MINUTES
COLUMBIA CITY BOARD OF ZONING APPEALS
REGULAR MEETING
MARCH 3, 2026
7:00 P.M.

WHITLEY COUNTY GOVERNMENT CENTER
MEETING ROOM A/B, LOWER LEVEL

MEMBERS PRESENT	MEMBERS ABSENT	STAFF
Cathy Gardner (E)		Nathan Bilger
Patricia Hatcher		
Jon Kissinger		
Lyle Kuhmichel		**ATTORNEY**
Dennis Warnick		Greg Hockemeyer

(E)lectronic participant

AUDIENCE MEMBERS

One visitor signed the Guest List, which is included with the minutes of this meeting.

CALL TO ORDER/ROLL CALL/INTRODUCTIONS

Mr. Kissinger called the meeting to order at 7:00 P.M. Mr. Bilger read the roll with members present and absent listed above.

CONSIDERATION OF PREVIOUS MEETING MINUTES

Mr. Warnick made a motion to approve the September minutes as presented. Ms. Gardner gave the second. By roll call vote, the motion passed 3-0-2. Ms. Hatcher abstained from the vote due to not having been present at the September meeting, and Mr. Kuhmichel abstained since he was not a member of the Board at that time.

Ms. Gardner moved to approve the October minutes as presented. Mr. Warnick gave the second. The motion passed 4-0-1, by roll call vote, with Mr. Kuhmichel abstaining due to not having been a Board member in October.

Mr. Warnick made a motion to approve the January minutes as presented. Ms. Hatcher gave the second, and the motion, by roll call, passed 4-0-1. Mr. Kuhmichel abstained since he had been absent from the January meeting.

ADMINISTRATION OF OATH

Mr. Hockemeyer administered the Oath to visitors who planned to speak at the meeting.

OLD BUSINESS

There was no old business.

NEW BUSINESS

1. 26-C-SE-1

Weston Perry requested approval of a Special Exception for a traffic-generating home occupation at 1382 N. Morsches Drive. Mr. Bilger summarized the Staff Report and described that the petitioner intended to become a no-inventory firearms dealer with approximately three customers per month, by appointment only. He explained that a dealer was required to obtain a Federal Firearms License and needed approval of local zoning.

He displayed an aerial of the property and noted available parking in front of the garage and around the circle driveway. In conclusion, he suggested four conditions of approval for the Board to consider. There were no questions for Mr. Bilger, and Mr. Kissinger requested to hear from the petitioner.

Weston Perry introduced himself to the Board and explained that he had operated the business at his previous residence, but a Firearms License was not able to be transferred to a new location. He answered questions regarding securing the items and test firing. He explained that while test firing should not be needed, he did have a personal range on his property that he would not be opposed to utilizing. Mr. Hockemeyer confirmed for Mr. Perry that he was not aware of any laws or necessary processes that would prevent him from allowing customers to use the range. Mr. Perry clarified that he had no interest in having a public range. He stated for Ms. Gardner that he would have no issue being restricted to an average of 4 customers per month and would request to amend the Special Exception if his hobby were to grow beyond what was proposed.

Mr. Bilger confirmed for Mr. Kuhmichel that neighbors were notified of the petition and the meeting was advertised in the newspaper, as required, and one neighbor had called to request additional information. Mr. Perry added that he did place the petition sign in his yard as well.

No one else was present to speak, and Mr. Kissinger closed the public hearing. Mr. Warnick made a motion to approve the petition as presented and with the conditions suggested by Staff. Ms. Gardner gave the second; motion passed 4-0, by roll call vote. The conditions of the approval were as follows:

1. The Special Exception is granted as presented for the applicant and is non-transferable.
2. The area used for the business shall not exceed 20% of the habitable area of the residence.
3. Any signage will conform to the requirements of the code.
4. The number of customers on-site will not exceed an average of four per month.

OTHER BUSINESS

There was no other business.

REPORTS FROM STAFF AND MEMBERS

Mr. Kissinger reported that he had seen some modifications underway on a property whose Variance request was recently denied. Mr. Bilger said he was unsure of the owner's plan, but he would investigate the site.

Mr. Bilger explained that the County would no longer be using GoToWebinar to webcast meetings. He said Teams, Zoom, or another similar program would be utilized for member participation, when needed. Videos of previous meetings were being transferred from GoToWebinar to YouTube.

Mr. Bilger clarified that while there was a fifth Monday in March, being Spring Break, a training workshop would not be held until the following fifth Monday, June 29, 2026.

ADJOURNMENT

Ms. Hatcher made a motion to adjourn, seconded by Ms. Gardner, and the meeting was adjourned at 7:24 P.M.

GUEST LIST

1. Weston Perry ..... 1382 N. Morsches Drive, Columbia City