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CONTACT:

John Mauro, City Manager
jmauro@cityofpt.us, (360) 379-5043

CITY COUNCIL PROPOSES COUNTEROFFER TO COMPREHENSIVE PLAN APPEAL SETTLEMENT

The Comprehensive Plan and implementing development regulations remain in effect during this process.

PORT TOWNSEND – On March 18, 2026, the City of Port Townsend was offered a settlement by Affordable Hometown Port Townsend (AHPT) in reference to their previously filed Petition for Review (appeal) of City’s Comprehensive Plan to the Growth Management Hearings Board (GMHB).

On Monday, April 6, City Council discussed the settlement offer and voted to respond to AHPT by rejecting their settlement offer and proposing a counteroffer. The settlement offer from AHPT is linked below for reference. To continue the City’s focus on affordable housing, while providing predictability, the City Council proposed that staff prepare a counteroffer focusing on:

- Potential revisions to the City’s Land Capacity Analysis. This may include revised income banding or additional adequate provisions (e.g., Inclusionary Zoning Programs, as appropriate).
- Performing an Inclusionary Zoning study based on the Port Townsend market and identifying funding sources for needed affordable housing units.
- Performing a Landlord Tenant protection study focusing on further anti-displacement measures based on the Port Townsend market.
- Continuing an open and public process with significant community involvement on the work of affordable housing instead of a closed record judicial process.

Within AHPT’s settlement offer of proposed actions, the City will not agree to the following:

- A moratorium or stay of Port Townsend Municipal Code Table 17.16.030 and upzone changes. The Port Townsend Municipal Code has allowed sixplexes since 2023 by permitting conversions of existing homes into fourplexes with two attached Accessory Dwelling Units. Enacting a moratorium would reverse these longstanding, appeal-protected- allowances. It would also prevent previously nonconforming structures from becoming compliant, undermining housing goals and fire/life/safety improvements.
- A new Environmental Impact Statement (EIS), which is based solely on this appeal. The City’s State Environmental Policy Act (SEPA) compliance was not challenged by AHPT (threshold determination of non-significance – meaning no EIS was required) and the City commits to complying with SEPA on all further actions. A new EIS is a lengthy process, costing significant public resources and delaying work on affordable housing.

John Watts, one of four appellants and involved with AHPT, made public comment at the meeting and referenced the settlement letter stating: “In the spirit of collaboration, AHPT is willing to come to a quick resolution with the City that will eliminate the need for further litigation. AHPT supports greater density, if combined with guarantees that some new units will in fact be affordable for middle and lower incomes, where the need for affordable housing is greatest.”



Inclusionary Zoning is a topic of particular interest in the community and is referenced by AHPT in their appeal. A future Inclusionary Zoning study must occur through an open public process rather than through an appeal and settlement that occurs without due public engagement and process. In order to identify funding sources for the affordable housing deficiency, all tools including Inclusionary Zoning need to be evaluated. The 2026 budget, adopted by City Council in November 2025, includes an affordability study tailored to Port Townsend’s housing market to explore the pros and cons of such policies like Inclusionary Zoning.

City Manager John Mauro stated: “It’s irrefutable that we are experiencing a housing crisis. It was encouraging to hear last night that Affordable Hometown Port Townsend believes, consistent with ongoing City Council direction-setting, that we must make progress on density and affordability. There is no time to waste, and any delay to the City’s 2026 workplan, which includes focused work on affordable housing, will keep us from working together on making progress on solving our housing crisis. It takes a community to deal with issues this big, and it can feel like an overwhelming challenge. That’s why we appreciate the community support and interest in moving forward collaboratively and productively in an open public process. Hopefully last night’s direction from City Council on a counteroffer can unlock our common ground so we can join forces and accelerate our efforts.”

“Zoning reform, which the City has worked on since 2023 Tactical Infill up to and through the adoption of the Comprehensive Plan in December 2025, is the foundation of affordability. The 2026 workplan also includes updates to the City’s Affordable Housing Surplus Land Inventory, expansion of the Multifamily Tax Exemption program, and exploring other affordable housing incentive strategy implementation. This petition for review (appeal) and actions proposed as part of AHPT’s settlement offer would divert staff from implementation of these programmed strategic projects advancing housing affordability, many of which are described in the Affordable Housing and Infill Strategies White Paper released in 2023,” said Planning and Community Development Director, Emma Bolin.

“Looking forward is what we need to focus on. Many of the different elements in the settlement offer would set us back with two to three years of process and stop us from getting material action on affordable housing in this community. There is a significant subsidy needed to actually address affordable housing, to the tune of \$17.5m per year,” said Councilmember David Faber.

If the appeal continues to a hearing at the GMHB, the Board will issue a final decision and order on August 19, 2026. The final decision and order will find the City’s adopted Comprehensive Plan compliant or non-compliant with the Growth Management Act. Through the GMHB’s process, the City’s Comprehensive Plan and implementing development regulations remain in effect and are presumed to be valid.

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For questions about the Growth Management Hearings Board, please see the [Growth Management Hearings Board website](#) and January 2026 version of the [Growth Management Hearings Board Handbook](#).

Access the [2025 Comprehensive Plan Periodic Review and Update webpage](#).



Access the [2025 Periodic Review project website](#), including links to the adopted plan, development regulations, appendices, and related documents created during the planning process.

Access the [Petition for Review](#) and [settlement offer](#) submitted by Affordable Hometown Port Townsend.

