

Siskiyou County Planning Commission
Regular Meeting
June 18, 2025

The Siskiyou County Planning Commission meeting of June 18, 2025, was called to order by Chair Fowle at approximately 9:00 a.m. in the Siskiyou County Meeting Chambers, 311 Fourth Street, 2nd Floor, Yreka, California.

Present: Commissioners Hart, Melo, Veale, and Fowle

Absent: Commissioner Lindler

Also Present: Rick Dean, Director, Community Development Department; Hailey Lang, Deputy Director of Planning; Rachel Jereb, Senior Planner; James Phelps, Senior Planner; Bernadette Cizin, Associate Planner; William Carroll, Assistant County Counsel; Janine Rowe, Commission Clerk

Minutes: It was moved by Commissioner Melo, seconded by Commissioner Veale, to approve the May 21, 2025, Planning Commission Minutes as presented.

Voted upon and the Chair declared the motion carried unanimously by those Commissioners present, with Commissioner Hart recusing himself since he was absent for that meeting.

Unscheduled Appearances: None

Conflict of Interest Declaration: Commissioner Hart declared a conflict of interest with the Waddell Reclamation Plan and Use Permit Amendment (RP-01-01-1M / UP-19-74-1M) project.

Presentation of Documents; Availability of Public Records; Public Hearing Protocol: The Chair noted that these items are outlined in the Agenda.

Right of Appeal Statement: The Chair read this item.

Changes to the Agenda: None

Commissioner Hart left the meeting at approximately 9:03 a.m.

New Business:

Agenda Item 1: Waddell Pit Reclamation Plan and Use Permit Amendment (RP-01-01-1M / UP-19-74-1M) / Mitigated Negative Declaration

The Project site is located in an unincorporated part of Siskiyou County approximately 8 miles north of the community of Happy Camp, along Indian Creek Road. The APNs associated with this project are 009-340-350, 009-330-230 & 009-330-240. The project proposes to amend the existing Use Permit and Reclamation Plan to expand the quarry excavation area and allow continued mining activities at the site for an additional 30 years. The proposed project would allow for the continued removal, crushing and stockpiling of aggregate onsite.

**Mitigated Negative Declaration
Reclamation Plan Amendment
Use Permit**

**Adopted
Approved
Approved**

Staff Report:

The previously circulated Staff Report was reviewed by the Commission, and a presentation of the project was provided by Ms. Cizin.

Ms. Cizin told the Commission that the project proponent requested amendments to the current surface mining use permit and reclamation plan for a quarry north of Happy Camp. The updates include expanding the mine boundary, increasing production estimates, extending operations, eliminating screen bed skimming, building a stormwater detention basin, updating maps and cross sections, and ensuring full compliance with the Surface Mining and Reclamation Act (SMARA).

Ms. Cizin told the Commission that the proposal seeks to expand the quarry boundary to allow continued production and to correct issues caused by a former operator who altered the site in a way that made the original reclamation plan unworkable. She said the amendment aims to ensure the site complies with county regulations and SMARA, enabling successful reclamation once mining ends.

An Initial Study and subsequent Mitigated Negative Declaration concluded there are no significant environmental impacts after mitigation measures were applied to issues like air quality, wildlife, and noise. Ms. Cizin said comments were received from the California Department of Conservation, Division of Mine Reclamation, CalFire, Siskiyou County Air Pollution Control District, California Department of Fish and Wildlife, and the Siskiyou County Environmental Health Division. She said one public comment was received regarding dust control which has been addressed through a specific mitigation measure requiring approval of a Dust Control Plan by the Siskiyou County Air Quality Control Officer.

Ms. Cizin told the Commission that staff recommends approving the use permit and reclamation plan amendments and adopting the CEQA Mitigation Negative Declaration.

Agency Input: None

Commission Questions:

Commissioner Veale asked about dust abatement in a residential community, and discussion was held that the county only performs dust abatement during a construction project. Mr. Dean recommended that he contact Public Works Director Tom Deany for more information along those lines.

The Chair opened the Public Hearing.

Public Comments: None

There being no comments, the Chair closed the Public Hearing.

Commission Discussion:

A brief discussion was held regarding the number of quarries in the county.

Chair Fowle asked how the 60-foot minimum no disturbance buffer zone listed in Condition 8 was arrived at, and Ms. Cizin responded that CDFW did not give a reason but believed it carried over from the previous project.

Motion: Following discussion, it was moved by Commissioner Veale, seconded by Commissioner Melo, to Adopt Resolution 2025-011 of the Planning Commission of the County of Siskiyou, State of California, Approving the Waddell Pit Use Permit Amendment (UP-19-74-1M), Reclamation Plan Amendment (RP-01-01-1M) and CEQA Mitigated Negative Declaration (MND) for the Waddell Pit.

Voted upon and the Chair declared the motion carried unanimously by those Commissioners present on the following roll call vote:

Ayes: Commissioners Melo, Veale and Fowle

Noes:

Absent: Commissioners Hart and Lindler

Abstain:

Commissioner Hart returned to the meeting at approximately 9:12 a.m.

Agenda Item 2: General Plan – Zoning Code Diagnostics Report

Staff presentation on the Zoning Diagnostics Report of the 2050 General Plan Update. The Zoning Diagnostics Report outlines what the Zoning Code is currently compliant and noncompliant with State law. As part of the Zoning Diagnostics Report presentation, staff is seeking input from members of the public regarding what updates they would like to see to the Zoning Code. The Zoning Code update is scheduled to be completed and adopted by the end of 2026.

Staff Report:

The previously circulated Staff Report was reviewed by the Commission, and a presentation of the project was provided by Ms. Lang.

Ms. Lang told the Commission that the consultant team prepared the Zoning Code Diagnostics report, and it offered a review of zoning practices, including what zoning allows and restricts, its purpose, and how it is applied. Ms. Lang said the report highlights where the existing code is compliant, non-compliant, or partially compliant with current regulations, especially considering recent state legislation and housing-related mandates.

Ms. Lang said the public hearing was aimed at gathering input from both the Commission and the public on zoning code updates, which marks the initial step in a series of discussions on updating the code.

Ms. Lang told the Commission that the staff report included several key questions for the Commission's input, particularly questions staff receives almost daily, such as defining accessory uses incidental to agriculture and clarifying what qualifies as agricultural use (e.g., commercial farms vs. hobby farms). She said those questions aim to begin dialogue and guide the code's future revisions.

After discussion, it was decided to open the public hearing and go through the discussion questions one by one with the public and the Commission providing input on each question.

The Chair opened the Public Hearing.

Discussion Question 1: What uses should be allowed in Residential zoning districts?

This includes RES-1, RES-2, RES-3 as well as the Rural Residential Agricultural (R-R) zoning districts.

No members of the public had any comments or questions regarding this question.

Commission Discussion:

Chair Fowle expressed support for allowing residential care facilities and daycare homes in residential zones, emphasizing their need to be located near essential services like hospitals, schools, and job sites. He believed that placing them in rural areas would create unnecessary transportation burdens for families and advocated for a streamlined administrative approval process, provided infrastructure and parking are sufficient and noted the issue is particularly relevant for communities such as Montague, Grenada, McCloud, and the Mt. Shasta sphere of influence.

Regarding religious institutions and schools, the Commission agreed that neighborhood compatibility should guide approvals and that smaller facilities could be approved administratively, with larger ones requiring Planning Commission review. It was noted that cottage food operations are permitted in all zoning districts under a certain production volume.

The Commission discussed mixed-use development and generally viewed it as a sensible land use.

Commissioner Hart raised concerns about the county's limited staffing and funding for zoning enforcement, warning that additional regulations could exacerbate bureaucratic strain and deepen neighborhood disparities. He also expressed concern about the challenges of converting older structures to residential or business use due to infrastructure and permitting requirements. Chair Fowle countered with an example of a successful renovation in Scott Valley, though Commissioner Hart cautioned that such improvements could increase property taxes and widen the gap between upgraded and neglected properties.

There was discussion that these concerns fall outside the Planning Commission's purview. Mr. Dean reported ongoing efforts to address blighted properties, noting the complexity of enforcement and the long timelines involved, especially when property owners are deceased. He explained that although abatement costs can be recovered through property liens, repayment may take decades.

Mr. Phelps encouraged the Commission to consider how recent state laws supporting accessory dwelling units (ADUs) could be implemented locally to promote multi-generational housing and community stability. The Commission agreed that ADU policies should be formally adopted and codified in county ordinance.

Discussion Question 2: What uses should be allowed in Commercial zoning districts?

Ms. Lang asked for feedback from the Commission and the public regarding the non-compliant and partially compliant codes listed in the Zoning Diagnostics Report beginning on page 13.

Chair Fowle invited comments from the public on this question, but none were made.

Commission Discussion:

The Commission discussed the unclear zoning status of therapeutic massage establishments and the absence of state-mandated licensing for massage therapists. With massage therapy growing in popularity especially in sports medicine, the lack of explicit zoning definitions raised questions about where such businesses should be permitted. Staff confirmed that current codes do not mention massage therapy, though it may fall under “personal services,” prompting the need for clearer classification.

The Commission considered whether certified massage therapists should be allowed to operate by right in commercial zones and debated the role of local government in regulating qualifications, especially given the rise of home-based and mobile services. Concerns were raised about the cost and complexity of meeting building codes, particularly ADA compliance which often deters residential operators. Commissioner Hart questioned the fairness of allowing home-based businesses to avoid commercial costs, while Chair Fowle noted that proper permitting would trigger tax reassessments, ensuring equity.

Staff explained how business license applications are reviewed across departments, with exceptions for low-impact home offices.

Mr. Phelps emphasized the need to distinguish therapeutic massage from adult-oriented services, with support from Chair Fowle for allowing therapeutic massage in residential, commercial, and rural residential zones. The discussion also touched on commercial zoning restrictions, such as the current prohibition on warehousing, and the implications of AB2085, which requires reproductive health clinics to be permitted wherever general medical clinics are allowed.

To accommodate public attendees, the Chair moved discussion to questions related to Rural Residential Agricultural zoning, noting that these staff-developed questions were not in the Zoning Diagnostics Report but reflect common issues encountered by staff.

Public Comments Received on Discussion Questions 6, 7, And 8:

Mr. Fitz Ya, Mount Shasta subdivision, addressed the Commission and said there is currently no business activity or allowed zoning for business in the Mount Shasta subdivision. He said they have to do all their business elsewhere, and he wondered if it's possible to change the zoning regulations to allow business activities in that restricted area.

Ms. Eliza Ya, Mount Shasta subdivision, said she would like to see more flexible building regulations due to the lack of essential utilities, particularly water access, on her property. She said some neighboring properties were “grandfathered in” under older rules and allowed to build without full utility access, using workarounds like trucking in water. She said she and her neighbors contribute to the local economy and want to be fully integrated members of the community, and they're facing obstacles that prevent them from settling on their property.

Discussion Question 6: How do we define ‘accessory uses incidental to agriculture’?

Commission Discussion:

The Commission discussed whether small-scale activities like selling eggs from backyard chickens are allowed in rural residential zones, with staff confirming such uses are generally permissible if tied to a single-family dwelling. In AG-1 and AG-2 zones, these activities are clearly allowed.

The discussion then turned to defining accessory agricultural uses, prompted by a denied request to build an on-site butchering facility. Chair Fowle argued that value-added practices like butchering, tanning, or hay pressing should be considered accessory if they support on-site agricultural production, even if neighboring farmers use the equipment. Staff cautioned against stretching definitions to include unrelated storage or warehousing, emphasizing that accessory uses must directly support the property's agricultural output. The Commission agreed on the need to clarify definitions to support adaptive farming while preventing disguised commercial operations.

Ms. Jereb asked whether certain conditionally permitted uses in AG-2 should be reclassified as incidental, noting that this classification doesn't apply to AG-1. The discussion highlighted the differences between AG-1, intended for prime agricultural production, and AG-2, which often requires permits for storage or processing. Chair Fowle argued that enclosed barns storing crops like alfalfa should not be treated as commercial warehouses. Ms. Lang acknowledged that planning definitions for warehousing are vague.

Concerns were raised about burdensome permit requirements for traditional practices like feedlots or mills on non-prime land. Mr. Dean recommended adopting clearer zoning language to reduce ambiguity and streamline approvals, aligning with the General Plan update. Chair Fowle supported this but emphasized that AG-1 should remain focused on production, while AG-2 should allow value-added uses by right, provided environmental standards are met.

The Chair called for a break at approximately 10:48 a.m.

The Chair called the meeting back to order at approximately 10:54 a.m.

After the break, the Commission resumed discussion on how AG-1 zoned land is treated regarding conditional uses and its overlap with Williamson Act regulations. Chair Fowle noted that landowners can either apply for a use permit or rezone part of their AG-1 property to AG-2 to allow certain uses by right. Mr. Dean clarified that under current Williamson Act rules, any use exceeding five acres or five percent of the property, such as a wedding venue, requires a use permit regardless of zoning to ensure compatibility with agricultural protections.

Chair Fowle raised concerns about potential state legislation that could amend the Williamson Act to permit solar installations for sale, which could significantly impact local land use authority. Mr. Dean emphasized that while the Williamson Act is a state framework, counties retain some discretion though future legislation could limit that. Chair Fowle suggested that allowing certain uses by right on AG-2 land, with clear acreage limits, could simplify permitting and might prompt updates to local Williamson Act rules. He also supported exploring more flexibility for AG-1 land, especially as water scarcity may shift more land toward AG-2 classification.

Discussion was held that any proposed changes discussed today would return to the Planning Commission for a second review before going to the Board of Supervisors. Ms. Lang added that current feedback will shape the draft zoning code update, and Commissioner Melo proposed a joint meeting between the Planning Commission and the Board of Supervisors for efficiency.

Commissioner Hart expressed concern about the requirement for use permits for feedlots on both AG-1 and AG-2 land, noting that many existing operations may be technically unpermitted. He questioned the clarity of the feedlot definition, particularly regarding animal count, duration, and water quality standards. Ms. Lang explained that the zoning code defines a commercial feedlot as a confined area for fattening or holding animals before market but lacks a specific duration, and Commissioner Hart said it was ambiguous. The Commission agreed that this gray area could unintentionally burden small-scale or routine agricultural practices. Chair Fowle concluded that feedlots should be allowed by right unless they fail to meet water discharge requirements set by the North Coast Regional Water Quality Control Board.

Discussion Question 7: How do we define ‘accessory uses and buildings normally incidental to single-family dwellings or small farming’?

Chair Fowle and Mr. Dean discussed the county having some Rural Residential Agricultural (R-R) parcels that are zoned R-R-2.5, R-R-5, or R-R-10 even though the parcel itself is over 100 acres. Mr. Dean suggested that the county adopt tiered R-R zoning, i.e., creating an R-R-40 designation, that would allow additional uses on larger parcels within R-R zones, acknowledging the inconsistency of applying the same restrictions to both 2.5-acre and 600-acre lots. Chair Fowle supported this idea and suggested using AUMs (Animal Unit Months) instead of listing permitted species, allowing for a more flexible and scalable approach to livestock limits based on parcel size.

Chair Fowle questioned whether owners of large Rural Residential parcels might be better served by rezoning to AG-1 or AG-2 to support expanded agricultural activities. Ms. Lang agreed, noting that R-R zoning was originally intended for small hobby farms, yet many large-scale operations now exist on R-R land. She recommended establishing a clearer link between parcel size, zoning tier, and land use. While the idea of creating additional R-R tiers like R-R-40 was discussed, Chair Fowle cautioned against over-tiering, warning it could lead to loopholes through subdivision and overuse. He suggested a limited tier system, similar to RES-2 and RES-4, to prevent abuse.

Mr. Dean supported tightening zoning language to require a single-family residence before certain uses are allowed. The Commission discussed clarifying livestock allowances, dwelling requirements, and zoning terminology and recommended using the term “allowed” instead of “permitted” to avoid confusion.

Chair Fowle proposed that all R-R uses should require a dwelling and that large R-R parcels used for agriculture should be rezoned to AG. He also distinguished between types of dairies, suggesting small goat or sheep dairies could be allowed on R-R-40 without a permit, while bovine dairies should require one.

Mr. Phelps asked whether a second, undeveloped R-R parcel near a primary residence would need its own dwelling to allow animal use; Chair Fowle said it wouldn’t be an issue if the parcels are contiguous. Finally, Chair Fowle asked about farmworker housing, and Ms. Lang confirmed it is

allowed by right in AG-1 and AG-2 zones.

Discussion Question 8: Should a home be required in our Residential zoning districts prior to allowing for a secondary use?

The Commission was all in agreement that the answer to this question is yes.

The discussion focused on unauthorized land use and enforcement challenges in areas like Shasta Vista, where many one-acre parcels are occupied without proper infrastructure.

Commissioner Hart and Chair Fowle expressed concern over people living on R-R-zoned lots without homes or water sources, posing public health and safety risks, particularly the lack of water for fire protection. Mr. Dean explained that these uses are typically addressed as illegal camping, and that development legally requires permanent potable water and sewage approval. Enforcement is difficult and resources are limited, compounded by low-income violators and minimal fines.

There was discussion whether such uses should be allowed at all, with Chair Fowle strongly opposing any legitimization of unsafe developments on nonconforming parcels. Commissioners Melo and Hart questioned the practicality of enforcement and fairness to landowners, while Mr. Dean reaffirmed that both county and state law require compliance, but admitted enforcement remains nearly impossible in many cases.

Chair Fowle emphasized that simply changing zoning won't solve the underlying issue of public health and safety risks tied to lack of reliable water. He strongly opposed allowing uses like stores or farmers markets on properties relying solely on water storage tanks, arguing that it would be irresponsible and potentially dangerous. He warned that a tragedy could create liability for the county. He believes a reliable water source must come first, and one potential path could be creating a cooperative water solution.

Discussion Question 3: What uses should be allowed in Industrial zoning districts?

The Commission discussed the need to clarify zoning code language around several high-demand but poorly defined uses, including solar farms, contractor yards, and warehousing. Ms. Lang noted that solar farm inquiries often come from AG-2 landowners, but the code only references power generation in heavy industrial zones without specifically addressing solar. She said contractor yards are in high demand but are only permitted in light industrial zones, prompting many applicants to seek rezoning due to limited flexibility. Ms. Jereb confirmed these are among the most frequently questioned uses and emphasized the need for clearer definitions and broader zoning allowances.

The Commission reviewed the tiered structure of industrial zoning (limited, light, and heavy) and questioned whether the distinctions are based on use types or physical characteristics. Ms. Jereb explained that the differences lie in permitted uses, though inconsistencies exist, such as trade schools being allowed in industrial zones despite their potential compatibility with commercial areas. Chair Fowle raised concerns about the disorganized zoning in areas like Grenada and questioned whether the consultants are addressing long-term planning, and Ms. Lang confirmed that the consultants are reviewing zoning patterns and may recommend changes, while Ms. Jereb suggested adopting a future land use map, which are used in other jurisdictions like the city of Chico.

The Commission also discussed zoning for animal hospitals, noting that while they are permitted in industrial zones and conditionally permitted in AG-2 and Commercial Central zones, small animal hospitals should be allowed by right, similar to human medical facilities. The code currently does not distinguish between large and small animal hospitals, highlighting a need for clarification.

Nurseries and greenhouses were also reviewed. Chair Fowle questioned the incentive to rezone to AG-2 if these uses are already allowed in industrial zones. Mr. Dean noted that limited industrial land makes AG-2 a viable alternative. The Commission agreed on the need to define greenhouses more precisely, distinguishing permanent structures from temporary hoop houses, which are increasingly common but currently undefined.

Mr. Dean raised concerns about the zoning code's treatment of water bottling and bulk water transport. He questioned whether existing language in the Light Industrial district adequately addresses bulk water hauling, which differs significantly from traditional bottling. Chair Fowle and Mr. Dean agreed that the intensity of the activity, such as truck traffic and environmental impact, should determine zoning suitability, not the commodity itself. Commissioner Hart added that while water law falls outside zoning, it intersects with broader regulatory concerns. The consensus was that bulk distribution operations regardless of product should be confined to industrial zones and require use permits, though defining thresholds for impact remains a challenge the zoning update aims to address.

The Chair called for a break at approximately 12:25 p.m.

The Chair called the meeting back to order at approximately 1:14 p.m.

The Commission continued the discussion on land use impacts in Rural Residential zones, focusing on activities that may require rezoning and CEQA review. As an example, Chair Fowle provided a scenario involving a water distribution facility on AG-2 land and questioned whether the State Water Board would assess its legality during CEQA. Commissioner Hart noted that while the county acts as the CEQA lead agency, state agencies like the Water Board often fail to respond which complicates compliance. Mr. Carroll acknowledged the ambiguity and suggested staff review zoning language and subdivision conditions for clarity.

The conversation shifted to industrial zoning and whether uses like micro-distilleries, wineries, and breweries should be allowed outside heavy industrial zones. Ms. Jereb noted that other jurisdictions treat those as accessory uses when tied to on-site crop production. Chair Fowle mentioned existing wineries on agricultural land in the county and discussed the zoning challenges of importing versus processing on-site crops. They also explored whether such uses fall under manufacturing or agricultural processing, referencing practices in Napa and Sonoma counties.

Chair Fowle noted that local grain production is beginning to support breweries and distilleries. He said a use permit is likely needed unless alcohol is made and sold on the same property. Commissioner Melo warned that excessive regulation could stifle business development, and Chair Fowle responded that the county is working to simplify processes by removing conditional use permits for accessory uses.

The Commission then discussed defining and zoning for feed stores. Ms. Jereb said retail sales are allowed in commercial zones so feed stores could fit there even though they're not explicitly listed. Chair Fowle suggested that they also be allowed in industrial zones but not in agricultural or rural residential areas due to traffic concerns. There was consensus on the need to clearly define the term "feed store" in the zoning code.

Discussion turned to heavy industrial zoning, particularly uses like canneries and agricultural processing. The Commission agreed that poultry, hog, and dairy operations should not require a permit in AG-2 zones but should be allowed in heavy industrial zones. Slaughterhouses processing only on-site livestock were considered accessory uses and should not require permits.

Finally, the Commission discussed commercial feedlots and animal sales. Ms. Jereb clarified that AG-1 and AG-2 zones allow commercial feedlots only with a conditional use permit. Chair Fowle distinguished between personal and commercial feedlots, arguing only the latter should require permits. Commissioner Hart emphasized consistent enforcement and environmental safeguards, especially for groundwater protection. The Commission and staff agreed on the need for clearer definitions and a comprehensive zoning table to guide future decisions.

Discussion Question 4: What uses should be allowed in Agricultural zoning districts?

Ms. Lang told the Commission that it is pretty clear as to what is allowed by right in agricultural zoning districts, but staff would like input on what conditional uses would be compatible in that district, i.e., business enterprises encompassing events, weddings, etc.

The Commission discussed the concept of "agricultural enterprises" as a rebranded version of the previously rejected "agritourism" proposal, with Chair Fowle expressing optimism that the new terminology would be more acceptable. Mr. Dean reminded the group that such activities are limited to 5 acres or 5 percent of AG-1 or AG-2 parcels, whichever is less. Chair Fowle emphasized that land disturbance rather than occupancy should be the key threshold for determining compatibility and permitting, which was supported by Mr. Dean. Commissioner Veale raised concerns about traffic impacts from events like weddings, while Commissioner Melo downplayed the issue.

Commissioner Hart suggested that non-commercial birdwatching events be allowed without permits which Chair Fowle supported, distinguishing between educational, non-revenue activities and those that generate income which would require permits.

Mr. Phelps asked whether agricultural enterprises should be allowed on AG-1 land, and the Commission supported case-by-case permitting especially in prime ag areas and noted that some activities within existing buildings might already be allowed. When Mr. Phelps asked about rural residential zones, Chair Fowle said agricultural enterprises could be appropriate there too, using the same 5-acre or 5-percent threshold.

Ms. Jereb asked if broader uses like weddings or horse clinics should be allowed on R-R-40 parcels under that threshold, and Chair Fowle agreed and that the definition should include equestrian events. Profit was confirmed as the trigger for requiring a use permit, and Chair Fowle stressed that permitting must remain affordable to encourage compliance.

Finally, Mr. Phelps asked for input on consolidating the county's many residential zoning districts. Staff supported simplification, and Chair Fowle recommended keeping just a minimum and maximum designation to streamline planning, especially in relation to vacation rentals and agricultural productivity.

Old Business:

Agenda Item 1: General Plan – 2025 Safety Element Update (GPA-25-02) / Categorically Exempt

Continued Public Hearing to receive a report on a complete update of the Siskiyou County General Plan Safety Element. Once adopted, the 2025 Safety Element update will replace the 1975 Seismic Safety and Safety Element of the Siskiyou County General Plan.

Staff Report:

The previously circulated Staff Report was reviewed by the Commission, and a presentation of the project was provided by Mr. Phelps.

Mr. Phelps told the Commission that staff made the requested changes to the draft Safety Element after last month's discussion.

The first change was the addition of a new chapter regarding wildlife hazards, with one section addressing disease transmission and the other addressing the physical threat of wildlife. Chair Fowle reminded Mr. Phelps that Brucellosis needs to be included because elk carry the disease and could transmit it to cattle. In addition, Chair Fowle asked that clarification be made that there is a vaccine for horses for West Nile virus but not for humans. He also requested that tuberculosis also be added.

The discussion turned to integrating predator hazards into Siskiyou County's Safety Element, focusing on local wildlife like gray wolves, mountain lions, and bears. Mr. Phelps noted the absence of confirmed wolf population data, particularly the Whaleback pack, and mentioned that California Department of Fish & Wildlife has a strike team equipped with rubber bullets for non-lethal hazing. He said estimates of predator populations vary widely, with some data seen as undercounting actual numbers. Chair Fowle and Commissioner Hart noted frequent sightings of predators in their areas of the county, with patterns suggesting wolves are displacing mountain lions and bears westward.

The Commission asked that local data be utilized for realistic planning and noted the importance of public awareness given increased human-wildlife encounters in rural areas.

There was discussion whether a county can allow horse burial on private property despite a longstanding California state law prohibiting it. Mr. Carroll noted that if the law is a state law, counties generally cannot override it, though local accommodations may be possible if the law allows flexibility. Mr. Dean said horse burials are addressed in the county's agricultural ordinance, including burial depth requirements. The conversation suggested there may be interpretive or demographic-based leeway under state law permitting such localized exceptions. Mr. Phelps noted it would be a manageable task to handle animal disposal at the county level with a centralized site and a simple pickup system.

The discussion turned to the subject of pet cemeteries and whether they are allowed in Siskiyou County. Zoning considerations for both human and animal cemeteries in Siskiyou County was

discussed, and the increasing interest in pet cemeteries was noted. Mr. Phelps stated that cemeteries aren't specifically addressed in the current code but are generally allowed when affiliated with churches. Ms. Jereb clarified that cemeteries are a conditionally permitted use with certain requirements such as recorded mapping, but it likely was intended to pertain only to human remains. Chair Fowle pointed out that with trends emerging nearby, the county should consider where pet cemeteries could be permitted and what restrictions might apply. Mr. Phelps noted that Article 15 allows the Planning Commission discretion to approve cemetery uses wherever deemed appropriate.

A new discussion started that centered around climate and temperature changes and how to accurately represent agricultural impacts in the Safety Element. It was noted that while the 2022 crop report showed increased fallow land and declines in crops and livestock, those conditions were not solely due to drought. Chair Fowle emphasized that Tulalake's lack of water that year stemmed from decisions by state and federal agencies, not natural shortages, so Mr. Phelps suggested clarifying in the text that some water shortages were due to regulatory actions rather than actual drought conditions.

Regarding the drop in livestock production receipts, Chair Fowle clarified that the drop was due to earlier feed shortages in 2020–2021, not 2022 conditions, and that recent years have seen higher sales despite lower cattle numbers due to stronger market prices. He advised removing any statement implying climate-related causes. Mr. Phelps explained the updates made on the U.S. Drought Monitor and noted it's based on local data from several organizations and is currently the best available.

Also discussed were changes to the growing season, and it was agreed that while statewide reports suggest more growing days, Siskiyou County's season hasn't extended—it has simply shifted to later in the year, with the same duration based on frost patterns.

Mr. Phelps said he discovered that Siskiyou County has implemented a drought task force comprised of personnel from the Office of Emergency Services and Environmental Health. He said they are working on a drought plan for the county.

Chair Fowle questioned the relevance of "low" and "high" emissions categories and said he doubted that Siskiyou County would qualify as a high-emission area. Mr. Phelps explained that the inclusion is required by state law as part of a mandated vulnerability assessment and due to budget limitations, the county used regional emissions data from a UC Davis-led study. Chair Fowle asked if wildfire emissions rather than human activity drive the high designation, and Mr. Phelps said that state data attributes emissions primarily to transportation and secondarily to wildfires, and while the numbers may not reflect Siskiyou County specifically, they apply broadly to Northern California counties.

Regarding emergency management, in response to a request by the Commission, Mr. Phelps added the Agriculture Department to the list which also includes the Public Health Department and local hospitals. He also expanded on the county's medical infrastructure, clarifying the distinctions between level 3 and level 4 trauma centers. He said Mercy Medical Center in Mt. Shasta is the county's highest-level facility (level 3), while Fairchild serves mainly to stabilize patients before air transport to better-equipped hospitals like Asante in Oregon.

The Chair called for a break at approximately 2:45 p.m.

The Chair called the meeting back to order at approximately 2:48 p.m.

The next section covered was community safety concerns, highlighting limited wireless coverage for emergency broadcasts and resource diversion. Chair Fowle expressed concern that newer wireless technologies, like 5G, offer poorer coverage in rural areas due to their limited range, making emergency access unreliable in places that previously had service. He noted this issue affects other rural counties as well. Mr. Phelps acknowledged the problem but pointed out that from a business standpoint, telecom companies may prefer solutions like satellite or hotspots over expanding rural infrastructure.

Mr. Phelps told the Commission that at the request of the Planning Commission at the last meeting, staff added the livestock pass program to the Safety Element which allows people with livestock to go through roadblocks during emergencies to check on their livestock and care for them since it is not feasible to evacuate large numbers of livestock during an evacuation.

Mr. Phelps noted that after Chair Fowle pointed out missing past wildfires on the map on Appendix A, he added the Shelley Fire by editing and aligning a graphic from another website, though he acknowledged not knowing the names of other missing fires. Chair Fowle added that some fires may be listed under different names, like the Kidder Complex, and suggested that a new table could be created for 2025 to include the recent surge in fire activity. Mr. Phelps also confirmed that the Agricultural Department was added to the safety element's institutional framework section (Appendix D) to acknowledge its role in hazard management.

The next discussion was about the addition of Appendix F in response to Chair Fowle's question about how National Risk Index scores are calculated. Mr. Phelps said the formula essentially boils down to a ratio of social vulnerability divided by community resilience. The social vulnerability score is based on four census-derived categories which are socioeconomic status, household characteristics, racial demographics, and housing type. He acknowledged that while the underlying math can be confusing and the source data dense, the county is relying on FEMA's methodology and trusting the accuracy of their calculations given the technical nature of the analysis.

The next discussion was regarding evacuation routes, and Mr. Phelps explained that staff is in the process of identifying all areas in the county with only one evacuation route, now phrased more clearly as "residential areas with one evacuation route" per the Chair's request. He said the report includes interactive map links or coordinates that pinpoint where evacuation access is limited. This process is being conducted countywide, laying the groundwork for potential future infrastructure improvements as funding becomes available.

Mr. Phelps explained that the Department of Conservation submitted comments intended for the local hazard mitigation plan, which likely won't be updated by OES, so the team incorporated those suggestions into the safety element instead. The feedback primarily came from the California Geological Survey, and expanded information on earthquakes was requested.

Mr. Phelps said the California Geological Survey requested inclusion of eruption probabilities for Mt. Shasta and Medicine Lake in the Safety Element. Federal estimates place Mt. Shasta's eruption probability at 3.5% and Medicine Lake's at 1% over the next 30 years. He clarified that Medicine Lake's higher threat ranking in some assessments reflects lower surrounding population and

infrastructure, not a greater likelihood of eruption. Chair Fowle added that some assessments do rank Medicine Lake as more likely to erupt, highlighting differences in evaluation criteria.

Mr. Phelps said staff also revised dam failure impact language, replacing flawed elevation data with timing estimates consistent with Dunsmuir's own safety planning.

Mr. Phelps said that suppression costs were added for the Mill and McKinney fires to illustrate the financial scale of major wildfires, and those costs would only cover only the cost of containment and not recovery or rebuilding. He said minor clarifying edits were made regarding areas of firefighting responsibility.

Mr. Phelps told the Commission that Appendix C was removed and a section regarding land use distribution was added on page 21 of the Safety Element that fulfills CAL FIRE's requirement. The section includes two side-by-side maps highlighting CAL FIRE's responsibility areas. He said the next section includes notes on increased forest density and the role of prescribed burns, as well as basic tips for individuals unable to evacuate during a wildfire.

Chair Fowle pointed out that the top map on page 21 mislabels wilderness areas as rural residential, and Ms. Jereb clarified that federal land in Siskiyou County is zoned R-R but acknowledged this can be misleading. Ms. Lang agreed it would be clearer to label such areas as federal or public lands, and Mr. Phelps said they could flag or footnote those areas for clarification. Chair Fowle said he thought that the lower map more accurately shows fire response responsibility, while the upper map's color coding could be improved to reflect actual land use.

Mr. Phelps discussed the fire hazard vulnerability assessment and said a graphic was added to help people visually understand defensible space guidelines. He said the report encourages readers to consult Appendix B for maps specific to their local area. Similar enhancements were made to the flood maps on page 32 to improve clarity and usability.

Mr. Phelps said the FEMA flood maps in Appendix C were enhanced with added arrows to help users unfamiliar with specific areas interpret the maps more easily. He said these annotations indicate recognizable landmarks, nearby flood hazard zones, and available exit routes, and this approach was applied consistently across all mapped regions in the county to improve public clarity and usability. He did the same thing with evacuation routes.

In conclusion, Mr. Phelps told the Commission that following a recent meeting with CAL FIRE, the informal review process has been initiated for the Safety Element, which will involve several months of coordination and revisions based on feedback from CAL FIRE and the State Board of Forestry and Fire Protection. Mr. Phelps said once the report is finalized, the revised version will be presented to the Planning Commission and is expected to align with the 2026 General Plan Update for adoption.

Mr. Phelps wanted the Commission to be aware that the local hazard mitigation plan was fast-tracked last month for seasonal fire protection. Since general plan updates require a 90-day interval, the same process will occur in August to ensure compliance and maintain preparedness.

Chair Fowle thanked Mr. Phelps for incorporating the Commission's comments and concerns and said he appreciated the hyperlinks that were included in the report.

Items for Discussion/Direction:**1. Ongoing Staff Update Regarding the General Plan Update**

Ms. Lang told the Commission that staff is continuing to work with the consultants on the zoning code elements, and they're incorporating the comments provided by the Planning Commission.

There was discussion regarding General Plan guidance on agricultural building waivers; specifically, whether it's more effective to allow one larger structure or multiple smaller ones. Ms. Lang said the consultants are still reviewing it.

Chair Fowle brought up low-income housing and whether it was better to pursue distributed smaller developments or focus on a more consolidated project with a smaller overall footprint.

Miscellaneous:

- 1. Future Meetings:** The next regular meeting of the Planning Commission is scheduled for Wednesday, July 16, 2025, at 9:00 a.m. The Commission Clerk advised the Commission that staff has no projects ready for presentation.

Motion: It was moved by Commissioner Melo, seconded by Commissioner Hart, to cancel the July 16, 2025, Planning Commission meeting.

Voted upon and the Chair declared the motion carried unanimously by those Commissioners present.

The next regular Planning Commission meeting is scheduled for Wednesday, August 20, 2025, at 9:00 a.m.

- 2. Correspondence: None**

- 3. Staff Comments: None**

- 4. Commission Comments:** Commissioner Melo thanked staff for their hard work. Commissioner Veale said he read about an airplane that was built and fueled with hemp.

Adjournment: The meeting was concluded at approximately 3:33 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Signature on File

Hailey Lang, Secretary