

**Minutes of the Public Meeting of the
Morrow County Planning Commission
Tuesday, October 28, 2025, 6:00 pm
Morrow County Government Center
215 NE Main Ave, Irrigon, OR**

COMMISSIONERS PRESENT:

Stacie Ekstrom, Chair
Norm Ayala
Charlene Cooley
Stephen Henthorn
Karl Smith
Liz Peterson

COMMISSIONERS ABSENT:

John Kilkenny
Brian Thompson

ATTENDANCE via ZOOM:

Tripp Finch

STAFF PRESENT:

Tamra Mabbott, Planning Director
Michaela Ramirez, Administrative Assistant
Clint Shoemake, Planning Technician
Kaitlin Kennedy, Code Compliance Planner

Staff Zoom:

Stephen Wrecsics, GIS Analyst

1. CALL TO ORDER

Chair Ekstrom called the meeting to order at 6:00 PM

2. ROLL CALL

3. PLEDGE

4. APPROVAL OF SEPTEMBER 30, 2025, DRAFT MINUTES

Recommended Action: Approved with noted changes on page 5, an interruption, and a name misspelling.

Motion by: Commissioner **Peterson**

Seconded by: Commission **Cooley**

Action: **Unanimously Approved**

Presented by: Planning Director Tamra Mabbott

Request: Legislative Code Update: AZ-160-25, Morrow County Zoning Ordinance

Amendment. Zoning Code text update to implement new Eastern Oregon Solar Siting Standards found in Oregon Administrative Rules 660-33-0130(44) and OAR 660-006-0025. The new standards will be incorporated into the Exclusive Farm Use Zone and the Forest Use Zone. Criteria for approval are provided in MCZO Article 8 Amendments.

Director Mabbott: said that pages eight through ten were a summary of the rules. She went on to explain that the rules increase local thresholds for permitting based on the value of farm ground and include requirements for mitigating agricultural impacts. The commission considered adding Section 44 standards to their zoning ordinance, which would allow for more flexible rule application, while maintaining the existing Section 38 rules. She pointed out that Section 38 was not being replaced by 44.

Chair Ekstrom asked if the Planning Commission had any questions for Staff:

Commissioner Henthorn: asked why the acreage threshold was raised before permits came to the Planning Commission. He also asked if a plan came in under 140 acres under Section 44 on high-value farmland, it would automatically be approved.

Director Mabbott: responded no, they would need to meet all the standards.

Commissioner Henthorn: asked if a permit met the standards, it would not come to the Planning Commission.

Director Mabbott: responded that the project had to be 160 acres or lower to meet Section 44, and if not, it would then go to EFSC to meet the statewide acceptance goals.

Commissioner Henthorn: then asked why they changed it from 12 acres.

Director Mabbott: responded that the state had changed the rule.

Commissioner Henthorn: asked what would be the reason for Oregon opting out and said he also believes these projects would not be a cure-all. He went on to explain how these types of projects needed some type of backup and gave an example of a state that had a bad situation.

Director Mabbott: explained that the decision was made at a higher policy level.

Chair Ekstrom opened the Public Hearing for public testimony, comments, presentations, or rebuttal. There were none.

Testifying Parties:

Randy Baker, 70215, Boardman, OR 97818

Randy: asked if they were Topcon-type panels or Perth-type panels.

Director Mabbott: responded that she didn't know and that is not a site standard.

Randy: said he was asking about the technology.

Director Mabbott: responded that it's not a site standard.

Chair Ekstrom then closed the Public Hearing.

She then asked if the Planning Commission had any questions for the Staff; there were none.

Recommended Action: The Planning Commission recommends that the Board Of Commissioners approve Legislative Code Update: AZ-160-25, Morrow County Zoning Ordinance

Motion: The Planning Commission recommended that the Board Of Commissioners approve Legislative Code Update: AZ-160-25, Morrow County Zoning Ordinance

Motion by: Commissioner Peterson

Seconded by: Commissioner Smith

Vote: All voted

Action: 6 commissioners voted to recommend that the Board of Commissioners approve; Commissioner Henthorn voted not to recommend that the Board of Commissioners approve.

Other Business:

Director Mabbott: wanted to apologize about the previous meeting (Heritage Trail Concept Plan) and if there was any confusion. She went on to say it was only a work session and not a formal hearing or proceeding,

and that was why they didn't take public testimony. They would, however, schedule to adopt at the January 27th Planning Commission meeting. This would be adopted as an appendix, and public comments would be taken.

Counsel Kearns: spoke on Jonathan Tallman's comments and recommended that a Land Use procedure be done for the Heritage Trail Plan.

Clint: said he wanted to summarize the memo on page 22. He said they found a mistake and that the trail did entail private land. He pointed out that there were 11 miles of proposed trail west of Boardman. He stated that there were seven and a half miles of the trail on the Port of Morrow and Threemile Farms properties. Both organizations confirmed they were in support of the concept. He also spoke with the City of Boardman and reviewed the master park plan; they were supportive and mentioned the plan could be subject to change. The City of Boardman also had to come to an agreement with the BPA. Oregon Potato requested that its property be taken out of the plan.

Correspondence: October Planning Update

Public Comment:

Jonathan Tallman, Boardman, OR 97818

Adjourned: Meeting adjourned at 6:56 PM

Next Meeting: Tuesday, December 2, 2025, at 6:00 p.m. The next meeting will be held in Heppner, OR, in the Bartholomew Building in Heppner, OR.

Respectfully submitted,
Michaela Ramirez