris Dorow, Chair



Date: 6-16-2025

Zuleica Morfin, Building and Planning Secretary