

October 5, 2021

To: Mayor and City Council

SUBJECT: Goal 5 (natural resources) protections

The Planning Commission would like to bring the current status of the City's compliance with Statewide Planning Goal 5 to your attention and to implore the Council to direct money and resources as needed to protect Salem's natural resources.

Statewide Planning Goal 5 is intended to protect a jurisdiction's natural resources, scenic and historic areas, and open space. Goal 5 requires cities to inventory their natural resources and to develop a plan to protect and mitigate impacts on them. Salem's development code has not incorporated the current Goal 5 standards related to natural resources and relies on potentially out-of-date inventories.

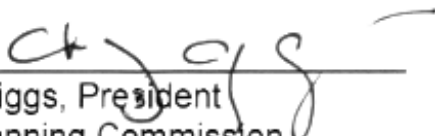
The Planning Commission recently heard a case where the focus of the discussion and appeal was the location of an unmapped waterway and the lack of setback protections to mapped waterways. Through this case, it came to the Commission's attention that our natural resource inventories, specifically mapped waterways and riparian areas, may be out-of-date and that Salem has not adopted minimum required building setbacks to waterways. Despite the Commission's desire to protect Salem's waterways, we cannot apply standards that do not exist and cannot update the waterways map through review of a development application.

There is currently no State program that requires the City update its Goal 5 inventories and protections. The state is no longer conducting periodic review; that was the process the state used to use to ensure cities complied with updated state regulations. However, protection of natural resources is a priority of the community, and the City Council and the City can take action without a state directive.

We request that the City Council consider funding a phased Goal 5 update in the next City budget. We recognize that a Goal 5 update is a large project that will require money and staff. We also recognize that many other projects have been identified as follow-up projects to the Our Salem project, which are also very important as we attempt to address climate change in our community, including an update to the Transportation System Plan, Comprehensive Parks System Master Plan, Climate Action Plan strategies, and more.

Therefore, we request the Council take a phased approach to updating Goal 5 and to fund the first phase – that being an update to Salem's waterways map and adoption of minimum required setbacks along waterways. This is an important first step to ensure that the impacts of new development along our waterways is minimized.

Sincerely,



Chane Griggs, President
Salem Planning Commission