

MINUTES

January 15, 2026
Planning Commission
Regular Meeting

6:30 pm
Hybrid Meeting
McMinnville, Oregon

Members Present: Sidonie Winfield, Brian Everest, Sylla McClellan, Brian Randall, Matt Jones (via zoom), Meg Murray (via zoom), Abigail Neilan, and Elena Mudrak

Members Absent: Rachel Flores

Staff Present: Tom Schauer – Senior Planner, Heather Richards – Community Development Director, Matthew Deppe – Associate Planner, and Missy Ryan (via zoom) – Legal Counsel

1. Call to Order

Chair Winfield called the meeting to order at 6:30 p.m.

2. Swearing In of Planning Commissioner Meg Murray for New Term

Chair Winfield swore in returning Commissioner Murray.

3. Selection of Chair and Vice Chair

Commissioner McClellan nominated Sidonie Winfield as Chair for 2026. The nomination was approved unanimously.

Commissioner McClellan nominated Elena Mudrak as Vice Chair for 2026. The nomination was approved unanimously.

4. Citizen Comments

None

5. Minutes

a. December 18, 2025

Commissioner Mudrak moved to approve the December 18, 2025, minutes. The motion was seconded by Commissioner Neilan and passed 6-0-2 with Commissioners Everest and Jones abstaining.

6. Public Hearings

a. Quasi-Judicial Hearing: Sign Standards Exception (SE 1-25), 750 SW Booth Bend Rd, Tax Lot R4429 02600

Chair Winfield opened the public hearing and read the hearing statement. She asked if there was any objection to the jurisdiction of the Commission to hear this matter. There was none. She asked if any Commissioner wished to make a disclosure or abstain from participating or voting on this application.

Commissioner Everest said his roommate had just accepted a position with EMPWR, but it would not affect his decision.

Chair Winfield asked if any Commissioner had visited the site. Most of the Commission had.

Chair Winfield asked if any Commissioner needed to declare any contact prior to the hearing with the applicant or any party involved in the hearing or any other source of information outside of staff regarding the subject of this hearing. There was none.

Staff Presentation: Associate Planner Deppe presented the request for an exception to the sign standards of the McMinnville zoning ordinance for a property on Booth Bend Road. He discussed the subject site, project description for the proposed sign, and some of its characteristics. He also presented elevations, and recommendation for denial due to the sign exception criteria not being met. He described the review procedures, how the proposed sign met the definition of a video sign, which by definition is a type of electronic changeable copy sign which is prohibited, and that the criteria were not met for the requested exception. He presented the code criteria for exceptions, how there were no public testimony or agency comments received, history of the last sign exception application from 2017, and findings that the applicant had not submitted evidence to demonstrate an “unnecessary hardship” and that generalized concerns about public safety on a public highway did not demonstrate an “unnecessary hardship” to the applicant. The applicant had not identified anything unique about the property’s location, topography, size, shape, or about surrounding development.

Applicant’s Testimony: Laura LaRoque, representing the applicant, read an executive summary that was submitted in response to staff’s recommendation for denial. She thought the sign met the definitions for electronic changeable copy sign and wall sign, but it did not meet the definition of a video sign as it would change from one static image to another at intermittent intervals. This interpretation was further supported by the purpose and scope of the code chapter which emphasized a balance of effective communication with public safety and aesthetics through minimum, consistent, and enforceable standards. The code also stated the copy or message of the sign was not to be regulated. The exception was necessary due to the site-specific conditions related to Hwy 18 frontage, building setback, industrial scale, and it would not result in material damage to surrounding properties or be detrimental to community standards or the appearance of the City. The applicant asked that the Planning Commission find the proposed sign was an electronic changeable copy wall sign and approve the sign exception. She then read the applicant’s response to the findings, reiterating that this was not a video sign, the images would be static, the sign was eligible for exceptions, how there was a hardship due to the site’s location, the speed environment of the highway, and surrounding industrial development, the requested exception would not result in material damage or adverse impacts to other properties and would not be detrimental to the community standards or the appearance of the City, and staff’s hardship analysis was not supported by substantial evidence. This was an electronic static sign not intended to be a video streaming sign on the side of the building. The hardship was that this was a large

industrial building set more than 200 feet back from the property frontage and even further from the road. Traffic was going 55+ miles per hour down the highway and the size permitted by the code was too small for this setting. Reducing the overall signage and allowing a static image to be changed a couple times was more aesthetically appealing than filling the space with letter signs.

Community Development Director Richards discussed the definition of a video sign vs. an electronic sign, how that related to the applicant's proposed condition regarding a static graphic, any clarifications as to whether the applicant's proposed condition also included changeable static graphics, and the Planning Commission's decision-making relative to these issues. Additionally, the applicant said staff had not proved that there was not a hardship, but it was the Commission's decision to decide if the applicant had proven there was a hardship. If the hardship was visibility of the back of buildings from Hwy 18, that was a precedent they would be setting for the community.

There was discussion regarding the code's definition of changeable copy sign and video sign, intended use of the sign, concern about the definition of "continuously change" and how static meant the image did not change, concern about the capacity for this sign to be used as a video sign and there was no means to enforce it, and how a different sign, like a billboard, could still serve the purpose of displaying branding, operational messages, and community information in a legible format without violating City code.

Proponents: None

Opponents: Mark Davis, McMinnville resident, agreed with the staff report that this application did not meet the criteria for an exception. He was especially surprised at the size of the sign proposed. The purpose of the sign was to get people to look at it, which he thought was not safe for people driving on a highway.

Rebuttal: Ms. LaRoque reiterated the differences between electronic changeable copy and video signs. She did not think a static sign with text that would not be moving could be interpreted as a video sign. It was a permitted use, and an electronic sign of this nature should not be interpreted as a video sign.

Chair Winfield asked if any party wished to request a continuance or that the record be left open for an opportunity to present additional evidence, argument, or testimony. There was no request by any party.

Commissioner McClellan moved to close the public hearing and public record; Seconded by Commissioner Everest. The motion passed unanimously 8-0.

Chair Winfield closed the public hearing and the public record.

The applicant did not waive the right to submit additional rebuttal argument after the record was closed to all other parties. The applicant would have until 5 p.m. on January 22, 2026, to submit final written arguments in support of the application, but the arguments would not include any new evidence.

Commissioner Jones moved to continue the Commission's deliberations for Sign Standards Exception (SE 1-25), 750 SW Booth Bend Rd, Tax Lot R4429 02600 to February 5, 2026. The motion was seconded by Commissioner Mudrak and passed unanimously 8-0.

7. Commissioner Comments

None

8. Staff Comments

Senior Planner Schauer discussed upcoming agenda items. Community Development Director Richards said the McMinnville Landing planned development overlay was approved by the City Council. The Council would be looking at the Airport Master Plan and land use efficiency measures on January 27. The Planning Commission was still in a quasi-judicial process for the application tonight and they should not speak to anyone about it before the next meeting.

9. Adjournment

Chair Winfield adjourned the meeting at 8:07 p.m.