



**Agenda for Gig Harbor Planning Commission
Gig Harbor Civic Center
Thursday, March 19, 2026 at 5:30 P.M.**

This meeting may also be accessed through Zoom at <https://zoom.us/j/95353411299> or by calling (253) 215- 8782 and entering Meeting ID 953 5341 1299. Please see the Public Comment & Decorum section at the end of this agenda for information on options to make public comment.

This meeting may also be viewed live in the Council Chambers at the Civic Center.

Call to Order/Roll Call:

Approval of Minutes: February 19, 2026

Public Comment:

Agenda Items:

Critical Areas Public Outreach Results – Presentation Community Development Director, Eric Baker and Commission discussion

Other Business: Next meeting Thursday, April 2, 2026 Critical Area Code Update

Adjournment

:

PUBLIC COMMENT & DECORUM

The city desires to allow a maximum opportunity for public comment. However, the business of the Planning Commission must proceed in an orderly, timely manner. The purpose of a Planning Commission meeting is to advise on subjects prescribed by the City Council; it is not a public forum.

Public comment may be made in-person from the microphone, remotely via Zoom or by phone during designated portions of the meeting. To speak during the meeting via Zoom, press the Raise Hand button near the bottom of your Zoom window or press *9

on your phone. Please refrain from raising your hand until the Chair has announced that the Commission has opened the public comment portion of the meeting. Your name or the last three digits of your phone number will be called out when it is your turn to speak. When using your phone to call in, you may need to press *6 to unmute yourself. Speakers will be allotted 3 minutes per individual, unless revised by the chair. Comments shall be made, first giving the speaker's name and address. Anyone making "out of order" comments may be subject to removal from the meeting.

Instead of making oral comments, written comments may be submitted to the Planning Commission at PlanningComments@gigharborwa.gov.

All remarks shall be addressed to the commission as a body and not to any specific commissioner. All speakers shall be courteous in their language and deportment and shall not engage in or discuss or comment on personalities or indulge in derogatory remarks or insinuations with regard to any commissioner, or any member of the staff or the public.

There will be no demonstrations during or at the conclusion of any public comment. These guidelines are intended to promote an orderly system of holding public meetings, to give every person an opportunity to be heard and to ensure that no individuals are embarrassed by voicing their opinions.

AMERICANS WITH DISABILITIES (ADA) ACCOMMODATIONS

ADA accommodations can be provided upon request. Those requiring special accommodations should contact the city clerk at cityclerk@gigharborwa.gov or (253) 853-7613 at least 24 hours prior to the meeting.



**Minutes for Gig Harbor Planning Commission
Thursday, February 19, 2026 at 5:30 P.M.
Council Chambers**

Call to Order/Roll Call

Chair Burcar called the meeting to order at 5:31 p.m. Commissioners Anderson (virtually) Cornel, Henderson, Jordan, Wozniak and Zhou were present.

Staff: Community Development Director, Eric Baker and Planning Technician, Michelle Thomas

Approval of Minutes

Motion: Move to approve minutes from February 5, 2026 (Jordan/Henderson)

Vote: Unanimously approved

Public Comment on Non-Agenda Items

None.

Agenda Items

Welcome Commissioner Wozniak

Election of Chair and Vice Chair

Motion: Elect Commissioner Burcar as Chair for the 2026-2027 year (Jordan/ Cornel)

Vote: All in favor Motion carries

Motion: Elect Commissioner Anderson as Vice Chair for the 2026-2027 year (Zhou /Jordan)

Vote: All in favor Motion carries

Critical Area Code Update – Presentation Community Development Director, Eric Baker and Commission discussion

Other Business

Next meeting Thursday, March 5, 2026

Adjournment 6:55 p.m.

Michelle Thomas

Michelle Thomas
Planning Technician



February 5, 2026

Gig Harbor Planning Commission Members
3510 Grandview Street
Gig Harbor, WA 98335

RE: Comments on Gig Harbor's draft Critical Areas Ordinance

Dear Planning Commission Members:

[Friends of Pierce County](#) is a non-profit environmental organization that was founded in 2003. We have been an advocate of responsible and environmentally friendly development practices and smarter growth for over two decades.

We appreciate improvements that the city is considering to increase stream buffers from 25 feet to 100 feet on Type Ns waters, but we would like to point out that for stream riparian areas, the Washington Dept of Fish and Wildlife (WDFW) recommends their best available science (BAS) for stream buffers which uses Site Potential Tree Height at 200 years, not Department of Natural Resources (DNR) water typing system (currently proposed by the city), which is based on a system for forest streams, not urban areas.

State law ([WAC 365-196-485 b](#)) requires that cities and counties include best available science in their policies and regulations to protect the functions and values of critical areas.

The current BAS for Fish and Wildlife Habitat Conservation Areas (FWHCAs) is from the WDFW that updated its protections for riparian ecosystems in 2020. In *Riparian Ecosystems, Science Synthesis and Management Implications (2020) Volume 1*, WDFW reported that riparian ecosystem functions of **all streams** (not just **fish-bearing**) streams was vital to protect. In *Riparian Ecosystems, Management Recommendations Volume 2* jurisdictions can find management recommendations on how to protect these areas. Vol 1 and Vol 2 represent the BAS from a state agency that is an expert technical advisor for FWCA.

Adopting WDFW policies will help your jurisdiction meet the requirements for BAS in your CAO to protect full riparian ecosystem functions and valuesⁱ as required by state law and help to achieve no net loss of these areas, as required by state law ([WAC 365-190-080](#)).

Habitat Connectivity and Open Spaces

State law ([WAC 365-196-485 c](#)) requires that cities and counties identify open space corridors within and between urban growth areas for multiple purposes, including critical wildlife habitat.

State law ([WAC 365-196-660](#) (2)(b)): recommends **critical areas regulations** be reviewed to ensure they are achieving no net loss of ecosystem functions and values. This review should

include an analysis of monitoring plans, regulations and permits to ensure they are efficient and effective at achieving protection goals and implementation benchmarks.

We urge you to implement the following:

- 1) Update your CAO to include BAS and follow WDFW recommendations for riparian areas ([found here](#)).
- 2) Include habitat connectivity of open spaces and riparian areas to facilitate wildlife movement on a regional level, not just within jurisdiction boundaries.
- 3) Plan for climate change and climate mitigation by protecting all ecosystem values and functions.
 - a. Assess and protect tree canopy, supporting carbon sequestration and biodiversity.
 - b. Protect maximum size and full function of wetland and riparian areas to help with flooding and thermal regulation, carbon sequestration, and maintaining biodiversity.
- 4) Adopt a Monitoring and Adaptive Management to gauge the city's Critical Areas Regulation's effectiveness in achieving no net loss of ecosystem functions and values as required by state law.

Thank you for the opportunity to comment. Please contact us if you have any questions.

Sincerely,

Carmela Micheli

Carmela Micheli
Board Member
253-988-1204
carmela@harbornet.com

From: [Eric Baker](#)
To: [Michelle Thomas](#)
Subject: FW: Opposition to Proposed Wetland Buffer - Request for Written Responses
Date: Wednesday, March 11, 2026 3:39:16 PM

Public comment on the CAO.

Eric Baker | Community Development Director

City of Gig Harbor
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Gig Harbor, WA 98335
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From: Jeri Delaney <jeridelaney2@gmail.com>
Sent: Tuesday, March 10, 2026 4:48 PM
To: Mayor & Council <mayorandcouncil@gigharborwa.gov>; Eric Baker <ebaker@gigharborwa.gov>; CityClerk <CityClerk@gigharborwa.gov>
Subject: Opposition to Proposed Wetland Buffer - Request for Written Responses

Subject: Opposition to Proposed Wetland Buffer – Request for Written Responses

Date: March 10, 2026
To: City Planning Department / City Council
Re: Opposition to Proposed Wetland Buffer - Request for Written Responses

Dear City Officials,

I am writing to strongly oppose the proposed 300-foot buffer around wetlands on existing private property. This buffer is extremely large and raises concerns about the potential re-designation of private property as wetland buffer, which could significantly restrict reasonable use, affect economic viability, and reduce resale value for affected parcels. Because of the seriousness of this proposal, I respectfully request written responses to the following questions

1. What scientific studies or environmental analyses specifically support a 300-foot buffer requirement in our area?
2. Is this buffer mandated by state or federal law, and if so, does the city have the authority to modify, propose alternatives, or refuse the buffer in order to protect private property rights and reasonable use for affected property owners?
3. Has the city evaluated the impact on property rights and property values for affected parcels?
4. Has the city conducted any economic impact analysis regarding potential loss of property value or usability?
5. What process exists for property owners to request variances, reasonable-use exceptions, or appeals if the buffer restricts property use?
6. If this proposal results in a property becoming partially or entirely limited in use, what

- remedies or compensation mechanisms would be available to the property owner?
7. Has the city evaluated whether a 300-foot buffer could eliminate reasonable economic use of certain properties, and if so, how the city plans to address potential regulatory taking concerns?
 8. Has the city prepared maps showing which parcels will be affected and how the buffer would be measured on individual properties?
 9. Has the city considered alternative buffer distances smaller than 300 feet, and if so, what analysis supports the determination that 300 feet is appropriate rather than a lesser distance?
 10. Is there any consideration of a reduced buffer, site-specific evaluation, or tiered approach depending on the size or classification of the wetland?
 11. Because the buffer could affect property use, has the city evaluated how many parcels may lose reasonable use, and what protections will exist for affected property owners?
 12. My research shows that many jurisdictions use smaller buffers depending on wetland category. Can the city explain why a 300-foot buffer is necessary rather than a smaller distance, such as 100 or 150 feet?
 13. Wetland buffers are sometimes used as part of mitigation bank programs to offset impacts from other development projects, including city, state, and for-profit wetland projects. Is this proposed 300-foot buffer part of a mitigation bank program? If so, please provide responses to the following:
 - a. Will any portion of my property or wetlands be used as part of this program?
 - b. What are the locations of the wetlands being credited/offset in the mitigation bank program?
 - c. Are the impacts associated with residential development, commercial development, city, state, or for-profit wetland projects?
 - d. Please provide the names of the developers, builders, or entities responsible for the projects that are impacting these wetlands.
 - e. What agreements, regulations, or permits govern the use of these wetlands as part of the mitigation bank program?
 14. Regarding public input, very little notice appears to have been provided for both the online meeting and in-person hearing. Is the city planning additional opportunities for affected homeowners to review data and provide input before moving forward?
 15. I also request that the city make available all written comments, feedback, and responses submitted by homeowners or other members of the public regarding this proposal.
 16. Regarding recently proposed developments near Canterwood in Gig Harbor, specifically Trailside Apartments and the Gig Harbor North Annex projects, will these developments be required to comply with the proposed 300-foot wetland buffer for all applicable parcels? If any exceptions, variances, or modifications are being considered for these projects, please provide details and explain the justification.

17. It appears that middle- to lower-income and retired property owners may be disproportionately affected by the economic impact of the proposed 300-foot wetland buffer. As Erik Baker, Gig Harbor Community Director stated at the planning commission meeting on February 5th, 2026:

“Regardless of these codes, just that there are codes in place that are going to require a significant amount of review and a significant amount of mitigation on site or off site. The costs of doing so may be outside certain people’s economic abilities.”

How does the city justify a policy where the ability to use private property depends on whether someone can afford a complex and expensive approval process.

18. How does the city plan to ensure that middle to low income and retired property owners are not unfairly burdened, and that the implementation of this buffer does not favor those who can afford extensive mitigation efforts? What policies, programs, or alternatives in place to protect reasonable use and economic fairness for all affected property owners? If the proposed 300-foot wetland buffer prevents homeowners from reasonably using their property, does the city provide any compensation or remedies for affected property owners? How does the city plan to address situations where the buffer significantly reduces property value or eliminates reasonable use?

Because this proposal may significantly affect the use and value of private property, I am carefully reviewing its implications and gathering information regarding how it may affect my property and others similarly situated. I would appreciate a written response addressing each of the questions listed above.

Thank you for your time and attention, and I look forward to your response.

Sincerely,

Jeralyn Delaney
9414 49th Ave CT NW
Gig Harbor, WA 98332

From: [ROSE MARY MICHELI](#)
To: [Planning Comments](#)
Subject: Critical Areas Update
Date: Tuesday, March 10, 2026 11:18:08 PM

I would like to submit the following comments on this planned update:
PROPOSED CHANGES TO CRITICAL AREAS

18.08.030 DEFINITIONS

B.

~~“Buffer” means a natural area adjacent to hillsides or ravines which provides a margin of safety through protection of slope stability, attenuation of surface water flows and landslide, seismic and erosion hazards reasonably necessary to minimize risk to the public from loss of life, well-being or property damage from natural disaster~~ means a natural area that separates one type, category, or use of land from another. Buffers typically serve to provide a defined area between more intensive land uses and land this more sensitive. Buffers are typically referenced by the associated critical area such as wetland buffer, stream buffer, etc.

The revised definition of Buffer appears to make the definition of a buffer vaguer, which would make it harder to define buffers. Also, the second sentence of this section makes no sense “...and land this more sensitive” makes no sense.

1.

~~“Designated wetland” means those lands identified through the classification process established by this chapter.~~

This deletion eliminates the definition of a wetland

“Ditches” are those artificial drainage features created in uplands through purposeful human action, such as irrigation and drainage ditches, grass-lined swales, and canals. Purposeful creation must be demonstrated through documentation, photographs, statements and/or other evidence. Ditches are excluded from regulation as streams under this section. Artificial drainage features with documented fish usage are regulated as streams. Drainage setbacks are required as per the city’s surface water manual. (Ord. 1036 § 26, 2006).

Why does this section limit ditches to features created in “uplands” when a ditch could be created anywhere. This makes it confusing.

R.

“Riparian management zone” means a designated area contiguous or adjacent to a stream that is required for the continued maintenance, function, and structural stability of the stream. Functions of a riparian management zone include shading, input of organic debris and coarse sediments, uptake of nutrients, stabilization of banks, protection from intrusion, or maintenance of wildlife habitat.

Replaces the definition of Stream buffer zone.

S.

~~“Stream buffer zone” means a designated area contiguous or adjacent to a stream that is required for the continued maintenance, function, and structural stability of the stream. Functions of a buffer include shading, input of organic debris and coarse sediments, uptake of nutrients, stabilization of banks, protection from intrusion, or maintenance of wildlife habitat.~~

Definition is replaced with “Riparian management zone.”

“Structure” means anything that is constructed in or on the ground or over water, including any edifice or any piece of work artificially built up or composed of parts and

joined together. Structures do not include such features as paved or gravel areas, sidewalks, or like amenities.

Deleting paved or gravel areas is a grave mistake as it allows for damage to the area almost the same as a structure would. It is just allowing developers to damage wetland/stream areas to access the area they wish to develop.

18.08.100 Wetlands – Buffer areas

1. There a legally established substantial development or developed roadway transects a wetland buffer, the director may approve a modification of the minimum required buffer width to the edge of the substantial development or developed roadway if ~~the part of the buffer on the other side of the road does not provide any buffer functions to protect the wetland in question~~

This section gives the director authority to approve modifications to buffers required with NO direction/stipulations as to what is appropriate for a modification. Gives too much individual authority with no guidance or oversight.

18.08.193 Mudslide hazard.

The director shall require review of each permit application to determine whether the proposed site and improvements will be reasonably safe from mudslide hazards; a further review must be made by persons qualified in geology and soils engineering; and the proposed new construction, substantial improvement, or grading must be adequately protected against mudslide damage and not aggravate the existing hazard. (Ord. 1245 § 37, 2012).

This section makes no mention that the review of the permit application must determine if the proposed site and improvements would CREATE mudslide hazards, which they do frequently.

MBAPC Comments on Gig Harbor CAO Draft

[Draft Link](#)

Code Section Number	Code Language	Question/Comment/Concern	Possible Responsive
18.08.180.D.5	Monitor a minimum of three five and up to 10 growing seasons, depending on the complexity of the wetland system. The time period will be determined and specified in writing prior to the implementation of the site plan;	Leave at 3 and cap at 5 years, 10 years seems excessive for a thoroughly vetted mitigation plan by qualified PWS's. 10 years is an excessive amount of time for a performance bond.	
18.08.100.D	Wetlands – Buffer areas table	Why do so many of the wetland buffers no longer take the intensity of land use into account in the determination of how large buffer should be (low, moderate, and high impact)?	
18.08.170.B	Wetlands – Replacement criteria	Why are the so many of the wetland replacement ratios significantly increased? How is determined what is necessary to achieve no net loss?	
18.08.186.D.e	Degraded Riparian Management Zone Shall Be Enhanced. Riparian management zones vegetated with non-native species or otherwise degraded shall be enhanced with native plants, habitat features or other enhancements.	What is the critiera and timeline for success on this?	