

CITY OF MILTON-FREEWATER
PLANNING COMMISSION MINUTES
September 2, 2025

The Planning Commission of the City of Milton-Freewater met for an informal pre-meeting study session at 6:30 pm on September 2, 2025 for the purpose of discussing questions on agenda items.

Those present were Commissioners Frank Millar, Myra Sherwin, Megan Norton, Wendy Harris, and Vice Chair Mary Ward.

Staff participants included Planning Assistant Cassidy Ruiz.

No action was taken.

The study session adjourned at 6:59 p.m.

The Planning Commission meeting was called to order on Monday, September 2, 2025 in the Albee Room of the City Library, 8 SW 8th Ave, Milton-Freewater, OR 97862 at 7:00 p.m. by Vice Chair Mary Ward.

Commissioners Present: Commissioners Frank Millar, Megan Norton, Myra Sherwin, Wendy Harris, and Vice Chair Mary Ward.

Commissioner Absent: Chair Nathan Lyon

There is currently one commissioner position vacant.

Staff Participants: Planning Assistant Cassidy Ruiz and City Manager Chad Morris were present.

Citizens Participants: Paul Seaquist – 684 College Street, Milton-Freewater, Anthony Graham – 207 NE 5th Ave., Milton-Freewater

Vice Chair Mary Ward asked if there were any corrections or additions to the June 2, 2025 minutes. None were stated. Commissioner Myra Sherwin motioned to approve the June 2, 2025 minutes as written. Commissioner Frank Millar seconded the motion. All were in favor for approval. Motion carried 5-0. The minutes of the June 2, 2025 meeting were approved as written.

Citizen Concerns: None shared.

The public hearing was then opened for the Variance application received GFS Oregon Holdings LLC to allow reduced front-yard setback for a security kiosk at the 5th Avenue Self Storage business located at 207 NE 5th Avenue.

Rules for a public hearing were read. No members of the Commission abstained or disclosed ex parte contact.

No audience member objected to any commissioner's right to participate in the public hearing.

Planning Assistant Kassidy Ruiz stated that the notice of the hearing was published as required by law.

Planning Assistant Kassidy Ruiz stated that no written comments were received by the Planning Department.

Planning Assistant Kassidy Ruiz provided the staff report submitted by Jaime Crawford with Bell Design Company, which is printed below.

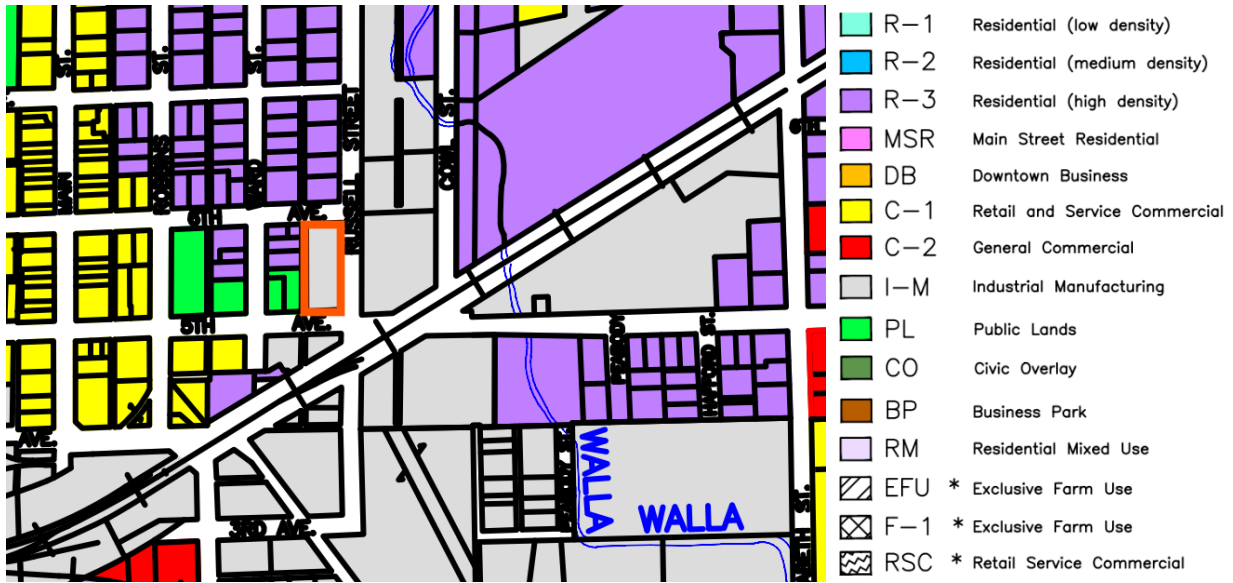
I. BACKGROUND

A variance is requested to allow an employee kiosk (an 8'x8' structure) near the front entrance of the existing 5th Avenue Self Storage facility. The Applicant is requesting to reduce the front setback standard from 22 feet to 6 feet, a 16-foot reduction. The requested variance is necessary for the function of the storage facility, and granting this variance will not adversely affect adjacent property owners or impact City utilities/services at large.

II. SITE DESCRIPTION

- The site is zoned Industrial Manufacturing (I-M). Figure 1 shows a section of the City's zoning map. The site is outlined in orange.

FIGURE 1. SITE OUTLINED ON CITY ZONING MAP



- The site contains the existing 5th Avenue Self Storage facility. Figures 2, 3, and 4 show the front yard of the site along 5th Ave. from different angles.

FIGURE 2. SITE FROM 5TH AVE. LOOKING NORTHWEST



FIGURE 3. SITE FROM 5TH AVE. LOOKING NORTH



FIGURE 4. SITE FROM RUSSEL ST. LOOKING WEST



- The surrounding properties are developed and contain a mix of existing residential, commercial, and industrial uses. Figure 5 shows an aerial of the site in context with adjacent development.

FIGURE 5. AERIAL IMAGE OF THE SITE AND SURROUNDING PROPERTIES



III. APPROVAL CRITERIA

The City's land use regulations are contained in Title 10 (Zoning Regulations) and Title 11 (Land Development) of the Milton-Freewater City Code (MFCC). Code citations are *italicized*. Responses are shown in standard font.

10-4-9: I-M INDUSTRIAL-MANUFACTURING:

- A. *Permitted Uses: [...]*
- B. *Permitted Uses with Site Plan Review: [...]*
- C. *Conditional Uses: [...]*

Response: The request is to place a new structure for an existing use within the front setback. The site contains the 5th Avenue Self Storage facility. The City does not have a clear definition of self-storage facilities. The Planning Commission does have the right to approve uses that are similar to those uses listed within MFCC 10-4-9. However, the new

structure will be accessory to the existing use and the existing use is not proposed to change, therefore, additional review for the use is not required.

D. Minimum Lot Dimensions:

- 1. When dividing land to be allocated to existing residential structures [...]*
- 2. When dividing land to be allocated to existing industrial structures [...]*

Response: A land division is not proposed.

E. Minimum Yard Requirements:

- 1. Front yard: Twenty two feet (22').*

Response: The new structure is planned 6 feet from the front lot line. A variance to this standard is requested and addressed in this report.

- 2. Where an industrial use abuts a residential zone, the yard abutting the residential zone shall be a minimum of thirty five feet (35').*

Response: The new structure is planned near the center of the site, over 35 feet from both the western and eastern side-lot line.

- 3. Other yard requirements shall be determined by the fire clearances specified by the uniform building code and the state fire marshal's office for that type of construction and use.*

Response: The new structure is planned near the front of the site, between the front lot line and existing storage structures to the north. Additional yard setbacks are not required.

F. Building Height:

- 1. Buildings in the I-M zone within one hundred fifty feet (150') of a residential zone shall not exceed forty five feet (45').*
- 2. Industrial buildings in excess of one hundred fifty feet (150') of a residential zone shall not exceed fifty five feet (55').*

Response: The new structure is planned near the front lot line, over 150 feet from any residential zone. The structure is prefabricated, one-story, and will not exceed 45 feet in height.

10-10-1: DESCRIPTION AND PURPOSE:

A variance shall be initiated by a property owner or his representative on forms provided by and filed with the planning department and accompanied by the appropriate administrative fee. A variance is a permission granted as a relief from some specific and unusual hardship(s) imposed by the strict interpretation of this title. The planning director, and the planning commission shall have the authority to grant a variance from provisions of this title. The planning director shall act on applications

for variation of up to ten percent (10%) in minimum yard requirements. The planning commission shall hear all other applications for variance.

A variance shall not be granted in cases where a zone change or zone text amendment is the appropriate administrative procedure.

Response: The requested variance has been initiated by the property owner and their representative. The variance request exceeds 10% of the minimum front yard setback. The Planning Commission is the decision body for this request. A zone change or text amendment will not address the requested variance.

10-10-5: CONDITIONS FOR GRANTING VARIANCE:

All variances other than minor setback variances shall be heard by the planning commission in accordance with level III processing procedures.

In granting a variance, the planning commission shall find that the following conditions have been met:

A. Exceptional or extraordinary circumstances apply to the property itself such as lot size, shape, or topography, which do not apply generally to other properties in the same zone or vicinity, and result from a situation over which the applicant has no control.

&

B. The variance is necessary for the preservation of a property right of the applicant substantially the same as is possessed by owners of other property in the same zone or vicinity.

Response: The exceptional circumstance and the variance's necessity to maintain the Applicant's property rights both result from the continued use of the property as a self-storage facility. The Applicant argues – and Staff agrees – that placing the new structure within the front yard setback will increase security for both the site and surrounding properties.

C. The granting of the proposed variance will not be materially detrimental to property within the vicinity in respects such as public safety, traffic, noise, health and sanitation, and hours of operation. The granting of variance shall not constitute a grant of special privileges inconsistent with the limitations on other properties in the same zoning district.

Response: The existing use and operations of the site will not change through approval of this variance. Traffic, noise, health/sanitation, and hours of operation will remain unchanged from the existing conditions. Public safety will be improved

by positioning on-site staff and cameras closer to the front of the storage facility. This requested variance does not conflict with any other limitations or regulations in place for other properties within the I-M zone. Other self-storage facilities wishing to improve their security provisions for their site and surrounding properties are able to request a variance to the front setback standard.

- D. It must be shown that a material hardship unwarranted within the intent of this title will exist if the variance is not granted, and that the hardship cannot be remedied by other means. The hardship demonstrated must not be self-created, and must relate to the land itself, and not to problems personal to the applicant. The variance permitted shall be the minimum variance which will alleviate the hardship.*

Response: Similar to criteria A and B, the hardship arises from the approved use of the site through a previous land use review that did not adequately consider the increased need for security for this site and the surrounding properties. The new structure will allow for additional cameras and wireless connectivity to provide coverage for the site's frontage. The location of the site and the nature of the use require these increased security measures.

IV. PUBLIC COMMENTS

As of the publishing of this staff report, no public comments or agency comments have been received.

V. STAFF RECOMMENDATION

Staff recommend **APPROVAL** of the variance request. Conditions of approval are not proposed nor are they necessary to mitigate any adverse impacts. All other relevant code criteria will continue to be met.

The applicant was then invited to speak.

Anthony Graham with GFS Oregon Holdings LLC stated that the staff report described his project well and he was available if the commission or citizens had any questions.

Vice Chair Ward asked if there were any members in support of the applicants.

None were stated.

Vice Chair Ward asked if there were any members in opposition of the applicants.

Paul Seaquist stated to the Planning Commission that the City has front setback regulations for a reason and that they should keep that in mind when making their decision.

Commissioner Myra Sherwin asked if there have been safety issues brought up without the kiosk.

Graham stated that management has to work out of enclosed space, making the person working not able to see customers coming in or out of the business. He added that security cameras play a large role in the safety of the business. The electrical infrastructure is stored below the facility and the business would be moving toward revamping their internet connectivity and camera systems.

Commissioner Sherwin asked if there is an employee in the kiosk 24 hours.

Graham stated no.

Vice Chair Ward asked the Commissioners if there were any more questions.

None were stated.

The Public hearing was declared closed.

Commissioner Norton motioned to adopt the findings of fact and approve the Variance application submitted by GFS Oregon Holdings. Commissioner Sherwin seconded the motion. Commissioner Harris, Millar, Sherwin, Norton, and Vice Chair Ward were in favor. Motion carried 5-0.

Planning Assistant Cassidy Ruiz presented the Administrative Actions of the Planning Department.

The meeting was adjourned at 7:30 p.m.