



# City of Rockaway Beach

## Planning Commission Meeting Minutes

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**Date:** Thursday, June 26, 2025

**Location:** Rockaway Beach City Hall, 276 HWY 101 - Civic Facility

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### 1. CALL TO ORDER

Planning Commission President Hassell called the meeting to order at 5:00 p.m.

### 2. PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE

### 3. ROLL CALL

**Commissioners Present:** Bill Hassell, Penny Cole, Lydia Hess, Nancy Lanyon, Jason Maxfield, and Stephanie Winchester

**Commissioners Excused:** Sandra Johnson

**Council Members Present:** Charles McNeilly, Mayor (via Zoom); and Mary McGinnis, Planning Commission Liaison

**Staff Present:** Mary Mertz, City Planner; and Melissa Thompson, City Recorder

### 4. APPROVAL OF MINUTES

Start time: 5:01 p.m.

#### a. May 15, 2025 Meeting Minutes

Winchester made a **motion**, seconded by Cole, to approve the May 15, 2025 Meeting Minutes as presented.

The **motion carried** by the following vote:

Aye: 7 (Cole, Hess, Johnson, Lanyon, Maxfield, Winchester, Hassell)

Nay: 0

### 5. PRESENTATIONS, GUESTS & ANNOUNCEMENTS – None Scheduled

### 6. STAFF REPORTS

Start time: 5:02 p.m.

City Planner Mertz provided the following updates:

- Announced it was her last meeting as City Planner and Abram Tapia would begin as City Planner next month. Mertz shared it was a pleasure serving as City Planner.
- Two public hearings will be held at the July meeting.

- Planning Department is getting very busy; people are building. Two developers are looking to develop multi-unit housing under the newly adopted middle housing code.

## **7. PUBLIC HEARING – None Scheduled**

## **8. CITIZEN INPUT ON NON-AGENDA ITEMS**

Hassell invited public comment. No audience members were present.

## **9. OLD BUSINESS – None Scheduled**

## **10. NEW BUSINESS**

Start time: 5:04 p.m.

### **a. Discussion Regarding Business Façade Grant Criteria/Process**

Mertz acknowledged the effectiveness of the Commission's work on the Community Grant program in guiding staff and the City Council on grant criteria, ranking, and funding recommendations. Mertz invited the Commission to do the same review of the Business Façade Improvement Grant program.

Discussion and suggestions included:

- City Council recently awarded 9 grants, and 4 were returned to applicants for revision and reapplication. Many applications didn't include bids. Detailed bids are desirable.
- Applicant budget section is not necessary if a bid is included.
- Remove detailed work plan requirement from application.
- Narrative description of project is desirable.
- Change grant program name to "Façade and ADA Improvement Grant."
- Consider changing "Façade" to "Street-Facing Improvement" or "Beautification."
- Include specific requirements for bids.
- Goal of grant is to increase tourism and ADA accessibility contributes to that.
- Providing details of additional funding sources is not necessary.
- Application may be too complex.
- Training workshops or documents to assist applicants is desirable. Possibly provide examples of successful applications.
- Include point ranking rubric in the application criteria. Mertz will provide criteria ranking that the Council used to the Commission.
- Provide points for applications that include drawings/renderings.
- Encourage businesses to install bike racks in front of the business.
- Question about eligibility of real estate-related businesses.
- Desire to make business district more comfortably walkable. Suggestion that the City proactively develop design standards. Suggestion to hold town hall to solicit

community feedback on standards. Noted that the Strategic Plan is guiding current goals.

- Questions for scoring rubric: Does it improve the visible character of the town? Does it improve the tourist experience more directly?
- Shift cycle a few months earlier, during winter months that are slower for businesses, with funds available in March or April.
- Increase application window to allow time for workshops.
- Include application question: How will this improvement increase tourism for the business?
- Goals are to bring more tourism to town and increase tourism for individual businesses.
- Prioritize off-season comfort, such as 3-season outdoor areas, including windbreaks and exterior heating.
- Comments regarding challenges of applications that support a business rather than a building, which some considered streetscape. Encourage durable, lasting improvements, that persist past the business itself.
- Brief discussion about business that was awarded a grant, and is now for sale.
- Consider criteria whether bid is reasonable. Noted that future grant closeouts could include review of receipts for reimbursement.
- Consider differentiating between locally owned and nationally owned businesses.

Winchester excused herself from the meeting at 6:04 p.m., and returned at 6:06 p.m.

Mertz appreciated the feedback, and explained that the Commission would discuss it further at a future meeting.

## **11. PLANNING COMMISSION COMMENTS & CONCERNS**

Start time: 6:07 p.m.

Lanyon suggested changing text in the Subdivision Ordinance, Section 14, subsection 2, from “servants” to “staff”. Lanyon shared a flyer regarding a *Salmonberry Trail Ground Building Event* in Wheeler and encouraged all to attend. Lanyon commended Mertz for her work as City Planner and wished her well in her next step as Public Works Director. Lanyon expressed concerns about pedestrian safety while crossing the railroad tracks. Hassell and Maxfield noted that the railroad tracks were not under jurisdiction of the City.

Hess advocated for bikes, stating that Rockaway is at a turning point as a growing tourist destination, and by encouraging healthy lifestyle and family-friendly transportation and recreation, everyone wins. Hess encouraged all to join the 4<sup>th</sup> of July Bicycle Brigade.

Maxfield thanked volunteers and staff in advance for their work on the 4<sup>th</sup> of July events. Maxfield shared that Blue Water Gallery was opening June 27<sup>th</sup>, and encouraged all to support the new business.

Cole commented it was great to see all the efforts to enhance the City's appearance and attract more tourists during the busy summer weeks. Cole looked forward to seeing the future results from the Façade Improvement grants.

McGinnis expressed desire to update the Bicycle Ordinance to incorporate e-bicycles. McGinnis shared about a visit to Classic Street Cottages neighborhood in Manzanita, and encouraged Commissioners to take a tour of it.

McNeilly shared an email received from a community member thanking the City Council, Commissioners and staff, and appreciating the thoughtful way the city and surrounds were being developed.

Hassell commented on the City's rapid movement toward accessibility, noting that two benches were just installed on the old cedar boardwalk. Hassell shared that David's Chair was very successful and fully booked for upcoming weekends.

All present wished Cole a happy birthday.

## 12. ADJOURNMENT

Hess made a **motion**, seconded by Maxfield, to adjourn the meeting at 6:19 p.m.

The **motion** carried by the following vote:

Aye: 7 (Cole, Hess, Johnson, Lanyon, Maxfield, Winchester, Hassell)

Nay: 0

MINUTES APPROVED THE  
17<sup>TH</sup> DAY OF JULY 2025

  
William Hassell, President

ATTEST

  
Melissa Thompson, City Recorder