



CITY AND BOROUGH OF SITKA

Minutes - Final

Planning Commission

Wednesday, February 19, 2025

7:00 PM

Harrigan Centennial Hall

I. CALL TO ORDER AND ROLL CALL

Present: Darrell Windsor (Chair), Wendy Alderson, Robin Sherman

Absent: Thor Christianson (Assembly Liaison), Katie Riley

Excused: Stacy Mudry

Staff: Amy Ainslie, Ariadne Will

Public: Sandra Fontaine, Florence Welsh, Connie Kreiss, Floyd Tomkins, Kord Christianson, Ryan Nichols, Greg and Becky Charlton, Karen Calvin and Bob Woodard, Jay M. Erie, Mary Stensvold, Galen Paine, Carina Nichols, Cynthia Christianson, Barth Hamberg, Cathy Li (Sitka Sentinel)

Chair Windsor called the meeting to order at 7:01 p.m.

II. CONSIDERATION OF THE AGENDA

III. CONSIDERATION OF THE MINUTES

- A [PM 25-03](#) Approve the February 5, 2025 meeting minutes.

M/Sherman-S/Alderson moved to approve the February 5, 2025 meeting minutes. Motion passed 3-0 by voice vote.

IV. PERSONS TO BE HEARD

V. PLANNING DIRECTOR'S REPORT

Ainslie provided the commission with several updates, including that training of the new Planning and Community Development Department employee was continuing and that the department working through a backlog of leases; that the department was continuing to work towards finding and implementing centralized permitting software; that the Tourism Commission was getting underway with its regular meetings; and that work on code changes to be presented to the Planning Commission remained underway.

VI. REPORTS

VII. THE EVENING BUSINESS

- B [P 24- 04](#) Public hearing and consideration of a preliminary plat for a minor subdivision resulting in two lots at 305 Islander Drive in the SFLD single-family low density residential district. The property is also known as Lot Five (5), Harris Island

Subdivision. The request is filed by Ryan Nichols. The owner of record is Randall G. Nichols Revocable Trust.

Ainslie reintroduced a preliminary plat for a minor subdivision resulting in two lots at 305 Islander Drive in the SFLD single-family low density residential district. Ainslie provided an overview of the proposal, which was to subdivide the lot and retain the existing single-family home and detached garage on one, and have the undeveloped portion become its own lot. Ainslie stated that both lots met the dimensional standards for the SFLD district as required by the zoning code, had legal means of access, and could be served by municipal water and power. She also noted that municipal sewer service was not available in to this neighborhood, and that DEC approval would be needed for a septic and/or marine outfall system.

The preliminary plat had first appeared at the commission's December 4, 2024 meeting, where it was postponed due to concern regarding the lack of a maintenance agreement for the shared bridge and road (Islander Drive) providing residents access to the island. Staff provided the commission with a summary of research they had conducted in the time since the December 4 meeting, including a restrictive covenant for many including the subject property (but not all) of the lots in the Harris Island Subdivision which largely included stipulations regarding architectural standards and retention of trees, as well as the stipulation that each lot subject to the covenant may have only one single-family home; the covenant did not have any stipulations regarding future subdivision or ownership/maintenance of the road or bridge. Ainslie also shared that there was a local improvement district (L.I.D.) established in the early 1980's for infrastructure development. While one version of that L.I.D. initially included municipal water service, improvements to the bridge, and repaving of Islander Drive, it was quickly amended and replaced with a new L.I.D. that only included municipal water service (removing bridge and roadway work from the scope of work and associated property assessments). Staff's conclusion from the research was that Islander Drive was a dedicated right-of-way, but management responsibility was not identified and assumed to rest with private property owners.

Ainslie also reported that on February 18, 2025, the Planning and Community Development Department held a neighborhood meeting as requested by commission and as detailed in a letter to neighbors approved by the body at the February 5 Planning Commission meeting. She said that the meeting allowed a venue for neighbors to learn more about different approaches to road and bridge maintenance, including the creation of a maintenance agreement, homeowners association, or municipal adoption. The meeting also served as a venue for neighbors to discuss some of their concerns about development and density impacts that could result from this and future subdivision actions.

Ainslie further detailed the subdivision was recommended for approval by planning staff because it met quantitative code requirements, including that resultant lots must have legal access, which Ainslie said was the case for the two proposed lots. However, she also stated that some of the additional factors (especially those that are somewhat qualitative in nature) beyond quantitative code requirements, such as those regarding public welfare especially in relation to impacts to infrastructure resulting from increased density and development resulting from this and/or future subdivision actions in this neighborhood, were in the purview of the commission to consider and factor into their decision.

When called to speak, applicant Ryan Nichols said that the subdivision was submitted to split his late father's property in half to divide between himself and his sister.

Several neighbors and property owners--Kord Christianson, Greg and Becky Charlton, Sandra Fontaine, Mary Stensvold, Galen Paine, Connie Kreiss, Barth Hamberg, and Cynthia Christianson--spoke under public comment. K. Christianson, G. and B. Charlton, Fontaine, Stensvold, and Paine were opposed to the subdivision, stating the subdivision would strain infrastructure and open the door for rampant development. Fontaine also voiced concern about changes to the neighborhood's character that would result from increased development and tree loss. Kreiss and Hamberg spoke in favor of the subdivision, pointing to the need for housing development and the size of the resultant lots. C. Christianson, who owns property on Harris Island, said that she did not want the commission to take action that would impede her from developing her property, but did not explicitly state her standing on the subdivision matter. Carina Nichols, the applicant's sister, also gave public comment and asked the commission approve the subdivision.

After public comment, the applicant again spoke and said that other Islander Drive residents could restrict their deeds to prohibit subdivision if they wished to control development of the neighborhood.

The commission then deliberated on the matter. Sherman said she was concerned about the roadway and bridge, especially given the possibility for additional future subdivision of the island, and given that some of the lots on the island were undeveloped and could be developed by right. Sherman said she felt the commission had a duty to ensure safe and adequate access to the island, and she wasn't sure existing infrastructure--and the absence of a road or maintenance agreement--provided such. Alderson stated that she shared those concerns, but that resolution on a maintenance agreement between property owners would be less likely if it were seen as a way to halt development. Before voting, Alderson and Windsor said they felt the subdivision proposal at hand wouldn't significantly impact infrastructure.

Following the failed motion to approve the subdivision, Chair Windsor called a seven-minute recess at 8:05 p.m. to allow staff time to prepare for a discussion on findings. The meeting was called back into session at 8:12 p.m.

M/Alderson-S/Sherman moved to approve a preliminary plat for a minor subdivision resulting in two lots at 305 Islander Drive in the SFLD single-family low density residential district. The property was also known as Lot Five (5), Harris Island Subdivision. The request was filed by Ryan Nichols. The owner of record was Randall G. Nichols Revocable Trust. Motion failed 2-1 by voice vote.

M/Sherman-S/Alderson moved to approve the following findings: While the proposal was found to comport with the Comprehensive Plan and met dimensional standards as found in the Zoning and Subdivision titles of the Sitka General Code, the Commission could not find that the preliminary plat met its burden of proof as related to access because the Commission did not agree that the access as proposed met the intent of the subdivision code to provide for adequate access-related infrastructure commensurate to the potential for increased density. Additionally, the Commission did not find that the preliminary plat did not negatively impact public health, safety, or welfare because the Commission could not agree that potential for subdivision(s) in this neighborhood would not result in a negative impact on public health, safety, and welfare due to concerns related to the capacity and lack of management responsibility for access-related infrastructure. Motion passed 3-0 by voice vote.

C [P 25- 02](#)

Public hearing and consideration of a replat at 214 Neva Street, 1502 Davidoff Street, 1501 and 1409 Edgecumbe Drive, in the R1 single-family and duplex

residential district. The properties are also known as Lots 5, 6, 7, and 8, Block 6, and Lots 1 and 12A, Block 7, U.S. Survey 3303B. The request is filed by Kris Calvin. The owners of record are Eric Calvin, Kris Calvin, Leif Calvin, Karen Woodard, The Welsh Family Trust, Christine Harrington, and the City and Borough of Sitka.

Ainslie introduced a request for a replat at 214 Neva Street, 1502 Davidoff Street, 1501 and 1409 Edgecumbe Drive. The commission had voted to recommend approval of the vacation of Neva Street in August 2024, which the Assembly directed staff to proceed with later that month. The replat reflected the vacation action, showing the vacated portions of the right-of-way attaching to neighboring properties while a 20-foot wide utility easement was retained for future use by the municipality if ever needed. The replat also included several boundary line changes, including adjustments and one removal to facilitate redevelopment of several properties owned by the applicant and his family.

The applicant and commission had nothing to add prior to the vote. No public comment was received.

M/Alderson-S/Sherman moved to approve a replat at 214 Neva Street, 1502 Davidoff Street, and 1409 Edgecumbe Drive in the R1 single-family and duplex residential district. The properties were also known as Lots 5, 6, 7, and 8, Block 6, and Lots 1 and 12A, Block 7, U.S. Survey 3303B. The request was filed by Kris Calvin. The owners of record were Eric Calvin, Kris Calvin, Leif Calvin, Karen Woodard, The Welsh Family Trust, Christine Harrington, and the City and Borough of Sitka.

M/Alderson-S/Sherman moved to adopt and approve the required findings as listed in the staff report.

VIII. ADJOURNMENT

Chair Windsor adjourned the meeting at 8:45 p.m.