



**Agenda for Gig Harbor Planning Commission
FOR DECISION ONLY
Continuation Open Public Hearing
Gig Harbor Civic Center
Thursday, May 21, 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: May 14, 2026

Agenda Items for Formal Review:

Continuation Critical Areas Code Update – Discussion and Commission Recommendation

Other Business Next meeting June 4, 2026

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
Public Hearing
Thursday, May 14, 2026 at 5:30 P.M.
Council Chambers**

Call to Order/Roll Call

Chair Burcar called the meeting to order at 5:33 p.m. Commissioners Anderson, Cornell, Henderson, Zhou and Wozniak were present.

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

Approval of Minutes

Motion: Move to approve minutes from March 19, 2026 (Wozniak/Cornell)

Vote: Unanimously approved

Public Comment on Non-Agenda Items

None

Agenda Items

Critical Areas Code Update – Proposal to adopt amendments to the city's Critical Areas Ordinance - Community Development Director, Eric Baker discussed proposed changes.

Public Comment No public comment was made

Motion: Close public comment (Zhou/Wozniak)

Vote: Unanimously approved

Recommendation

Motion: to make a recommendation to review the proposed changes to the critical area code updates. (Anderson/Zohn)

Amendment: Recommend keeping Type 2/F and Type 3/F stream buffers consistent with county with a buffer of 175 feet not the proposed 200 feet (Cornel/Anderson)

Vote: 4 in favor 1 opposed

Amendment: Motion that, that we, the city, align our definition of fish and wildlife habitat and conservation areas consistent with commerce and the WAC. (Wozniak/Anderson)

Vote: Unanimously approved

Amendment: Motion to continue the Hearing to the next scheduled

meeting day of May 21 at 5:30 PM for the Commission to make their recommendation to Council and keep the written comment period open until 4:30 Monday, May 18 for comments on the Commissions proposed amendments. (Wozniak/Anderson)

Vote: Unanimously approved

Other Business

Next meeting Thursday, May 21, 2026 to make recommendation to Council regarding the proposed Critical Area Code Update

Adjournment 7:00 p.m.

Michelle Thomas

Michelle Thomas
Planning Technician

From: drelly@sound-decisions.org
To: [Planning Comments](#)
Subject: FOPC & CPC CAO comment letter
Date: Monday, May 18, 2026 8:08:25 AM
Attachments: [FOPC & CPC CAO letter for GH May 18 2026.docx](#)

You don't often get email from drelly@sound-decisions.org. [Learn why this is important](#)

Hello Gig Harbor Planning Commission,

We submitted a letter before the final editing was done on 5/17/26. Attached please find the final letter and discard the previous submission.

Thank you very much,

Elly Claus-McGahan

Elly Claus-McGahan, PhD
Climate Pierce County
<https://climatepiercecouny.com/>
drelly@sound-decisions.org
253-219-9129



Virus-free. www.avast.com



May 18, 2026

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

RE: Comments on Gig Harbor’s draft Critical Areas Ordinance -Letter 2

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.

[Climate Pierce County](#), is committed to a carbon-free future for Pierce County, working collaboratively with all organizations endeavoring to fight climate change and environmental injustice, with the goal of creating a healthy, sustainable, and resilient future for all Pierce County residents.

We support city staff’s stream buffer recommendations. We appreciate the much needed improvements to increasing stream buffers that will help ensure no net loss of critical areas as required by state law. [WAC 365-190-080](#) requires that cities include best available science in their policies and regulations to protect the ecosystem functions¹ and ecosystem values² of critical areas. We appreciate all the hard work from city staff to arrive at the public hearing phase and the consideration of best available science in establishing better stream buffers.

The city’s Comprehensive Plan reported that since 2015 the housing unit counts have increased by about 4.1% per year. The Pierce County housing growth target for 2020-2044 for Gig Harbor is 892 new housing units. Overall, these figures are relatively low compared to more urban areas. Housing concerns have been recognized by many other jurisdictions in Puget Sound, some have much larger housing targets and some are much lower. Gig Harbor’s housing target is relatively modest in comparison with the annual growth rate under 5% per year.

The false narrative that bigger buffers mean less houses has been debunked by creative thinking in other jurisdictions. Snohomish County staff reported to their Planning Commission that larger

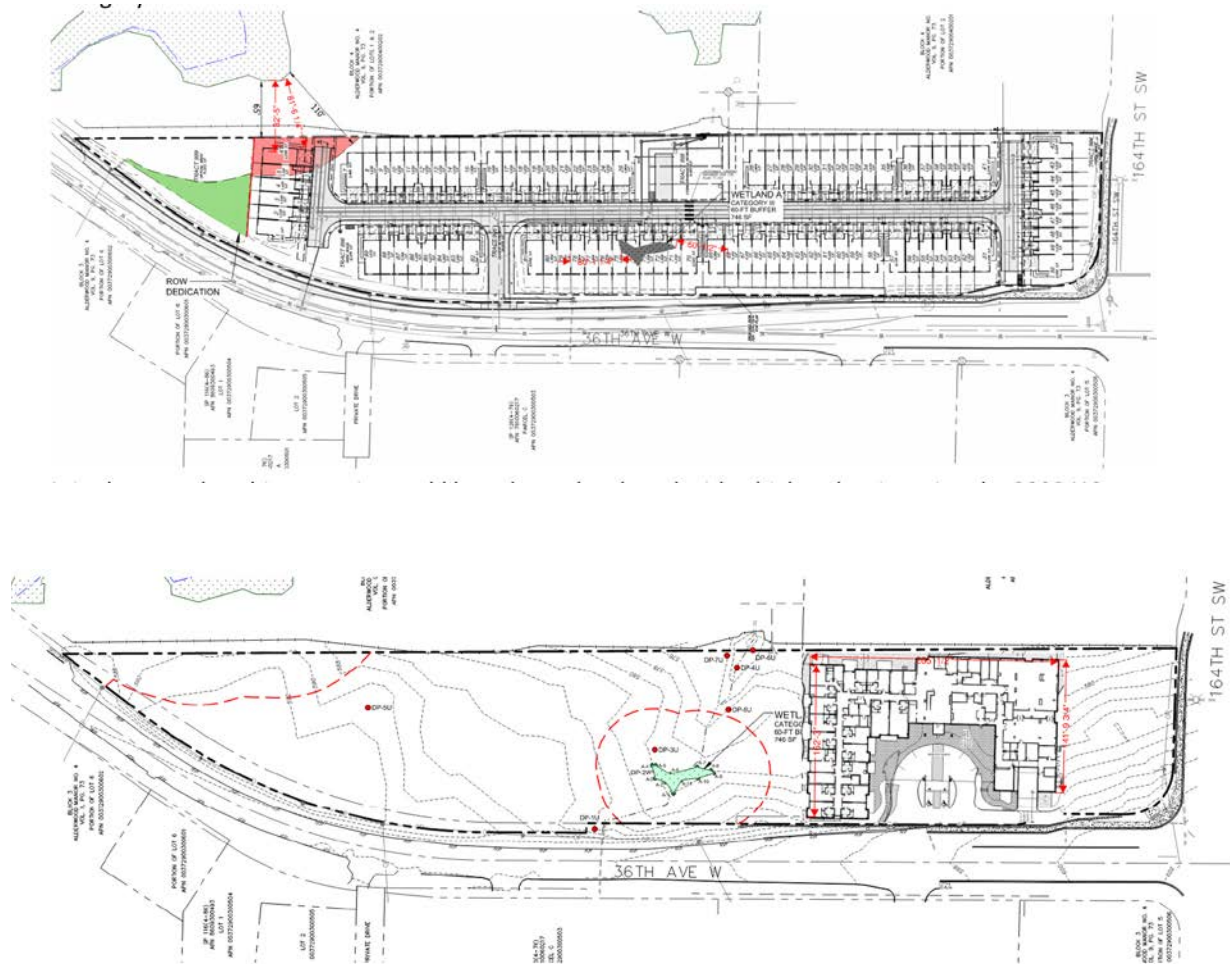
¹ “Ecosystem functions” are the products, physical and biological conditions, and environmental qualities of an ecosystem that result from interactions among ecosystem processes and ecosystem structures. Ecosystem functions include, but are not limited to, sequestered carbon, attenuated peak streamflow, aquifer water level, reduced pollutant concentrations in surface and ground waters, cool summer in-stream water temperatures, improved air quality, and fish and wildlife habitats (WAC 365-196-210).

² “Ecosystem values” are the cultural, social, economic, and ecological benefits attributed to ecosystem functions. (WAC 365.196.210 (15)).

buffers were possible if development occurred in less conventional ways. [See memo from January 27, 2025.](#)

The below examples are taken from the Snohomish County memo. The top figure illustrates conventional building methods and the below figure illustrates clustering development to avoid wetland buffers. **Larger wetland buffers did not eliminate the housing allowance on the property.** The county also concluded that as Critical Area Regulations becomes more restrictive, densities actually get higher as developers more fully utilize the allowed densities of the zone.

Developers need to choose different ways of building to take advantage of the full use of properties. The environment can be protected with larger buffers and still allow for housing.



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We also urge you to:

- 1) Support the city staff’s recommendation of 200 foot buffers on Type 2 and 3 waters.
- 2) Adopt a Monitoring and Adaptive Management Plan 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@harboret.com

Elly Claus McGahan

Elly Claus McGahan, PhD
Climate Pierce County
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CRITICAL AREAS CODE UPDATE PLANNING COMMISSION RECOMMENDATION - MAY 21, 2026

The matrix below is a summary of proposed revisions to the Draft Critical Areas Code dated April 30, 2026 recommended by the Planning Commission during deliberations on May 14, 2026 and May 21, 2026. This recommendation will be forwarded to City Council for consideration.

No.	Code Section	Code Revision	Comments/Analysis	Planning Commission
1	18.08.030.F Definitions.	“Fish and wildlife habitat <u>conservation areas</u> ” means those areas identified as being of critical importance in the maintenance and preservation of fish, wildlife and natural vegetation including waters of the state, and as further identified in GHMC 18.08.186 <u>such artificial features or constructs as irrigation delivery systems, irrigation infrastructure, irrigation canals, or drainage ditches that lie within the boundaries of and are maintained by a port district or an irrigation district or company.</u>	Based on Dept. of Commerce Comment Ensures definition is consistent with current state statutes.	Passed revision.
2	18.08.034 Applicability	<u>C. Critical Area Reports. Wetland analysis reports and/or habitat management plans required for permit approval including delineations, classifications, buffer determinations, and/or any proposed mitigation measures shall be applied to subsequent permits related to and consistent with the original permit approval, unless the original permit expires, is rescinded or no longer valid; or specific, site-specific information demonstrates the approved report is erroneous. Nothing in this section limits the City’s authority to apply performance standards necessary to achieve no net loss of critical area functions and values.</u> Appeals subsection (previously C) renumbered to D.	Provides clarity in environmental protection for future permits directly related to a larger land use/subdivision approval (preliminary plat, binding site plan). Valid as long as the larger land use/subdivision approval does not expire or rescinded.	Passed revision.

No.	Code Section	Code Revision	Comments/Analysis	Planning Commission
3	18.08.090.C Wetlands – Analysis report requirements	C. Within 30 days of receipt of the wetland analysis report and other information, the department shall determine the appropriate wetland category, buffering requirement, and required mitigation. The report shall be accorded substantial weight and the department shall approve the report's findings and approvals, unless specific, written reasons are provided which justify not doing so. Once accepted, the report shall control future decision-making related to designated wetlands unless <u>the permit in which the report was required expires, is rescinded or no longer valid or</u> new information is found demonstrating the report is in error.	Provides clarity in environmental protection for future permits directly related to a larger land use/subdivision approval (preliminary plat, binding site plan). Valid as long as the larger land use/subdivision approval does not expire or rescinded.	Passed revision.
4	18.08.186.D.1.a Critical fish and wildlife habitat conservation areas	a. The following riparian management zones are established for streams: Stream Type Riparian Management Zone Width (Feet) <u>Type S</u> <u>200</u> <u>Type F</u> <u>175-200</u> <u>Type Np</u> <u>100</u> <u>Type Ns</u> <u>100</u>	Based on the best science review from Pierce County and their adoption of 175-foot buffers for Type F streams. Also, ensures consistency in development regulations between the City and surrounding unincorporated area. Reduced from 200 feet for Type F streams.	Passed revision.

The Planning Commission recommends Council consider the April 30, 2026 draft update to GHMC 18.08 Critical Areas as revised in the matrix above. The Planning Commission held deliberations and passed the revisions by majority vote.

The revisions are consistent with the Growth Management Act, best available science, Puget Sound Regional Council's VISION 2050, the Pierce County Countywide Planning Policies and City of Gig Harbor Comprehensive Plan.

Dated: May 21, 2025

CITY OF GIG HARBOR PLANNING COMMISSION



Chair