



City of Othello
Planning Commission Meeting
April 20, 2026
Zuleica Morfin

CALL TO ORDER

Chair Rob Simmons called the meeting to order at 6:01pm.

ROLL CALL

Commissioners Present: Chair Rob Simmons, Ruth Sawyer, Donald Burks, MD, Jose Garza, Maria Martinez, Chad Robbins

Excused: Daniela Voorhies (vacation)

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

Remote: Consultant Aren Murcar (SCJ Alliance), Council member Kelli Camp

Attendees: Council member Chris Dorow, Council member Alma Carmona, Bob Carlson, Genna Dorow, Gregg Fultz (Othello School District)

PUBLIC INPUT

None

MINUTES APPROVAL

March 16, 2026, minutes approved M/S Garza/Burks

Wahitis Short Plat- Deferrals, Deviations, & Waivers- Recommendation

Othello School District (OSD) started the process to plat the Wahitis Elementary site in 2011, in conjunction with building the school. Through various staff changes at the city and OSD, and several platting attempts derailed by Covid and delays at USBR, the plat has never been finalized. In March, OSD submitted a new application to finish the plat. Deferrals, deviations, and waivers for street and utility improvements associated with platting were granted in the past but have expired. OMC 16.40 sets up the process for deferring or waiving street and utility improvements and deviating from the improvement standards. This process includes a recommendation from the Planning Commission.

Request

Deviation: Allow 38' street width for the constructed portion of Scootney Street from 14th Avenue to where the right-of-way abuts the south property line of the plat.

Commissioners had no objections to this deviation.

Deviation: Allow the existing stormwater infrastructure for Scootney Street instead of requiring it to be rebuilt to City standard. The current stormwater infrastructure has worked for 15 years. The School District's letter stated Othello has allowed similar infrastructure to be built since the school was constructed. City Engineering/Public Works has not identified any concerns currently.

Commissioners agreed to accept this deviation with language that allows the City to require changes later if there is a problem.

Deferrals: Complete the Scootney Street improvements to the East property line (pavement, curb, gutter, sidewalk, and turnaround at the end).

- OSD requests to defer these improvements until development to the East of Wahitis Elementary School would necessitate the improvements.
- Upon passing of a bond, OSD would construct the district's portion of Scootney Street to approximately 65' for the eastern property line. Leaving a deadhead turn around and the rest of the improvements for development east of Wahitis Elementary School.

Commissioners agreed to accept this deferral until the City determines the improvements must be completed. At that time, OSD must provide a time line to complete the improvements

Deferral: Street improvements for Cemetery Road (pavement, curb, gutter, sidewalk, storm water).

- OSD requests to defer these improvements until the vacant land along Cemetery Road is developed and/or Scootney Elementary School has a major remodeling project.

Commissioners agreed to accept this deferral as proposed.

Waiver: Sanitary sewer in Scootney Street. OSD is requesting a waiver as sewer is not needed, because the property to the East can be served by the future sewer on Columbia Street. Adding sewer would also require reconstruction of the existing Scootney Street.

Commissioners agreed to accept this wavier.

Sewer and water mains in Cemetery Road. OSD requests to waive these improvements. They may not be needed for future development.

Commissioners felt like a deferral would better fit this request instead of a waiver.

Motion to recommend waivers, deferrals and deviations as discussed. M/S Burks/Sawyer

Comprehensive Plan Update - Community Survey

The survey flyer with link and QR code was included in the packet.

Comprehensive Plan Update - Vision 2047

The packet included a memo from SCJ Alliance which presented a draft vision framework for the Othello Comprehensive Plan, informed by the Planning Commission's February 2026 visioning workshop. The hope for the discussion tonight was to refine a shared vision for Othello's future, starting from what was heard at the February workshop, discuss key tensions and tradeoffs, and then work through the Alternative Vision Directions table row by row to land on updates to the vision statement. The draft in the packet was not meant to be final. The goal was to provide clear direction so the vision can be refined and brought forward for broader community input.

Three alternatives were presented:

1. Base Line Vision: Othello remains a welcoming and close-knit community where diverse cultures, traditions, and generations of families shape the city's identity. As the city grows, it preserves its friendly atmosphere, strong sense of belonging, and rural heritage.

2. Growth & Opportunity, Character & Livability: Othello continues to be a welcoming and inclusive community while evolving into a growing regional center. New residents, businesses, and industries reshape the community while maintaining a shared sense of identity.
3. Community Character & Livability Focus: Othello preserves its identity as a welcoming, close-knit, and culturally rich rural community, where relationships, traditions, and a strong sense of belonging remain the foundation of daily life.

Commissioners were ok with the base line vision but would like to see Growth & Opportunity, Character & Livability separated. The consultant Aren Murcar suggested an exercise where they have the statements down the middle of a board and have character & livability on one side, growth and opportunity on the other. The baseline would be down the middle. Commissioners liked this instead of being the ones that chose the version that would be going out to the public. Council member Kelli Camp suggested a QR code to try and gather more feedback that way.

Commissioners discussed the differences between a Comprehensive Plan Vision vs a Vision Statement in a Strategic Plan, and the need for better communication such as with the school district and health care.

Meeting Topic Schedule- Informational, Volunteers Needed

The packet included the likely schedule for the upcoming meetings and Comprehensive Plan events. Volunteers would be appreciated at the May 2 event at Lions Park to talk to the community about the Comprehensive Plan Update.

New State Legislation

Ms. Henning informed commissioners that new state legislation adopted this year allows family burial grounds on private property unless the City prohibits or regulates it. The Commission asked to have regulations prohibiting it brought for their review.

Commissioners also would like to discuss again at the next available meeting the RCWs allowing housing in existing buildings no matter what zone they were in and allowing childcare in all locations.

Vendors in Parks

Commissioners discussed that there have been a lot of vendors at City parks, which may be contrary to city code.

Electric Scooters

Commissioners had concerns about electric scooters, bikes, and mini motorcycles, speeding on streets and sidewalks.

ADJOURNMENT

Having no further business, the meeting was adjourned at 7:59pm. Next meeting is Monday May 18, 2026.

Robert M Simmons DC
Robert M Simmons DC (May 19, 2026 17:51:20 PDT) Date: May 19, 2026
Rob Simmons, Chair

Zuleica Morfin
Date: 5/19/26
Zuleica Morfin, Building and Planning Secretary