



CITY OF YACHATS  
PARKS & COMMONS SPECIAL WORK SESSION COMMISSION  
SUMMARY MINUTES OF JANUARY 28, 2025

The Planning Commission's regular meeting was called to order by Chair mEG Simans at 2:00 pm in the Civic Meeting Room of the Yachats Commons. Members present: Co-Chair Dan Sterling, Ron Simans, George Giroux, Adam Altson, John Pravel, and Dan Wright. Staff: Recorder Kimmie Jackson.

Audience: 12

**WORK SESSION**

**I. Announcement & Correspondence**

The meeting began with a welcome to newly appointed and returning commissioners and the importance of having an entire seven-member board to ensure fair representation and efficient decision-making. The new Commissioner Orientation was introduced to help new members become familiar with the commission's duties, policies, and decision-making procedures. The new commissioners were encouraged to ask questions and participate actively in discussions. Binders containing reference materials were distributed for further reading.

**II. Review and Finalize Admin Policy 5 proposed revisions**

The commission has been working on revising the city's policy on donations and memorials. The existing policy contained ambiguous language, leading to inconsistent approvals and confusion. The commission wanted a clear and enforceable policy that ensured fairness and transparency. The objectives of the Revision are to Define who and what qualifies for public recognition through plaques or memorials; Establish guidelines for where plaques and monuments can be placed; determine maintenance responsibilities to ensure long-term upkeep; and Address concerns over the aesthetic and environmental impact of excessive memorials.

A primary concern was ensuring that plaques and memorials do not overcrowd public spaces or distract from the natural environment.

Two Types of Memorials Identified: 1. Recognition Plaques—These are Reserved for individuals or organizations with exceptional public service contributions (e.g., long-time community volunteers; and 2. Memorial Plaques—These are Personal memorials requested by families. They are often placed on benches, engraved rocks, or designated areas. Key Considerations: Should memorial plaques be allowed anywhere, or should they be limited to specific locations? Could excessive plaques detract from the natural beauty of the city's parks and waterfront areas? Is consolidating memorials in a designated space, such as a memorial park or boardwalk, beneficial?

The commission agreed to limit memorial plaques to specific designated areas. No plaques would be allowed to preserve the landscape in natural, undeveloped areas. Limiting the Number and Location of Plaques.

A significant debate emerged over whether to set a maximum number of plaques or allow an unlimited number based on case-by-case approvals.

Concerns About Overcrowding: If plaques were not limited, future commissions could face excessive plaques cluttering public spaces. A lack of clear limitations could create difficult public disputes over plaque approvals. Instead of setting a fixed number, the commission retains the right to limit plaques as needed based on aesthetic and spatial considerations. The language was added stating that plaque placements will be assessed for suitability, compatibility, and necessity. The commission will review each request individually, ensuring plaques are placed appropriately.

Memorial Benches & Engraved Rocks have traditionally been popular places for memorial plaques, but concerns were raised about maintenance and fairness in their placement. Key Issues: Should individuals be allowed to place plaques on public benches? Should plaques be engraved into rocks, or additive plaques (attached to rocks) be used? Who would maintain these plaques over time? Benches will no longer be used for personal memorial plaques, but community organizations can still sponsor them. Attached

plaques on rocks will not be allowed, as they damage natural surfaces and require maintenance. Engraved rocks will be permitted, but only if they are Natural stones or artificial rocks that appear natural, Provided by the requester (to avoid city costs), and Approved by the commission to ensure environmental compatibility.

Maintenance Responsibilities & Financial Contributions is one of the most complex issues discussed. Who was responsible for maintaining plaques and memorials over time? Concerns Raised are: If a plaque becomes damaged or weathered, who replaces it? Should the city be responsible for the ongoing maintenance of plaques, or should the original donors bear that responsibility? Potential Solutions Discussed were A time-limited sponsorship model where plaques remain in place for a set period (e.g., 10 years) before requiring renewal; A maintenance fund where donors contribute to long-term upkeep; A requirement that plaque sponsors must cover replacement costs if damage occurs. Maintenance costs and responsibilities will be outlined in the plaque approval process. Plaques may be removed or replaced at the donor's expense if they fall into disrepair.

The commission agreed that the public should be informed about these new policies to ensure transparency. How Information Will Be Shared: The new policies will be published in the city newsletter, a social media announcement will encourage residents and organizations to review them, and the city website will provide detailed information and guidelines for plaque requests.

The final discussion focused on how future commissions handle plaques and memorial requests. Long-Term Considerations: Future commissions should periodically review plaque policies to ensure they still reflect community values. Policies should be adaptable to accommodate new public spaces or unforeseen challenges. The commission can modify plaque locations and limit their numbers as needed. The updated policy will be

presented to the City Council for final approval. Once approved, the commission will oversee the implementation of these new guidelines.

**The meeting adjourned at 3:30 pm.**

**Kimmie Jackson, Recorder**