

Siskiyou County Planning Commission
Regular Meeting
January 21, 2026

The Siskiyou County Planning Commission meeting of January 21, 2026, was called to order by Vice Chair Tony Melo at approximately 9:00 a.m. in the Siskiyou County Meeting Chambers, 311 Fourth Street, 2nd Floor, Yreka, California. During roll call, Chair Fowle entered the meeting and directed Vice Chair Melo to continue facilitating until he was prepared to resume the Chair. A quorum was established.

Present: Commissioners Hart, Melo, Lindler, Veale and Chair Fowle

Absent: None

Also Present: Hailey Lang, Director, Community Development Department; James Phelps, Senior Planner; William Carroll, Assistant County Counsel; and Katie Howell, Commission Clerk

Approval of Minutes

It was moved by Commissioner Veale and seconded by Commissioner Hart to approve the November 19, 2025 Planning Commission Minutes as presented. The motion carried unanimously by voice vote.

Unscheduled Appearances: None

Conflict of Interest Declaration: None

Presentation of Documents; Availability of Public Records; Public Hearing Protocol: The Vice Chair directed those present to refer to the Agenda for these items.

Right of Appeal Statement: The Vice Chair read the Right of Appeal Statement.

Changes to the Agenda: William Carroll, Assistant County Counsel, reminded the Commission that the January meeting should have included an agenda item regarding the election of Chair and Vice Chair for 2026. It was determined that the election would be placed on the agenda for the February meeting.

Commissioner Fowle resumed his role as Chair of the meeting.

New Business:

Agenda Item 1: Elwood Ranch Sale Barn (UP-25-02) / Exempt from CEQA (Guidelines §15061(b)(3) – Common Sense Exemption)

The project site is located on Juniper Valley Drive, near the Big Springs Road/Juniper Valley Drive intersection, approximately 1 mile northeast of the community of Lake Shastina; APN 019-060-020; Township 43N, Range 4W, Section 30, MDB&M; 41°32'50"N 122°21'15"W. The project is a proposed use permit to allow construction and operation of an approximately 8,000-square-foot agricultural sale barn facility for cattle auctions and limited agricultural events, located on a 40-acre parcel in the AG-2

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zoning district.

Staff Report:

Senior Planner James Phelps presented the project, describing a proposed 8,000-square-foot agricultural sale barn facility on a 40-acre AG-2 parcel near Juniper Valley Drive. The facility would host up to 12 events annually, including cattle auctions and agricultural seminars. Staff recommended approval of the Use Permit and determination that the project is exempt from CEQA under Guidelines §15061(b)(3). A screening-level qualitative vehicle miles traveled (VMT) review indicated that the project would generate less than 1% of average daily countywide traffic.

Agency Input: None

The Chair opened the Public Hearing.

Public Comments:

Kyle Matti, NMR Architects, spoke in support of the project and described the facility's purpose to provide a local cattle auction venue and agricultural event facility. He noted the building design includes auction space, livestock holding pens, restroom facilities, office space, and covered exterior areas.

Susan Crawford spoke in support, noting the benefits to local ranchers and referencing broader economic considerations related to agricultural operations in the County.

Commission Questions/Discussion:

Commissioners discussed access routes, emergency ingress/egress, and traffic impacts. Clarification was provided that two access routes exist via Big Springs Road and Highway 97. Commissioners discussed the proposed limit of 12 events annually and maximum attendance of 150–200 people. Consideration was given to potentially increasing event limits and attendance; however, County Counsel and staff advised that significant changes would require the project to be continued to allow for renoticing with a revised project description. The applicant indicated a preference to proceed as originally proposed and amend later if necessary. Commissioners also discussed the agricultural nature of the project and expressed support for agricultural accessory uses in the County.

Motion: It was moved by Commissioner Veale, seconded by Commissioner Lindler, to adopt Resolution PC 2025-023, determining that the project is exempt from CEQA and approving the Elwood Ranch Sale Barn Use Permit UP-25-02.

Voted Motion carried unanimously by voice vote.

The Chair called for a break at approximately 9:59 a.m.

The Chair called the meeting back to order at approximately 10:09 a.m.

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Agenda Item 2: General Plan - Open Space and Conservation Element (GPA-26-01)

Staff presentation of draft versions of the Open Space and Conservation Element for Planning Commission and public review. The Open Space and Conservation Element provides a land use policy framework to guide the conservation and management of Siskiyou County's natural, agricultural, and cultural resources. This review is informational only and is exempt from CEQA under Guidelines §§15061(b)(3), 15306, and 15378.

Staff Report:

Senior Planner James Phelps presented two draft revisions of the Open Space and Conservation Element. Staff explained the differences between the July 2025 consultant draft and the December 2025 staff revision. The staff revised draft emphasizes working lands, agriculture, and forestry as integral to conservation outcomes and clarifies the County's limited regulatory role. Staff noted that groundwater management authority rests with the Groundwater Sustainability Agencies (GSAs), and the County's role is to ensure land use decisions remain consistent with adopted Groundwater Sustainability Plans.

Agency Input: None

Commission Questions/Discussion:

Commissioners discussed groundwater governance, regulatory overlap with State Water Resources Control Board and Regional Water Quality Control Boards, and the County's authority relative to GSAs. Chair Fowle emphasized the importance of recognizing agriculture as foundational to open space and conservation policy. Commissioner Lindler requested clarification regarding Timberland Conversion Permit requirements. The discussion was informational only, and no action was taken.

Miscellaneous:

1. Future Meetings: The next regular meeting of the Planning Commission is scheduled for Wednesday, February 18, 2026, at 9:00 a.m.

2. Correspondence: None

3. Staff Comments:

Community Development Director Hailey Lang acknowledged the Commission's engagement and noted continued refinement of the General Plan elements to ensure alignment with statutory authority. Director Lang noted that her plan is to have the first workshop regarding the zoning matrix during the April Planning Commission meeting.

Senior Planner James Phelps expressed appreciation for the Commission's active participation and stated that thoughtful dialogue enhances policy clarity and defensibility.

Assistant County Counsel William Carroll reminded the Commission of procedural safeguards to minimize legal exposure when modifying noticed projects.

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4. Commission Comments:

Commissioner Melo asked for clarification regarding whether there was a deadline associated with adopting and sending the General Plan update to the State. Staff explained that certain portions of the General Plan, such as fire-related components, require review and sign-off by CAL FIRE, but that comprehensive updates outside of the Housing Element are locally adopted and generally not subject to formal State approval timelines.

Staff further clarified that while there is a general goal of adoption by early spring or summer, the County is not currently operating under a strict statutory deadline, and additional time could be taken if necessary to complete further work.

Chair Fowle stated that the General Plan update should continue to be treated as a project, with the Planning Commission providing initial review and guidance before the matter is presented to the Board of Supervisors.

Adjournment: The meeting was concluded at approximately 11:35 a.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Signature on file

Hailey Lang, Secretary

Director, Community Development Department

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