

Town of Leeds

Planning Commission Meeting for Wednesday, January 7, 2026

1. Call To Order/Roll Call: 7:00pm

ROLL CALL:	<u>Present</u>	<u>Absent</u>
CHAIR: CHUCK BENTLEY	X	
COMMISSIONER: KEN HADLEY		X
COMMISSIONER: LAURIE SULLIVAN	X	
COMMISSIONER: ALAN ROBERTS	X	
COMMISSIONER: DAVID RHOADS	X	
TOWN PLANNER: SCOTT MESSEL	X	

2. Invocation: Rochelle Gardner

3. Pledge of Allegiance

4. Declaration of Abstentions or Conflicts: NONE

5. Consent Agenda:

- Tonight's Agenda of January 7, 2026
- Meeting Minutes of December 3, 2025

Motion to approve Consent Agenda made by Commissioner Sullivan, 2nd by Commissioner Roberts.

ROLL CALL VOTE:	Yes	No	Abstain	Absent
CHAIR: CHUCK BENTLEY	X			
COMMISSIONER: DAVID RHOADS	X			
COMMISSIONER: KEN HADLEY				X
COMMISSIONER: LAURIE SULLIVAN	X			
COMMISSIONER: ALAN ROBERTS	X			

Motion to approve Consent Agenda made by Commissioner Roberts, 2nd by Commissioner Sullivan.

ROLL CALL VOTE:	Yes	No	Abstain	Absent
CHAIR: CHUCK BENTLEY	X			
COMMISSIONER: DAVID RHOADS	X			
COMMISSIONER: KEN HADLEY				X
COMMISSIONER: LAURIE SULLIVAN	X			
COMMISSIONER: ALAN ROBERTS	X			

6. Announcements: Pet clinic January 24, 2026, from 1-2 pm.

7. Public Hearings: NONE

8. Action Items: NONE

9. Discussion Items:

a. Required Information to Properly Evaluate Town's Wastewater Alternatives, including Sewer.

The Planning Commission discussed the community's thoughts on the adoption of a sewer system in Leeds. The Chair expressed that there is not a clear understanding of public opinion on the matter, stressing the need for further discussion and research to answer outstanding questions.

Some residents prefer septic because of leach lines return water to their own property, rather than sending wastewater to Washington County Water Conservancy District. There is concern that adopting a sewer system would transfer control of local water resources to outside entities.

Septic systems are still an environmentally friendly way of wastewater disposal for small systems. The need for open discussion and careful evaluation of the town's future wastewater management was emphasized, due to the growth, noting that the topic has been in discussion since the 1970's.

Some residents value septic systems for their environmental benefits and the way they keep water local. While others note that Leeds' slow growth is partly due to the lack of sewer system.

Overall, the community is grappling with the technical, financial and social implications of transitioning from septic to a sewer systems, and a strong desire for clarity from the entities involved. Questions still needed to be discussed.

Planning Commissioner Chair opens discussion up for public comment for the discussion of sewer.

Rochelle Gardner: I have a question, say the Cove brings the pipes in and they're paying for it if they only put in a certain sized pipe and somebody else wants to hook in later, another development, or let's say even the town decides later for some reason that we need to put sewer someplace, how do they put in a bigger pipe to start with how do they do that and do we want it? How does that work?

Scott Messel goes over the different options for the sewer agreement that would come in. If they do not do it at that time, then whoever needs the upgrade would pay for the upgrade.

Rochelle Gardner: We might want to look at the cost of that process for upgrade if we need it for future developments.

Alan Cohn: I realized it's harder for people to put in septic and realize that sewer is going to have to end up somewhere at some time. My main concern is the sewer does not benefit the existing residents of Leeds. My concern is that any sewer lines coming in, that they do not affect the Town of Leeds from a funding standpoint, that existing residents are not taxed because the developers need to bring in sewer lines for their big developments. The Town of Leeds should not be stuck with it. If a development has sewer, that development's association needs to be responsible for the sewer.

Tracy Comas: I just want to give my opinion. I do not want to see sewer in town. It is a huge expense, and I don't know how they're going to get around the rule of being within 350 feet of pipe and having to hook up. Like us, we went through a lot of expense putting in a commercial grade sewer system in our house with a huge septic tank and it does help because our leach line is in the pasture. Where that leach line is, we don't have to use irrigation water because it keeps it green. There are advantages to having septic system. No, I would not like to see it. The smell, I don't think you're going to have enough flow in this town to stop that smell.

Susan Savage: Water is complex and I think part of what Don is talking about is that when you apply for a water right and then you go through a whole bunch of things to get it, when they give you the water right, then you are given a point of diversion and a point of use. Here we can't use water outside of the area that was designated by the state engineer. I think part of what he's saying, as I've heard some discussions about it, is

that when you have a closed system like a sewer system and you have your water coming into it, then the sewer takes it out of that area into a different area. However, that works out, that's one of the complexities.

Rochelle Gardner: I think that if the public had some hard figures before them where they could see that either they're going to have to hook up or they're not going to have to hook up or this happens or that happens, I think there's a lot of misconceptions. I would worry if it went down my street because I just paid to put in a septic system and I know that to hook up to the street from the backyard is a long distance, and it's going to cost me more than it costs me to put in the septic system. I think that's a legitimate worry for a lot of people. I think if they knew what was ahead and could see it, that would make a big difference.

Questions of how to get that information to the town for the citizens.

The development Silver Cliffs is a special service district and can have a sewer system.

b. Short-Term Rentals

The conversation was on regulation and enforcement of short-term rentals in the Town of Leeds. There are questions about the ability to enforce short-term rentals. There is no dedicated code enforcement officer as of right now so the authority would be the Mayor and the Planning Commission. Lack of enforcement could be an issue if neighbors are directly affected. Other cities restrict short-term rentals to specific areas, preventing them from spreading into residential areas. This is becoming more common to protect long term rental residents from disruptions associated with short-term rentals.

Planning Commission had previously drafted and approved language regulating short-term rentals, but it was tabled and not enacted by the Town Council. Planning Commission is reviewing the draft and seeing if they want to modify any part of it moving forward.

Michelle Johnson. Like we said before, you guys did a great job, we all did a great job getting that put together. I think the only thing that needs to happen now is to pull it out of the definitions, make it its own ordinance, and then send it to the new council. It should have never been shut down the way it was shut down. Unfortunately, I know of at least two that we did shut down, because there's no enforcement now, they've opened back up they came straight out and said, I'm doing it, I don't care. It has to become an ordinance so that it can be controlled and enforced. So, we don't have people going, no, I'm doing it anyway, because that's what's happening. It really is unfortunate for the people who did come and do what they needed to do and bring those conditional use permits and they pay the money and they pay every year to do their business licenses and they get inspected and it's a middle finger to everybody else when it's not going to be enforced they don't care.

Alan Cohn: Who's going to make sure that the owner is occupied? Who's going to make sure the owner isn't gone through the week and have another house somewhere that they're living in that they are specifically, you ring that doorbell and that owner is in that house. Who's going to be doing that?

Rochelle Gardner: You would think that I would be very against this, and sometimes I am, but I know of several that go on in my area and their homeowner occupied and they've been very respectful and I know of one instance where it is really helping somebody out financially. As long as they abide by the rules, I haven't had any problem and I would be one of the first to complain, from a former experience.

10. Staff Reports

11. Public Comment

12. Adjournment

Approved this 4th Day of February 2026.

Chuck Bentley, Planning Commission Chair

ATTEST:

Cari Bishop, Clerk/Recorder

DRAFT