# MINUTES

## City of Salem Planning Board

*Date* | *time* September 24, 2026 at 6:00pm | *Meeting called to order by* Willam Corbin

## In Attendance

Members:

William Corbin, Kim Thompson, Ben Ford, Jason Moritz, Ayesha Miller, and Vaughn Groce

Staff:

Adam Telsey, Jennifer Koeturius, Chloe Bach, and Sean Brown

## Approval of the May 2026 Meeting Minutes

Kim Thompson makes a motion to approve the May 2026 meeting minutes; seconded by Jason Moritz; approved by all.

## Resolution #2026-10: Review of and Recommendation for the City of Salem's Proposed Ordinance #26-19 Concerning the Regulation of Data Centers

Sean Brown, the City of Salem's Zoning and Economic Development Officer, explained that Ordinance #26-19 was introduced by City Council with the purpose of prohibiting data centers as land use within the city.

Since this ordinance would amend the City's land use regulations, this has been referred to the Planning Board for review and recommendation as required under the Municipal Land Use Law. The ordinance will be reviewed with consideration and recommendation as it relates to the Master Plan and land use objectives. Review and recommendation from the planning perspective and Master Plan consistency is occurring before the second reading and further decision.

Adam further confirmed that the Board's position in an ordinance that touches on the City's land use is reviewed prior to adoption. This confirms that it is consistent with the Master Plan, Housing Plan, and Planning/Zoning element. Options are to accept as consistent, adopt with recommendations, or return as inconsistent. In review of the proposed ordinance, it is like those adopted within other municipalities with no noted discrepancies or concerns.

Ms. Miller asked to confirm that this ordinance was banning data centers within the city to which it was confirmed as yes.

Motion to approve the resolution was made by Ben Ford; seconded by Jason Moritz; approved by all through roll call. Vaughn Groce was not present at time of resolution roll call voting.

Sean Brown explained that Ordinance #26-20 is an amendment to Chapter 130 of the City's Code as it relates to the Historic Preservation Commission. Sean stated that this discussion regarding the topic should not be seen as criticism of the Historic Preservation Commission or its members. Concerns have been raised regarding understanding the City's historic preservation requirements, the application process, what requires Commission review, and respective responsibilities of both the Commission and City staff. Within the proposed ordinance's language is the intention to provide greater clarity regarding roles, responsibilities, and procedures. Per Mr. Brown, many of these concerns are being addressed by the City currently to include regular coordination meetings and establishing a Public Allies position specific to historic preservation research. Additional areas including an updated historic preservation manual, clearer information for property owners, improved application guidance, and maintaining the City's website are to be addressed. The Board's role in the ordinance review and recommendation is to confirm that the proposed language of the City's historic preservation process is clearer. It must also remain consistent with the City's Master Plan, Municipal Land Use Law, and appropriate State historic preservation requirements. The Board can identify appropriate provisions and revisions as they relate administratively.

Adam confirmed that this ordinance review is occurring as it pertains to Chapter 130 of the City's land use chapter. The amendment is not land-use specific, but more of an organization of the Historic Preservation Commission. However, as it deals with Chapter 130, the Board must review for consistency to the Master Plan and Housing, Planning, and Zoning elements.

Ms. Miller asked to confirm what changes were occurring with the amendment to which Sean answered clarifying the role of the Historic Preservation Commission and its members.

Adam followed up stating that the ordinance would be amended to include a liaison for the city as a non-voting member with the Commission. It would also revise the authority of the Historic Preservation Commission in areas to include entering private properties and issuing stop work orders. There is also the addition of Historic Design Guidelines to be adopted by Council. This defines the scope of areas that need to be reviewed.

Vaugn Groce asked the Board if there was a clear understanding as to what the Historic Preservation Commission does to which the answer was no. At this point he asked Jen Derevlany, chairperson of the City's HPC to provide a background. She stated that the Commission's role and duty is to preserve the historic elements and values of the City's district. The Commission is governed by many State laws, by laws, and ordinances. The City of Salem is one of seventy-five municipalities with a CLG or Certified Local Government. The CLG provides many perks including grants and technical support which are key to the City and HPC. If the proper historic preservation processes are not followed, the CLG will be lost. The rules, regulations, and guidelines are written very clearly and followed completely. The HPC has its goals in place, has broken no rules, and has had no complaints submitted against them. The amendment being put on agenda was blindsiding and might be interpreted that the HPC cannot have communication with the residents. The Commission is in place to educate residents and enforce the historic elements of the city. If taken away, it will have negative impact within the City's historic district.

Aileen Hassler VanAtta, member of the HPC, stated that the wording of the proposed revision reads that members are not allowed on a property without escort or City employee. This in turn limits what the Commission can do, which includes providing information. The Commission is also to be given their own Code Enforcement Officer to be utilized with violations and concerns of the historic district. As of now, this is being followed, but the amendment's wording rescinds. While the Master Plan's

guidelines are to provide a stricter historic district and preservation, the amendment is doing the complete opposite. This results in an inconsistency of the Plan.
Adam reiterated that members of the public speaking are not typical of the review and recommendation process. Although they were asked to provide insight, it has become an argument for sides. Adam stated that the Board can decide to pass the resolution accepting the ordinance as is, adopt with recommendations, or reject as inconsistent with the Mater Plan.
Chloe Bach asked if the Historic Design Guidelines would be adopted by ordinance that comes before the Planning Board. It is written that the Council would adopt as a new aspect to the Historic Preservation. It was noted to recommend the consideration of the Planning Board before any guideline adoption. Jen Derevlany further confirmed that the guidelines must be created and set forth by procedures including utilizing state guidelines, professionals, and public meetings.

It was determined to make recommendations to the ordinance as necessary to maintain Master Plan consistency. These recommendations include the following:

1. HPC members to be allowed on the property to provide information to the residents and other lawful purposes
2. Maintain a Code Enforcement Officer specific to the Historic Preservation guidelines and area.
3. Planning Board should review the Historic Design Guidelines before Council adoption.

Motion to approve the resolution with recommendations was made by Jason Moritz; seconded by Kim Thompson; approved by all through roll call. Vaughn Groce and Ben Ford abstained from resolution roll call voting.

## Planning Board Discussion

- Adam shared information with the Board and public regarding a fraudulent invoice and letter received to a member of the Upper Pittsgrove community. He highlighted points to review for authenticity and suggested advising new applicants of this event.

## Public Comment

No comment was made by the public

## Adjournment

A motion to adjourn the meeting at 7:05 pm was made by ben Ford; seconded by Vaughn Groce; approved by all.

## Next Meeting

The next Planning Board Meeting is scheduled for October 22, 2026, at 6:00 pm.