

Siskiyou County Planning Commission
Regular Meeting
March 18, 2026

The Siskiyou County Planning Commission meeting of March 18, 2026, was called to order by Chair Tony Melo at approximately 9:00 a.m. in the Siskiyou County Meeting Chambers, 311 Fourth Street, 2nd Floor, Yreka, California.

Present: Commissioners Fowle, Lindler, Veale and Chair Melo

Absent: Commissioner Hart

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

Approval of Minutes

It was moved by Commissioner Veale and seconded by Chair Melo to approve the February 18, 2026 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 Chair directed those present to refer to the Agenda for these items.

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

Changes to the Agenda: None

New Business:

Agenda Item 1: General Plan – Land Use Element Review and Edits (GPA-26-02)

Staff presentation of the original draft and the recommended revised draft of the Land Use Element for Planning Commission review and public input. The Land Use Element establishes the County's land use policy framework, including land use designations, standards of population density and building intensity, and goals, policies, and programs guiding future development and resource conservation in Siskiyou County.

This item is informational in nature. No formal action is required at this time. The review is exempt from the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA) pursuant to CEQA Guidelines Sections 15061(b)(3), 15306, and 15378.

Staff Report:

Deputy Director of Planning James Phelps presented the draft Land Use Element explaining that the document establishes the County's comprehensive land use policy framework, including residential

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density, commercial and industrial designations, and agricultural land protections. He described the side-by-side comparison of consultant-prepared language and staff-recommended revisions, noting that staff edits were intended to ensure consistency with California law, clarify that the General Plan provides policy direction rather than regulatory authority, and better reflect Siskiyou County's rural character. Deputy Director Phelps further stated that revisions were made to improve clarity and readability for the public. This item is informational and not subject to CEQA review.

Agency Input: None

Chair Melo opened the public hearing. No members of the public were present to provide testimony. The public hearing was closed.

Commission Questions/Discussion:

The Commission commenced review of the Land Use Element. Commissioner Veale sought clarification regarding the basis of staff revisions, to which Mr. Phelps responded that the edits were intended to ensure both legal compliance and accessibility.

Commissioner Lindler initiated discussion regarding minimum parcel sizes and septic requirements, referencing smaller historic subdivisions and questioning whether additional flexibility could be incorporated. Mr. Phelps explained that the one-acre minimum is driven by environmental health standards requiring both primary and replacement leach fields. Commissioner Lindler acknowledged the explanation but expressed concern regarding impacts on housing affordability.

Community Development Director Hailey Lang entered the meeting at 9:32am.

Senior Planner Rachel Jereb provided clarification regarding staff interpretation of agricultural processing. Ms. Jereb stated that activities such as seed cleaning may be considered processing due to alteration of the original product. Commissioner Fowle expressed disagreement, stating that such activities constitute customary agricultural practices and should be considered accessory uses permitted by right rather than subject to discretionary review.

Commissioner Fowle elaborated on the distinction between traditional agricultural activities and commercial processing, expressing concern that overly broad definitions could impose unintended regulatory burdens on agricultural operations. Staff acknowledged the concern and indicated that further clarification would be addressed during the zoning code update process.

Commissioner Lindler reiterated concerns that minimum parcel size requirements may increase development costs and limit housing affordability. Commissioner Fowle stated that affordable housing should be located in areas with available services and that rural land use policies should prioritize open space and agricultural compatibility. Chair Melo expressed interest in ensuring that policy changes do not adversely impact agricultural operations.

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Staff explained proposed revisions to vacation rental regulations, including allowing parcels under 2.5 acres to be reviewed by the Planning Commission rather than automatically denied. Chair Melo questioned whether such requirements could affect property rights. Mr. Phelps clarified that discretionary review would allow case-specific evaluation and appropriate conditions.

The Commission continued review of policy language, focusing on consistency with existing County code and ensuring that the General Plan remains a policy document rather than a regulatory instrument.

Chair Melo called for a break at approximately 10:23 a.m. and departed the meeting.

Vice Chair Lindler called the meeting back to order at approximately 10:30 a.m.

Commissioner Fowle raised concerns regarding proposed reductions in commercial parcel size standards, particularly in relation to potential hazardous materials and compatibility issues. Staff indicated that these provisions would be reviewed for consistency with environmental health requirements.

Commissioner Lindler requested clarification regarding removal of certain streamlining language. Mr. Phelps explained that such provisions could conflict with state law. Discussion then turned to floodplain policy language, with Commissioner Fowle recommending use of the term “manage” rather than “regulate.” Staff acknowledged the recommendation for further consideration.

Due to prior obligations, Chair Melo Director Lang departed the meeting at 11:00am.

The Commission continued deliberation regarding floodplain policies and water resource management. Mr. Phelps explained existing regulatory requirements, including federal compliance obligations. Commissioner Fowle emphasized the importance of water storage, including groundwater recharge and upland storage strategies. Commissioner Veale noted that water availability represents a significant long-term issue for the County.

The Commission discussed economic development considerations and the importance of aligning General Plan language with existing state and local regulations. Additional discussion addressed building code considerations and potential regulatory overlaps. County Counsel indicated that certain matters may require further legal analysis.

Motion: It was moved by Commissioner Veale, seconded by Commissioner Fowle, to continue this item to the April 15th Planning Commission Meeting.

Voted Motion carried unanimously by voice vote.

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Items for Discussion/Direction

1. Ongoing Staff Updates regarding the General Plan Update

Deputy Director of Planning James Phelps provided a brief update regarding the ongoing General Plan Update process. Mr. Phelps stated that staff would continue refining the Land Use Element based on Commission feedback received during the meeting and indicated that additional sections of the General Plan, as well as associated zoning code updates, would be brought forward at future Planning Commission meetings for continued review and direction. He emphasized that the update process is ongoing and iterative, and that staff would incorporate Commission input to ensure consistency with County policy objectives and state requirements.

Miscellaneous:

- 1. Future Meetings:** The next regular meeting of the Planning Commission is scheduled for Wednesday, April 15, 2026, at 9:00 a.m.
- 2. Correspondence: None**
- 3. Staff Comments: None**
- 4. Commission Comments: None**

Adjournment: The meeting was concluded at approximately 11:58 a.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Signature on file

Hailey Lang, Secretary

Director, Community Development Department

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