

CITY OF MILTON-FREEWATER
PLANNING COMMISSION MINUTES
December 1, 2025

The Planning Commission of the City of Milton-Freewater met for an informal pre-meeting study session at 6:30 pm on December 1, 2025 for the purpose of discussing questions on agenda items.

Those present were Commissioners, Wendy Harris, Myra Sherwin, Chair Nathan Lyon, and Commissioner Mary Ward via telephone.

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, December 1, 2025 in the Albee Room of the City Library, 8 SW 8th Ave, Milton-Freewater, OR 97862 at 7:00 p.m. by Chair Nathan Lyon.

Commissioners Present: Commissioners Myra Sherwin, Wendy Harris, Chair Nathan Lyon, and Commissioner Mary Ward via telephone.

Commissioner Frank Millar was absent

There are currently two commissioner positions vacant.

Staff Participants: Planning Assistant Cassidy Ruiz.

Citizens Participants: Cindy Timmons – 54171 Miller Rd., Michael Melder – 1365 Beet Rd. Walla Walla, WA, Leanne Steadman – 85422 Tum-A-Lum Rd., Emily Holden – 1325 College St., John Brown – 204 Powell Rd., Kelly & Carolyn Hahn – 250 Powell Rd.

Chair Nathan Lyon asked if there were any corrections or additions to the November 3, 2025 minutes. None were stated. Commissioner Myra Sherwin motioned to approve the November 3, 2025 minutes as written. Commissioner Wendy Harris seconded the motion. All were in favor for approval. Motion carried 4-0. The minutes of the November 3rd meeting minutes were approved as written.

Citizen Concerns: None shared.

The public hearing was then opened for the Zoning Map Amendment request from R-1 to R-2 from JM Land Development for a property located at Map no. 6N3535DC Tax Lot 3301.

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 Cassidy Ruiz stated that the notice of the hearing was published as required by law.

Planning Assistant Cassidy Ruiz stated that two written comments were received. One letter of opposition was received by Grasiela and Fausto Ramos at 1118 N Main Street and one letter of opposition was received by Isaias Campos and Gloricel Rojas at 1119 N Main Street.

Planning Assistant Cassidy Ruiz provided the staff report.

I. BACKGROUND

The subject site has no current structures built on it and has been used for agricultural purposes in the past. The property was partitioned earlier this year by Benchstone Estates (1131 N Main Street) and sold to JM Land Development LLC with the intentions of subdividing the property for additional housing units. The site fronts on N Main Street and is approximately 3.32 acres in size. The applicant intends to change the Zoning of the property to accommodate smaller residential lots.

The land is suitable and available for residential uses, but has not been developed for this purpose. According to the City of Milton-Freewater's Comprehensive Plan - Goal 10: Housing, Milton-Freewater provides a full range of housing types in a variety of price ranges and rent levels. JM Land Development LLC is proposing their future development to bring in medium-income housing for the city. By focusing on medium-income housing, this proposal will meet Goal 10 and decrease the gross vacant acreage of R-2 land within Milton-Freewater.

The applicant is intending to rezone the property to maximize the density of the parcel, while still being able to build single family residences or allow duplex rental units on some lots. After the project denial (Rezoning the property from R-1 to R-3) in June 2025, the

applicant has adjusted the proposal and will accommodate the future subdivision with medium density lots rather than the smallest allowed lots.

II. SITE DESCRIPTION

The subject property consists of approximately 3.32 acres and is bordered by Residential Low-Density (R-1) properties to the north and west, Residential Medium-Density (R-2) to the east, and a mixture of Residential Medium-Density (R-2) and Residential – High Density (R-3) to the south. The property is surrounded by single family homes, except the parcel directly to the west, which is used for agriculture purposes, but is zoned Residential Low-Density (R-1). The property itself does conform with the City's Comprehensive Plan.

III. APPLICABLE CODE PROVISIONS

Chapter 12: Amendments

10-12-1: An amendment to the text of this Ordinance or to the Zoning Map may be initiated by the City Council, Planning Commission, or by application of a citizen.

Findings: The amendments were initiated by the applicant, who is a developing group.

10-12-2: Amendments to the text of this Ordinance or to the Zoning Map shall be processed under terms of the Level IV procedure in Section 10-3-10.

Findings: The amendments were processed as a Level IV procedure in accordance with this chapter.

10-12-3: In the Planning Commission report to the City Council, and in the City Council's action after review of the Planning Commission's report, the following standards shall be addressed:

(A) The proposal is in conformance with all applicable provisions of the Comprehensive Plan text and map of land use designations.

Findings: The proposal conforms with applicable provisions of the Comprehensive Plan.

(B) The proposal addresses a need which was improperly or inadequately addressed by the present ordinance text or map.

Findings: By amending the property zone to a higher density, the City Zoning Code will allow residential lots to be 7,500 square feet rather than 10,000 square feet required in the R-1 zone. With the required size of lots being smaller, the applicant can construct more housing units within the parcel. This would provide more housing options for the city, thus supporting the goal of developing additional housing within Milton-Freewater.

The site is surrounded by single family residential lots, which makes the site more desirable for additional housing.

10-12-4: The City Recorder shall maintain records of text and map amendments.

Findings: As part of City procedure, the appropriate records will be maintained.

IV. GENERAL COMMENT

The Residential High-Density (R-2) designation is an appropriate designation for this property based on the applicant's development intentions for subdividing the property for additional housing units.

V. STAFF RECOMMENDATION

Staff recommends that the Planning Commission recommend approval of the amendments.

The applicant was then invited to speak.

Michael Melder stated that he agreed with Planning Assistant, Cassidy Ruiz, staff report. Melder stated that the Planning Commission originally recommended approval to City Council in June of 2025, but was ultimately denied by City Council. Melder stated that he received citizen feedback for the project. Many citizens were opposed of the project because the original proposal of rezoning the property to R-3, would allow for multifamily development, high rises, apartment complexes, etc. Melder stated that was never the intention, but in fact, to build single family homes and duplexes on the

property to maximize density to give himself the most flexible options he could. Testimony from the public expressed concern about the density and what the plan was of the applicant. Melder stated that he wanted to listen to the neighbors, so he is now proposing the rezone of R-2, in which he has submitted a conceptual plan of future development. Melder stated that he is still sticking to the plan of single-family residential development with duplexes. The property then would allow for 15 lots.

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

None were stated.

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

None were stated.

Chair Lyon asked the Commissioners if there were any more questions.

Commissioner Myra Sherwin asked the applicant if he had an idea as to what he is wanting to do with the property if rezoned to R-2. Melder responded informing Commissioner Sherwin that within the packet is a conceptual site plan showing the developmental layout of the property. Melder also stated that he would submit a preliminary plat to divide the property into individual lots. Melder stated that he is a civil engineer and general contractor so he planned to permit and develop the project himself.

Commissioner Sherwin confirmed with the applicant that no apartment complexes or multifamily developments were being proposed, in which Melder confirmed.

The Public hearing was declared closed.

Commissioner Sherwin motioned to adopt the findings of fact and recommends to the Milton-Freewater City Council to approve the Zoning Map Amendment from R-1 to R-2 from JM Land Development for property located at 6N3535DC Tax lot 3301.

Commissioner Harris seconded the motion. Commissioner Harris, Ward, and Sherwin, were in favor. Chair Lyon was in opposition. Motion carried 3-1.

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

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