

ASTORIA DEVELOPMENT COMMISSION

City Council Chambers
August 1, 2016

ADC JOURNAL OF PROCEEDINGS

A regular meeting of the Astoria Development Commission was held at the above place at the hour of 7:50 pm.

Commissioners Present: Price, Herzig, Warr, Nemlowill, Mayor LaMear

Commissioners Excused: None

Staff Present: City Manager Estes, Community Development Director Cronin, Parks and Recreation Director Cosby, Finance Director Brooks, Fire Chief Ames, Police Chief Johnston, Public Works Director Cook, and City Attorney Henningsgaard. The meeting is recorded and will be transcribed by ABC Transcription Services, Inc.

REPORTS OF COMMISSIONERS: No reports.

CHANGES TO AGENDA: No changes.

CONSENT CALENDAR:

The following items were presented on the Consent Calendar.

- ADC Minutes of 6/20/16

Commission Action: Motion by Commissioner Price, seconded by Commissioner Warr, to approve the Consent Calendar. Motion carried unanimously. Ayes: Commissioners Warr, Nemlowill, Herzig and Price, and Mayor LaMear. Nays: None.

REGULAR AGENDA ITEMS:

Item 6(a): Astor West Urban Renewal District – Plan Amendment Study (Community Development)

The City Council established Fiscal Year 2015-2016 goals to “develop a master plan for the western entrance to Astoria” and “promote positive economic development through strengthening partnerships.” In addition, the City Council has expressed strong interest in reopening Bond Street to two-way traffic and facilitate revitalization of this key connecting street between the Uniontown and Downtown neighborhoods. On March 21, 2016, the ADC authorized staff to initiate a plan amendment study that would examine the boundary expansion options to include Bond Street and other key projects. Community Development Director Kevin Cronin has prepared a memo detailing the timeline for the undertaking of this process. This item is for Council’s information and discussion and requires no action at this time.

Director Cronin updated the Commission on the work done over the last three months. He displayed the maps that were shared at the open house, which listed existing and proposed projects, existing and proposed boundaries, existing slide areas, and City owned properties. If the Commission approves the expansion, the decision will allow for funding to install a retaining wall late next summer. All of the residents and property owners within the proposed expansion area were notified of the open house and about 24 people signed in. Most of the public’s concerns were about traffic and there was a lot of support for the street improvements that have been planned as part of the expansion. Attendees also supported opportunities to improve single-family and multifamily housing. Residents and owners of property within the proposed expansion area wanted to know how they would benefit from being a part of the district. He explained they would become eligible for grants and loans for the Storefront Improvement Program and residential projects, as well as better access to Astoria via improved streets. Taxes would not increase. All of the proposed projects are estimated to cost about \$400,000, which includes some traffic calming. Staff is considering a partnership with Clatsop Community Action (CCA) and the Community Action Team (CAT), who have existing programs that Astoria could tie into. The programs could be amended to fit the needs of Bond Street. He would present updated Storefront Improvement Program guidelines on August 15th, based on previous Commission discussions. He confirmed Staff would continue outreach with businesses and property owners and reviewed next steps, which were listed in the agenda packet.

Commissioner Herzig asked how much money was currently in the Astor West Urban Renewal District (AWURD) Fund. He learned the definition of sharrow, a chevron and arrow, indicated a shared bicycle/automobile lane. The people who attended the open house did not know what to expect. The open house

focused on the extension of the district and how the extension would impact the neighborhood and traffic. People who preferred Bond Street be a one-way street were concerned about traffic. The retaining wall will be built into the slope so that it is structurally sound. In the future, he believed Staff needed to provide more clarity on what would be discussed at open houses.

Director Cronin said the open house was designed to be very basic and flexible. There was no formal presentation, which allowed people to stop in for ten minutes or stay and talk longer. Commissioner Herzig said the format was good and there was a lot of networking going on. It was nice to have so many people attend. Finance Director Brooks said the AWURD fund has a budget for improvements other than buildings of \$2 million and \$95,120 for materials and services for this fiscal year. The contingency is \$325,000 and the Ending Fund Balance is \$1.78 million.

Commissioner Herzig believed the sum of all of the proposed projects was about \$850,000. Director Cronin explained that the Storefront Improvement Program would apply to the entire district. The Housing Rehabilitation Project could be specific to Bond Street, or Council could direct Staff to pursue other areas. However, there are very few houses on West Marine Drive, which has mostly industrial and commercial properties. City Manager Estes added that urban renewal districts are structured to accept debt via bonds. Long-term projects could be paid off with increments received through the life of the AWURD.

Mayor LaMear confirmed that the Storefront Improvement Program was the same as the façade grant.

Director Cronin said he would ask the Commission to authorize the program at their next meeting on August 15th. Once the Commission approves the program guidelines, Staff will begin marketing the program. City Manager Estes added that the program would be paid for out of the AWURD, not through grants. The City will provide matching grants as financial assistance to property owners.

Commissioner Nemlowill said the projects seemed worthy, but she was concerned that the City was not being strategic enough. The district was created around the goal to build a convention center, which was never built. She wanted to know what the overall goal was now, besides just expanding the district to get money to fix Bond Street. City Manager Estes said for several years, the City has discussed participating in projects with the Port of Astoria. If the Port and the Urban Renewal District could align their projects, the District could be a financial partner. Within the last year or two, the City has had the most cooperation with the Port to create a shared vision. The Port is working on a master plan to start tackling some of these improvements. The convention center was just one of the projects proposed for the urban renewal district, along with infrastructure and other projects, which would not be deleted as part of this expansion. City Council and the founders of the Astor East Urban Renewal District (AEURD) did not envision the Liberty Theatre when that district was created. However, the AEURD was expanded to include the theatre. Renewal districts have the ability to ebb and flow while continuing to focus on the initial projects.

Commissioner Nemlowill said the big accomplishment in the AEURD was redevelopment of the Gateway Area and former mill site, which was the district's intention. The district has been extended to help the Liberty Theater and urban renewal funds could be used to redevelop the former Safeway site. She did not want to lose sight of original intention and the goal to benefit the greatest amount of people. Individual, small businesses and homes can collectively improve the value. However, she did not believe the AWURD has come to fruition like it could. City Manager Estes noted the AWURD is much healthier financially than the AEURD. Director Cronin added that Staff has applied for a grant to improve the streetscape along West Marine Drive. In the near future, he hoped to present City Council with a contract for a consultant to assist with the Economic Development Strategy Project. He would be working with Jim Knight on all of the projects because their resources need to be aligned. City Manager Estes said Staff could provide more information about existing projects at the next meeting.

Mayor LaMear believed it was critical to allow two-way traffic on Bond Street because if Marine Drive is closed there is no other way to get through the city, which is a safety concern. Director Cronin noted that he expected to hear back on the streetscape grant in August. He would notify City Council when he finds out if Astoria was awarded the grant.

Mayor LaMear said it is not inviting to come into Astoria from across the bridge, so the grant is critical. Commissioner Herzig said he was concerned about the overall vision for this expansion. Michelle Reeves had said this area of Astoria was the least appealing, but it is the first thing people see when they drive up Highway 101. He hoped City Council would extend the district along the Young's Bay side because the area will become blighted if the City does not begin addressing how to reclaim it. Director Cronin added he was very interested in what would happen to the old Astoria Ford property in that area.

Mayor LaMear called for public comments.

Veronica Montoya, 324 38th Street, Astoria, said the Oregon Department of Fish and Wildlife (ODFW) is in the East Mooring Basin because the Port allowed them in for a profit without any consideration for the taxpayers that live between the Maritime Museum to Alderbrook. The sea lions are hazed as early as 7:00 am and sometimes until 5:00 pm. ODFW tries to fill their traps so they can brand the animals. Once the animals are hazed off the dock, it can take up three or four hours to settle them down again only to have Pacific Marine Fisheries come back and haze them off the dock again. Astoria has 20 more cruise ships coming that are full of tourists who also love the sea lions. This could be an opportunity to create a sea lion sanctuary with very little money needed to sustain it. The sea lions come and go as they need and they feed themselves. No money is needed to house or feed the sea lions, so the only thing they need is for people to provide a safe alternative fall out. Money could come streaming into the community for many years to come with a little bit of advertising. The Port of Astoria is supposed to be beholden to all the residents in Clatsop County, including tourism, not just the 16 percent of the state that happens to fish. She would love to see the community work for a solution that would make everybody happy. The sea lions could be relocated to the west jetty so they could have a safe place to rest and sleep without being hazed and burned by Pacific Marine Fisheries in front of all of Astoria's guests just to appease fisherman. This causes extreme pain, distress, and noise to taxpaying residents through no fault of their own. She asked if City Council knew how much money the Port makes from having sea lions in the basin and from harassing and branding them. She brought this up a couple of weeks ago and wanted to know if anyone had a chance to find out how much money is made. She wanted to know if the City could ask the Port to bring back the old floats that were paid for with tax dollars to the west end of the East Mooring Basin. The floats would provide the sea lions with a safe place to rest. The Port has rented out all of the slips on one of their docks, so the sea lions only have one place to rest. She asked the City to find out how much the Port makes because it is not fair to the residents who live in the area. The animals make noise as they are hazed off the dock.

Mayor LaMear asked Ms. Montoya why she believed the Port made money from this situation. Ms. Montoya said the Port rents the area to ODFW for the barge used to brand the sea lions and the trap that sits in the basin.

Mayor LaMear asked Ms. Montoya if she had contacted Jim Knight. Ms. Montoya said yes, but she was unable to get any information. She believed the City could get information.

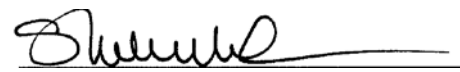
Mayor LaMear said she heard it cost the Port a lot to repair the docks when the sea lions climb on them. Ms. Montoya said the Port had a big rectangle dock for the sea lions. The dock was removed and now sits at Tongue Point. If the dock could be put near the west jetty, the animals could be acclimated back on to the jetty. Right now, the sea lions have no place to go. The dock is never used by fisherman.

City Manager Estes asked if Ms. Montoya had ever attended a Port Commission meeting. The City of Astoria does not have any jurisdiction over the Port of Astoria and each entity has separate elected officials. Ms. Montoya said she has attended several Port Commission meetings, but she has received death threats so the meetings are not her favorite place to go. She is not the only person who cares about the animals and a whole side of town is disrupted by what this one group of people does in the basin. Thousands of people come to Astoria to see the animals and they do not want to see them get burned. It is not good for the city to have this in the middle of town. This is where guests come to visit sea lions. It is not pleasant for the residents or the visitors.

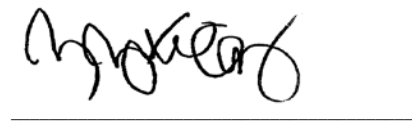
ADJOURNMENT:

There being no further business, the meeting was adjourned at 8:16 pm.

ATTEST:


Secretary

APPROVED


City Manager