

January 27, 2026

To: Mayor and City Council

SUBJECT: Interview Process for Planning Commission candidates

The Planning Commission recommends that the City Council standardize the interview process for Planning Commission candidates prior to appointment. Specifically, our recommendation is that Commissioners being appointed to a non-consecutive term (not re-appointments) be interviewed by City Council.

Some of the current Commissioners were interviewed while others were not. The Commission feels that it is unfair to place the burden of the interview process on some Commissioners while others are appointed without this requirement, as it creates an inconsistent and unequal standard for selection. This disparity not only places undue pressure on those who must undergo interviews but also raises concerns about equity and transparency. Such an uneven approach undermines the integrity of our appointment process and may result in a lack of diversity in perspectives among Commissioners. Conducting interviews would provide an opportunity for the Council to engage with potential Commissioners, assess their qualifications, and understand their vision for the role. Establishing a standardized interview process would ensure that all candidates go through the same process for appointment. This process would not only enhance transparency and accountability for Commission appointments.

We are also recommending that the public be notified of all vacancies on the Commission *at least* two weeks prior to an individual being selected to interview for the vacancy. Posting of vacant Commission positions has been inconsistent in the past. It is important to the Commission that we have broad representation on the Commission, which is not possible, when the positions are not posted and shared publicly in a timely manner.

By taking these proactive steps, the Council can foster a more collaborative and informed decision-making process when appointing Planning Commissioners which ultimately benefits our city and its residents.

Sincerely,

Robert Vierya-Braendle,  
President, Salem Planning Commission