



City of Othello
 Planning Commission Meeting
 May 18, 2026
 Zuleica Morfin

CALL TO ORDER

Chair Rob Simmons called the meeting to order at 6:02pm.

ROLL CALL

Commissioners Present: Chair Rob Simmons, Ruth Sawyer, Donald Burks, Jose Garza

Excused: Daniela Voorhies, Maria Martinez, Chad Robbins

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

Attendees: Bob Carlson; Council members Chris Dorow, Alma Carmona, and Kelli Camp

PUBLIC INPUT

None

MINUTES APPROVAL

April 20, 2026, minutes approved M/S Garza/Sawyer

COMPREHENSIVE PLAN UPDATE- PUBLIC ENGAGEMENT - DISCUSSION

Commissioners looked at the completed and upcoming public engagement events, to determine where to go from here. Events included the following:

Date	Event	Likely Topic
Mar 31	Staff action	Survey was mailed with utility bills
Apr 3	Staff action	City notifications of online survey (social media & OthelloGo)
May 2	Little League Opening Day/ Cinco de Mayo	Public engagement: Advertise/collect surveys, attempted to get feedback on draft vision
May 8	Social media “boost”	To get the survey link in the social media feed of more Othello area residents
July 4	4 th of July Celebration	Public engagement opportunity. Possibly interactive boards, maps (Land Capacity Analysis, Land Use)
July 20	PC mtg, also possible open house before or during the meeting	Public Workshop: Future Land Use Map
Oct 19	PC mtg	Public Workshop: Review findings/direction
Dec 5	Miracle on Main Street	Public engagement opportunity. Draft Plan rollout/feedback

Ms. Henning explained that the May 2 event took a lot of planning and consultant time to develop materials, and a lot of staff time to put on the event, but maybe didn’t achieve much, although people did mention it was great to see the City presence at the event. She asked commissioners if we should put effort into having a table at the July 4th event? Some commissioners felt like this would be a good event to be at since the event attracts a lot more people, and it is important to do public engagement. Other commissioners felt that a lot of people who attend aren’t from Othello. There was discussion about having an easier activity so that people would be more likely to participate. Council member Chris Dorow

mentioned that if commissioners feel they need more input, they should volunteer for the booth. Commissioners felt like they had enough information to move forward, but that the City should do a table at 4th of July to continue to gather information and raise awareness about the Comprehensive Plan update.

Commissioners discussed the survey results. There were 282 surveys collected between online, paper, and the May 2 event. Council member Carmona mentioned that 200 to 250 responses is pretty typical for surveys we have done in the past.

Commissioners were surprised by the number of people that rated senior housing as a concern. This isn't something that they hear about daily, but it did have a large response in the survey. Othello has a large younger population, and there aren't any affordable options specifically for seniors.

Commissioners and Council Committee discussed what makes Othello's "small town feel", including safety, lack of traffic, not too many cars on the streets, mom & pop shops, a laid-back feel, knowing your neighbors, and businesses knowing their customers' orders.

STATE LAW UPDATE - NEW HOUSING IN EXISTING BUILDINGS, CHILDCARE LOCATIONS, AND FAMILY BURIAL GROUNDS - DISCUSSION

Commissioners discussed zoning updates needed to address recent state laws.

[HB 2239](#) adopted in 2026 allows people (but not corporations) to create family burial grounds on their private property, unless the city or county has prohibited the establishment of family burial grounds.

Commissioners would like to not allow family burial grounds on private property.

[RCW 35.21.990](#) and [35A.21.440](#) require all cities to allow redevelopment of existing buildings into housing, in commercial, mixed-use, and residential zones. We must adopt new codes by June 30, 2026, or be preempted by the state regulations. An existing building is one that received a Certificate of Occupancy at least 3 years ago.

Commissioners would like to designate Main Street and 4 blocks of 1st Avenue as major pedestrian corridors, which would restrict ground floor conversion to residential. Commissioners did not see any other changes needed to the draft.

[RCW 35.21.996](#) and [35A.21.460](#) require all cities to allow childcare centers in all zones. A childcare center is defined broadly as "an agency that regularly provides early childhood education and early learning services for a group of children for periods of less than 24 hours." These regulations must be adopted by June 2027.

Action: Commissioners agreed to move forward with the public hearing for new housing in existing buildings, childcare locations, and family burial grounds.

Garage Conversions - Discussion

During the discussion of the housing and childcare items at the January meeting, the issue of whether garages could be converted for these uses was raised, so staff gathered additional information, which was included in tonight's packet. Discussion included that many existing garage conversions may not be safe, because they were done without permits and inspections, and that many people don't use their garages

for parking, so maybe conversion should be allowed. Commissioners would like more time to consider this issue and requested a map of areas that it might affect.

ADJOURNMENT

Having no further business, the meeting was adjourned at 7:56pm. Next meeting is Monday June 15, 2026.

Robert M Simmons, DC Date: Jun 16, 2026
Robert M Simmons, DC (Jun 16, 2026 09:04:45 PDT)

Rob Simmons, Chair

Zuleica Morfin Date: 6-16-26
Zuleica Morfin, Building and Planning Secretary







2026.05.18.Minutes.Sign

Final Audit Report

2026-06-16

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