

A regular meeting of the Astoria Common Council was held at the above place at the hour of 7:00 pm.

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

Councilors Excused: None

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

REPORTS OF COUNCILORS

Item 3(a): Councilor Nemlowill reported she attended the tour of park facilities on Saturday, December 5th, as a member of the Parks Master Plan Committee. The Parks Department does an amazing job with limited resources. She believed many efficiencies and opportunities could be implemented to develop the Parks Department. She noted that Director Cosby had handouts containing information about the master planning survey at www.astoriaparks.com. The survey is offering incentives in exchange for sharing input about the future Astoria's parks.

Item 3(b): Councilor Herzig reported the next Chip-In event would be on Sunday, December 20th at Lil' Sprouts/Port of Play, which is one of the few daycare centers in the country that is for ages of nothing on up and is a major accomplishment by the Parks Department. The parks tour received great press coverage in the newspaper and on the radio. Director Cosby is really getting the public involved in the master planning process and the Parks Department team deserves a lot of credit. He reported that the Astoria Warming Center was open for 12 consecutive nights beginning November 19th. The Warming Center is run by volunteers and private donations. The Warming Center opened again December 6th and would remain open through December 8th during the current severe weather conditions. He would be volunteering at the Warming Center after the meeting from 2:00 am to 6:00 am. Over 50 individuals have been served, 10 women and about 40 men. Last night, one woman at the Warming Center showed signs of a mental illness. The Warming Center took her in because it is well known that homeless women are more likely to be sexually assaulted. The Warming Center appreciates the community's support. Dulcye Taylor with the Magnanimous Mug event raised \$1,860 for the Warming Center. Warming Center volunteers were overwhelmed with gratitude that Mitch Mitchum's obituary requested donations to the Warming Center. Columbia Bank is also fundraising. The community support is fantastic and volunteers stay up all night to keep the center open. This winter will be wet and cold and the Warming Center will try to open as many nights as possible. The homeless members of this community have no other place to go and must exist on the streets if the Warming Center is not open.

Item 3(c): Councilor Warr had no reports.

Item 3(d): Councilor Price thanked Director Cosby, Jonah Dart-McLean, Ian Sisson, Parks Department staff, Charlie Schweigert, Drew Herzig, and Karin Temple for volunteering at the Warming Center. She also thanked the Astoria Downtown Historic District Association (ADHDA), Robert Jacobs, and the North Coast Corral for hosting a great lighting ceremony. The Christmas Club decorated the downtown area beautifully, particularly on Commercial Street. Mr. Jacobs supplied a double-decker bus for the event.

Item 3(e): Mayor LaMear called for a moment of silence in remembrance of Mitch Mitchum, who was an exemplary volunteer in the community. She reported that she spoke at the Drug Court Graduation in November, where two individuals with rough backgrounds celebrated being sober for more than 200 days. These graduations are very moving and she encouraged community members to attend if given the opportunity. All members of City Council participated in the dedication of the Irving Avenue Bridge. She believed everyone in town was delighted that Astoria now has an east/west through street. She and her husband volunteered for two shifts at the Warming Center. She thanked Councilor Herzig and Charlie Schweigert for their work with the Warming Center and encouraged everyone to volunteer for a shift. Her next Meet the Mayor event would be on

December 9th. This was her second year appearing in the Nutcracker as the Mayor and this will become one of her seasonal appearances.

CHANGES TO AGENDA: No changes.

PRESENTATIONS

Item 5(a): Liberty Restoration, Inc.

Liberty Restoration, Inc., Board Member Steve Forrester will introduce Executive Director Rosemary Baker Monaghan and Vice-President Christine Lolich who will give a brief history of the City's pivotal role in the Liberty Theater's acquisition and restoration.

Steve Forrester, 999 Ridge Drive, Astoria, explained that in late 1999, former Mayor Van Dusen and City Council made a \$1.3 million grant to Liberty Restoration, Inc., which had executed two options for purchasing the Liberty Theater building from Robert Jacobs and Rose Marie Paavola. Russ Warr and Blair Henningsgaard were on that Council. Hal Snow, the City Attorney at that time, said the grant was a very courageous act. When he asked Mayor LaMear for time to speak at this meeting, he noticed that the deed on the Liberty Theater contained a reversionary clause. If the non-profit failed financially or if the theater is not used as a performing arts center, ownership of the theatre reverts to the City of Astoria. He had suggested to Mayor LaMear that because of the City's big stake in the Liberty Theater, it would be good for City Council to receive an update on the state of the theater building.

Rosemary Baker Monaghan gave handouts at the dais and explained that Liberty Restoration, Inc. is the company that owns and operates the Liberty Theater. Her presentation was as follows:

- The non-profit company's mission is to transform the building into an original and contemporary performing arts and culture center so it would serve as a destination that adds significantly to the economic vitality of Astoria. This mission includes economic development, cultural enhancements, arts education and enrichment, and preservation. Liberty Restoration's operating mission is to enhance cultural and educational opportunities, increase community pride, and operate a state of the art performing arts and event center, and a convention and conference center in tandem with the local arts, cultural, and business communities. The company opened for business in 2005 and the mission was adopted in 2006.
- Liberty Restoration has been the main driver for the downtown renaissance. Of the initial investment of \$1.3 million, \$1 million was spent on the building and \$300,000 was spent on infrastructure. Another \$385,000 was spent on the pavilion. The company leveraged the City's investment and turned it into \$2 million in renovations over the last 10 years. It was crucial for the City to make an early investment in the Liberty Theater because that tangible commitment from the City allowed Liberty Restoration to receive funds from other granting agencies.
- Since the City abandoned the idea of building a publicly owned conference center at the Port of Astoria, the Liberty Theatre has served as a defacto convention center hosting many public and private events over the last 10 years. The theater worked with other venues in Astoria to develop the Paulson Pavilion, which seats 665 people. It benefits the community as these people eat at the restaurants, stay in hotels, and go shopping.
- Commercial lease spaces in the theater are completely rented and generate significant economic activity, including \$10,000 in property taxes. There are eight street level commercial tenants and two second floor commercial tenants.
- The Liberty qualifies for funding under House Bill 2133, which requires 70 percent of lodging taxes imposed after 2003 be dedicated to tourist related facilities. The theater produces numerous events annually that are of interest to tourists and have helped to make Astoria a destination. A relatively small contribution from the Promote Astoria Fund dedicated to maintaining the facility would enable the Liberty to attract more performance events and boost tourism. Since the grand reopening in 2005, the theater, reception, conference, prom, wedding, and other businesses have grown at Liberty Theater.
- Prior to the pavilion, the theater had an average of 178 event days per year. This year, the theater will have 273 event days. Event days are events in the theater that generate income and on some occasions, there are three events in one day. The theater is only closed on Christmas and Thanksgiving. The income is a combination of renting out space and bringing in events. Any event advertised as "The Liberty Theater presents..." is an event that was brought in by Liberty Restoration. Based on conversations at the urban

renewal meeting about parks and recreation maintenance, this is a growing and ongoing concern for the Liberty Theater.

- Her handout included fixed costs for maintenance, inspections, insurance, and taxes. These fixed costs plus utility and phone expenses total about \$77,000 each year. Costs for planned maintenance expenses have remained within the budgeted amount. Grants have allowed the theater to do more projects than that budget would allow. This year, the budget included \$63,000 in maintenance projects.
 - In addition to operating at such a high level, the following maintenance projects have been completed: replaced the roof over the commercial space now occupied by Pilot House Spirits, which cost \$19,500; restored the leased space occupied by La Luna Loca as an add-on to the Paulson Pavilion; repaired and maintained the front entrance in 2010; sealed the seam between the building and sidewalk; resurfaced three entryways for safety; strengthened the supporting structure underneath the front entrance; replaced over 50 feet of sewer pipe; and several safety improvements throughout the building. Many materials from the building have been recycled.
 - Current projects include restoring the stage door and landing area and remodeling the green room with heating and air conditioning. Renovating the box seats will be in January.
 - Grants received this fiscal year include six maintenance grants that total about \$94,000, one piano grant for \$2,000, seven grants for the dance theater, and two children's theater grants.
 - Her handout included a list of known maintenance and safety issues and planned energy improvements. The theater needs help with lighting upgrades because the volunteers who operate and maintain the building are already working so many hours.
- Astoria should be proud of the Liberty Theater. When touring other cities' theater districts, she often hears, "Oh, you should have seen this theater. We tore it down in the 60s." Astoria does not have to say that.

Christine Lolich, 179 W Duane St., Astoria, said the Liberty Theater is the living room of the community. The brightly lit marquee greets people each night and the 10 leased spaces are warm and inviting. The downtown streets are bright and festive with holiday lights and decorations. She asked everyone to visualize the downtown if the theater were closed due to lack of funding. The theater needs the financial support of the City to keep the lights on and is asking for an annual allotment from the Promote Astoria Fund. The theater is 90 years old and is exposed to the elements 24 hours a day, 7 days a week. She wants the Liberty to live on and asked the City to make a difference for the community.

Mayor LaMear asked how much money the theater was asking for.

Ms. Baker Monaghan said the annual shortfall is \$60,000.. Mr. Forrester added that the less the theater needs to raise for maintenance, the more it can spend on programming. Ms. Lolich said their goal is to bring in more programs.

Councilor Warr said the presentation was very nice and informative; however, the handout did not include a sufficient operating statement and he wanted to see how money was being spent. The City has already made a large investment and the theater is asking the City to make another large investment. The Liberty is very important, but he wanted more details about expenditures and sources of income.

Ms. Baker Monaghan confirmed she could give Council an operating statement. She did not know how much information Council wanted at this meeting. Between 25 and 30 percent of their budget is spent on maintenance. Each year, the theater aspires to a \$350,000 budget, but that amount has never been raised. The theater actually operates with a budget of \$300,000. Income is 20 percent operations and 80 percent rental income from their leased spaces. Most theaters bring in 30 to 50 percent of their revenues through operations. The theater has received quite a few grants for maintenance, but operational grants are difficult to receive.

Councilor Price did not believe it was an exaggeration to say the Liberty Theater was the living room of the community. She agreed with Councilor Warr that Council needed more details on the budget before a decision could be made. Astoria has a Cultural and Arts Fund with \$30,000, which could be raised to \$50,000 in the next fiscal year.

Councilor Nemlowill asked if other City funding options had been considered. This request forces the Council to consider giving a flat percentage to an organization, which is a procedure she was unaware of.

Ms. Baker Monaghan said the theater applied for the Arts and Cultural grant from the City the first year it was offered. The theater was told those grants are only given to festivals. Therefore, the theater did not reapply in subsequent years. She believed the definition of festival was very limiting and the idea was that a festival would bring people into town and fill up hotel rooms and restaurants. The theater does this as well with almost every performance. The theater has received other grants from the City, including historic renovation grants.

Councilor Herzig said he was on the Arts and Culture Committee when the theater applied for the grant. He believed the theater had requested the entire balance of the fund, which was \$30,000. The Committee was not going to give the full amount to one group. The decision was not about festivals, but about sharing the money among the community.

Ms. Baker Monaghan said when she attended the City's grant writing session, she was encouraged to request the full amount of \$30,000. She was also told the Committee would decide what percentage of the fund the theater should receive. However, the City responded that the theater was not a festival.

Councilor Herzig said he and Councilor Price were on the Committee last year and being a festival was certainly not an essential criterion for the grant.

Ms. Baker Monaghan responded that the theater is open to the community and is a key part of downtown. She did not believe it would be unreasonable to discuss a percentage because the theater is a major downtown institution.

Councilor Herzig believed the City should do its due diligence and Council needed to see more financial records before such an allowance could be considered. Counting ballet classes as an event day is creative math and he preferred a financial audit on the theater before the City makes any ongoing commitment.

Ms. Baker Monaghan stated the ballet classes rent space.

Councilor Herzig believed this was misleading. Three ballet classes in one day are being counted as three event days. He was concerned about this math because it gives an inflated sense of the operations.

Ms. Baker Monaghan explained that multiple ballet classes are given during one block of time and are counted as one event because they are paying for the space.

CONSENT CALENDAR

The following items were presented on the Consent Calendar:

- 6(a) City Council Minutes of 11/21/15**
- 6(b) Boards and Commission Minutes
 - (1) Library Board Meeting of 10/27/15
 - (2) Parks Board Meeting of 10/28/15
- 6(c) Request for Proposals for a Point of Sale and Registration Software System (Parks)
- 6(d) Contract for Professional Human Resources Services with Xenium (Finance)
- 6(e) Award of Contract for Cemetery Turf Revitalization (Parks)**
- 6(f) Telephone Network Upgrade (Finance/Police)
- 6(g) Astoria Senior Center Renovation Project Construction Contract Amendment #3 (Public Works)
- 6(h) City Council Ground Rules**

Councilor Warr requested Item 6(e) be removed for further discussion. Councilor Herzig requested Items 6 (a) and (h) be removed for further discussion.

City Council Action: Motion made by Councilor Warr, seconded by Councilor Price, to approve Items (b), (c), (d), (f), and (g) of the Consent Calendar. Motion carried unanimously. Ayes: Councilors Price, Warr, Herzig, Nemlowill, and Mayor LaMear; Nays: None.

Item 6(a): City Council Minutes of 11/2/15

Councilor Herzig noted the following correction to the fourth paragraph on Page 3 of the minutes: "Councilor Herzig stated the Port has been working with Marriott to build a hotel in the ~~area east of Pier 39~~ **Bridge Vista**

Area.” He said he had not made this statement at all and was sure Rosemary Johnson remembered he was speaking about the Bridge Vista Area.

City Council Action: Motion made by Councilor Herzig, seconded by Councilor Price, to the City Council Minutes of 11/21/15, as corrected. Motion carried unanimously. Ayes: Councilors Price, Warr, Herzig, Nemlowill, and Mayor LaMear; Nays: None.

Item 6(e): Award of Contract for Cemetery Turf Revitalization

Councilor Warr explained the contract proposed to spend about \$70,000 on turf and seeding at Ocean View Cemetery. He was opposed to the contract because he did not believe the Parks Department had the resources to keep it maintained. He explained that several years ago, when the City was finishing the tank by the high school, a baseball field was going to be built. The City had to call the contractor three times because the gravel had not been removed to the City’s standards. The field was not seeded properly and the City wanted the baseball field to be perfect. A year later, the area was a weed patch because the City did not take care of it. The Parks Department only has three full-time maintenance employees year round and five in the summer. In 1993, Ocean View Cemetery had three full-time employees year round and about 15 during the summer. The cemetery was beautiful at that time. He was opposed to spending \$70,000 on the cemetery without any commitment by the City to increase staff to maintain it. If the City is not going to take care of the cemetery, there is no point spending money. Over the last couple of years, he has advocated for increasing fees. Cemetery fees have been increased by 50 percent and other fees in the community have increased by a similar percentage. He believed the fees were being increased so the City can afford to better its facilities. However, the Parks Department still has three employees and the City is still failing to maintain its facilities. The City has emphasized the needs of the Fire Department to the point that \$1.5 million was spent in two years. The City needed to replace the fire engine, but this was possible because of the way the need was emphasized. Until City Council decides to take care of the parks in the community, he did not believe the money should be spent.

Director Cosby agreed that if the City does not have the funds to maintain the investment, the work should be postponed until funds are available.

City Manager Estes reminded that turf revitalization at the cemetery was first brought to Council’s attention last spring. At that time, Council directed staff to consider having the cemetery reseeded. This work was added to the budget for this fiscal year and the Parks Department is simply working to follow through with this budgeted item.

Councilor Herzig said the estimate from the contractor was well within the amount budgeted for this expenditure. This is just a transitional operation. Sending staff to do the work would be much more expensive than hiring a contractor. The Parks Master Plan currently being developed could help the City decide where to allocate funds. The City might decide to reacquisition some of the smaller parks to free up staff and money that could be devoted to the cemetery. He did not agree the funds should not be spent just because staff cannot see the way forward. He fully supported the turf revitalization because Parks staff is working overtime to figure out what direction the department should go, get community input, and develop an overview of the entire park system. The City is on its way to figuring out how to maintain the cemetery.

Councilor Warr noted the City has three people trying to look after 63 separate venues, which is impossible. One of City Council’s goals is to fix the problems at Ocean View Cemetery, but six months have gone by and the problems have not been fixed. Planting grass will address the issue, but if the City allows the grass to die next year, nothing has been accomplished. He believed Council should make maintenance of its parks and infrastructure a priority by adding employees if necessary. The only way this goal will ever be accomplished is if City Council insists on it.

Councilor Price agreed with Councilor Warr. She believed the \$70,000 should be used to hire temporary summer employees when more parks maintenance is needed. She was looking forward to the Parks Master Plan and believed it was one of the most important things the City was engaged in at this time. The Parks Department clearly needs help one way or another.

Mayor LaMear asked when the Master Plan would be complete. Director Cosby said Ian Sisson would give City Council an update at their next meeting. The plan should be forwarded to Council in July for adoption. The

department is just finishing the collection phase and beginning the development phase, which is very early in the process.

Mayor LaMear agreed she would not want money invested in the cemetery only to have the Parks Master Plan state something else should have been done. She confirmed that the turf revitalization could be delayed until the master plan was complete. She felt morally obligated to take care of the cemetery and the City needs to address the issues. Spending money on the cemetery now seems like a band-aid that would not work for the long term. The money could be used for a better purpose.

Councilor Warr said replanting will be necessary because most of the grass is dead. However, this might not be the right time to replant if the City is not dedicated to maintaining the turf. And currently, the City is not dedicated.

Councilor Nemlowill said she visited the cemetery during the Parks and Recreation tour. She did not know what it looked like in the 90s, but believed some progress had been made. The City has been transferring all of the cemetery's records into a digital format and has hosted Chip-In events at the cemetery. While there are issues with moss and weeds, some progress has been made.

Councilor Herzig said this proposal was approved by City Council in November and he did not understand why Council would change its mind in 30 days. It is disrespectful to the Parks and Recreation Director for Council to assume she would throw away money by failing to follow up on the work. This expenditure was part of the budget discussions. Council approved the proposal recently and now Council is saying the work should not be done. He believed Council was not trusting staff to do the right thing.

Mayor LaMear believed the work should be postponed until the master plan was complete to ensure the work done is adequate and will be maintained. She planned to vote to deny the contract.

City Council Action: Motion made by Councilor Price, seconded by Mayor LaMear, to deny the contract for turf revitalization at Ocean View Cemetery. Motion carried 4 to 1. Ayes: Councilors Price, Warr, Nemlowill, and Mayor LaMear; Nays: Councilor Herzig.

Item 6(h): City Council Ground Rules

Councilor Herzig said the ground rules are a City Council Goal. Mayor LaMear had suggested implementing a three-minute time limit on public comments. He was concerned that public comments were limited, but presentations were not. He believed presentations should have a time limit because it is not fair to give some of the powers in the community unlimited time while restricting the citizens to three minutes. One of the rules states disrespectful citizens will be asked to leave Council chambers; however, he believed it was important to remember that people over speak or misspeak sometimes. He did not want Council to threaten people with being thrown out of Council Chambers. Repeat offenders can be spoken to about their behaviors. The rules do not contain any agreement between Councilors to treat each other respectfully, which he believed was crucial. If Councilors are unable to model respect to each other, Council cannot expect the citizens to be respectful. He wanted the rules to include a time limit on presentations, less threatening language about citizens respecting elected officials and City staff, and an agreement between Councilors to treat each other with respect.

Mayor LaMear requested these ground rules be implemented because it had been a long time since Council said the goals would be created. She wanted the rules implemented now and changes could be discussed at a later date.

City Council Action: Motion made by Councilor Warr, seconded by Councilor Nemlowill, to approve City Council Ground Rules, as presented. Motion carried 4 to 1. Ayes: Councilors Price, Warr, Nemlowill, and Mayor LaMear; Nays: Councilor Herzig.

REGULAR AGENDA ITEMS

Item 7(a): Amendment A15-03 Concerning Riverfront Vision Plan Implementation for the Neighborhood Greenway Area (Community Development)

- (1) Ordinance Amending the Astoria Comprehensive Plan Pertaining to Implementation of the Astoria Riverfront Vision Plan for the Neighborhood Greenway Area (2nd Reading and Adoption)

(2) Ordinance Amending the Astoria Development Code and Land Use and Zoning Map Pertaining to Implementation of the Astoria Riverfront Vision Plan for the Neighborhood Greenway Area (2nd Reading and Adoption)

In 2008-2009, the City of Astoria developed the Riverfront Vision Plan (RVP) to address issues dealing with open space, land use, and transportation issues along the Columbia River. Significant public involvement opportunities were designed to gain public input. This process was initiated to plan for these issues in a comprehensive manner and to set a framework for the future of the study area. The City's north Riverfront (Columbia River to West Marine / Marine Drive / Lief Erikson Drive) was divided into four Plan areas of development: Bridge Vista (Port/Smith Point to 2nd Street), Urban Core (2nd to 16th Street), Civic Greenway (16th to 41st Street), and Neighborhood Greenway (41st Street to 54th Street, east end of Alderbrook Lagoon). City Council accepted the Riverfront Vision Plan in December 2009. Since that time, the City Council has set goals regarding implementation of the Riverfront Vision Plan. Implementation of recommendations from the Riverfront Vision Plan in the Neighborhood Greenway Plan Area will take the form of map amendments, Development Code and Comprehensive Plan amendments.

Proposed map amendments will include: 1) apply the new Neighborhood Greenway Overlay (CGO) Zone to the Neighborhood Greenway Plan Area; and 2) rezone the water area between 41st and 54th Streets between the shoreline to the pier head line from A-3 (Aquatic Conservation) to A-4 (Aquatic Natural).

Proposed Development Code text amendments will include: 1) Add Neighborhood Greenway Overlay Zone to address the standards for over-water development including structure height and width, allowable uses, and landscaping; 2) Add new design standards for multi-family development in the Neighborhood Greenway Plan Area; 3) Add new design guidelines for multi-family residential and non-residential development in the Neighborhood Greenway Plan Area; 4) Establish landscaping standards for multi-family residential and non-residential construction/uses. There would be no landscaping standards for single-family and two-family dwellings; 5) Allow some exemptions for the few existing over-water buildings to continue to be viable businesses thereby preserving the historic structures; 6) Limit new, over-water development to maximum height of top of bank; and 7) Make miscellaneous "housekeeping" amendments related to references to the above noted amendments.

Proposed Comprehensive Plan text amendments will include: 1) Update the description of the Alderbrook Area and reference the Neighborhood Greenway Overlay Area and Riverfront Vision Plan implementation; 2) Acknowledge the growing impact of traffic to the neighborhood; 3) Add a policy to investigate the possibility of extending the trolley to the Alderbrook area; and 4) Change designation of aquatic area from conservation to natural, and amend allowable uses in the Aquatic Natural designated areas to include the exception for existing structures.

The Planning Commission held a public hearing at their October 27, 2015 meeting and unanimously recommended that the City Council adopt the proposed amendments. A public hearing on the Amendment was held and a first reading was conducted at the November 16, 2015 City Council meeting. It is recommended that Council consider adoption of the proposed ordinances. If the Council is in agreement with the recommendation of the Planning Commission, it would be in order for Council to hold a second reading and adoption of the two separate ordinances.

Councilor Herzig complimented Rosemary Johnson for completing the project to this point, adding that this portion was the least controversial thanks to Ms. Johnson's community outreach.

Director Cronin conducted the second reading of the Ordinance amending the Comprehensive Plan.

City Council Action: Motion made by Councilor Price, seconded by Councilor Warr to adopt the Findings and Conclusions contained in the staff report, approve Amendment A15-03, and adopt the ordinance amending the Astoria Comprehensive Plan pertaining to the implementation of the Astoria Riverfront Vision Plan for the Neighborhood Greenway Area. Motion carried unanimously. Ayes: Councilors Price, Warr, Herzig, Nemlowill and Mayor LaMear; Nays: None.

Mayor LaMear read the rules of appeal.

Director Brooks conducted the second reading of the Ordinance amending the Astoria Development Code and Land Use Map and Zoning Map.

City Council Action: Motion made by Councilor Nemlowill, seconded by Councilor Herzig to adopt the Findings and Conclusions contained in the staff report, approve Amendment A15-03, and adopt the ordinance amending the Astoria Development Code and Land Use Map and Zoning Map pertaining to the implementation of the Astoria Riverfront Vision Plan for the Neighborhood Greenway Area. Motion carried unanimously. Ayes: Councilors Price, Warr, Herzig, Nemlowill and Mayor LaMear; Nays: None.

Mayor LaMear read the rules of appeal.

Item 7(b): Resolution Amending Fee Schedule for the Parks and Recreation Department (Parks)

The mission of the Astoria Parks and Recreation Department is to provide lifelong learning, wellness, and well-being through recreational opportunities and is dedicated to the preservation of natural resources, open spaces and facilities that inspire and bring neighbors together. To assist in achieving this goal the Parks and Recreation Department charges fees to assist in the cost recovery of the Department operations. The Department's budgeted cost recovery for the 2015-2016 fiscal year is 52%. In order to meet this budgeted allotment the Parks and Recreation Department is in need of increased fees. The proposed changes are found in Astoria Aquatic Center – Schedule F1, Ocean View Cemetery – Schedule F3, Astoria Recreation Rental Division – Schedule F4 with the addition of the new Schedule F5 for the Astoria Column. Other fees charged by the Parks and Recreation Department for program based activities are not included in the Fee Schedule to allow flexibility for maximum cost recovery as programs ebb and flow. The Parks Advisory Board have reviewed and recommended that the City Council authorize this fee schedule amendment, in order to offset the costs within the Parks and Recreation Department.

City Manager Estes noted the proposed fee increases are outlined in the City Council Memorandum dated November 28, 2015.

Director Cosby confirmed the effective dates of the new fees were different for each service, as outlined in the memorandum. New fees at the Aquatic Center and the Column would be effective January 1st, at Ocean View Cemetery would be July 1st, and one more effective April 1, 2016.

Councilor Nemlowill said the proposed fee increases only help cover about 70 percent of the recent wage increases for lifeguards. The wage increases were necessary for the City to stay competitive with service industry jobs and to keep the pool operating. The pool is still closed from 1:00 to 3:00 pm and she hoped this would not continue for too much longer. The City is still subsidizing costs and the proposed fee increases will not cover costs. Unfortunately, labor costs will continue to rise with Oregon's minimum wage increases and inflation. The City has discussed full-time Parks employees, but the department has between 115 and 150 part-time employees at any given time. The Affordable Care Act has made it such that the City must have employees working less than 29 hours each week in order to maintain current staffing levels. She wanted to know how the City could develop an annual fee increase that is low, predictable, and would keep up with the rising costs of labor. Director Cosby believed the Parks Department could request annual incremental fee increases of between 2 and 4 percent.

Councilor Nemlowill asked if Council had the jurisdiction to approve annual fee increases for a specific amount of time. City Attorney Henningsgaard said Council typically approves fees on an annual basis. This request is for an out-of-cycle fee increase. When Council adopts requests like this one, any necessary fee increases can be factored in. City Manager Estes clarified Councilor Nemlowill wanted to know if City Council could approve a percentage that fees would be increased automatically each year for a number of subsequent years. City Attorney Henningsgaard stated fee increases required an annual resolution. Councilor Nemlowill said she supported the fee increases because they are necessary.

Councilor Warr believed annual fee increases should have been implemented in the past. The Maritime Memorial and cemetery had gone 17 years without increasing fees, which did the City a disservice. Fees should be reviewed by City Council annually.

Mayor LaMear noted that the City does not want to raise fees so high that no one comes to the Aquatic Center or uses the City's facilities, which is why the proposed increases are modest. There is a delicate balance between charging enough to cover costs without charging so much that the City loses patrons.

Councilor Price asked staff to take note of this discussion in preparation for next year's budget hearings. She agreed that it would be easiest to increase fees by a percentage each year. City Manager Estes stated staff would definitely note this discussion. The budgeting process for the next fiscal year has already begun and the Finance Department is already considering fee increases.

Councilor Herzig said he attended the Parks Board meeting that included a healthy discussion of the fee increases. Director Cosby gave the board a very detailed analysis of the current fee schedule. Due to Parks Board input, a senior rate was created. A lot of thought has gone into this proposal. Staff did some restructuring and considered use patterns. He supported the entire proposal except the annual parking fee increase at the Column. He wanted to discuss this fee increase with the Friends of the Astoria Column. The Column and the Riverwalk are important features that Astoria provides to the world. The City would never consider charging people to walk on the Riverwalk. He understood the Column was stationary, so it is easier to collect money from that location. However, he wanted parking fees at the Column to remain \$2 per year because it shows Astoria is willing to share the Column with the world and the Column should not be used as fundraiser. All of the other proposed fee increases have been very well considered, but he wanted the Column fee increase removed from the proposal. Director Cosby explained the proposed parking fee increase had a systematic breakdown, which was proposed by the Friends of the Astoria Column as an afterthought to the recent restoration of the Column and the Friends' \$1 million donation. Out of the \$5 annual parking fee, \$1 would go to the City of Astoria Parks and Recreation Department, \$1 would go to a restricted fund within the Oregon Community Foundation (OCF) to begin saving for future restoration work, \$1 would go to a restricted fund within the OCF for capital expenditures, and \$2 would go to the Astoria Column General Fund for ongoing care and maintenance of the Column and Astor Park. The current \$2 annual parking fee is deposited into the Column's General Fund.

Eric Paulson, 195 W Kensington, Astoria, said he was the treasurer of the Friends of the Astoria Column. The Column is a gem of the city and it is an honor to serve on the board. He explained the proposed fee increase with the following comments:

- The Friends was founded in 1989 by former Mayor Henningsgaard because the Column was dilapidated. Jordan Schnitzer was the first president of the Friends and their goal was to find a way to fund the repairs. The restoration work cost about \$1 million in 1995 and the Friends raised the money to complete the work. Since then, the Friends have spent \$20,000 on inspections. Handicap accessibilities were added in 1994. The Friends have done seismic upgrades, paving, and striping. A gift shop was added in 2008, which cost \$100,000. In 2009, the stairs were replaced, which cost \$400,000. The Friends and the City each paid \$200,000 towards replacing the stairs. The Friends began providing a caretaker in 2013, at which time the caretaker cottage was deemed uninhabitable. So, the Friends spent \$45,000 on the cottage. He presented before and after photographs at the dais of the restoration work.
- After the first restoration in 1995, the emblems were visible. However, by 2014, the emblems needed more work, so the Friends and the City authorized \$1 million of restoration work. The Friends goal is to make sure the Column does not return to its 1995 condition. The most recent restoration work was authorized around the same time the hospital was raising funds for the new cancer center and the armory was raising funds for restoration work. The Friends took on the task of providing funds for the Column.
 - Mr. Schnitzer donated \$250,000 and three board members donated \$50,000 each. Collectively, the board members raised almost \$500,000 amongst its members and the Friends used its OCF savings to fund the rest of the project. A fundraiser at Fort George raised about \$2,000 and other fundraisers brought in about \$20,000. The restoration work is done and it did not cost the City one dime.
 - After 20 years, \$1 million was needed to renovate the Column. The fundraising requirements in this community have made it difficult to ask people now to donate to the maintenance of the Column. The \$2 parking fee is not adequate to put a portion aside to save for the restoration.
- Over 90 percent of the vehicles that park at the Column are from out of town, so the parking fees are a source of revenue coming in from outside of the City.
 - Knowing that it took 20 years for Astoria's weather to almost destroy the mural on the Column, he anticipated another \$1 million in restoration work would be necessary 20 years from now. The Column received 55,000 cars in 2014 and 35,000 cars in 2015. The lower number for 2015 was due to the restoration work during the nicest part of the year, which resulted in a loss of tourism. However, he

believed the Column averaged about 50,000 cars per year. One dollar per year per car over 20 years will raise \$1 million, which will pay for the maintenance of the Column.

- To mitigate against unexpected expenditures, like the stairs, he proposed setting aside another dollar for capital restoration work instead of taking money from the City budget. Of the current \$2 annual parking fee, the Friends give the City \$35,000 per year. This is a fixed amount regardless of the number of cars that park at the Column in a year. However, the Friends now propose to give \$1 per car to the City each year, which will be about \$50,000 per year. The remaining \$2 of the new parking fee would be used for operating expenses, like employee wages, landscaping, restroom cleaning, and utility bills. The Column could be completely self-sustaining plus have the ability to give.
- The Friends had a heated discussion about raising the parking fees. Raising the fee now to \$5 will prevent the Friends from having to come back and ask for smaller increases. The Friends keep a pretty sophisticated budget. He gave copies of the 2014 budget to Council, noting that the Friends run a pretty tight ship. Year to date, the Friends has lost \$140,000.
 - The Board has discussed adding board members. However, it costs \$50,000 to serve on the board, which limits the size of the board. Therefore, the Board has planned to make the Column self-sustaining.
 - The Board considered fees charged at other parks. The State park charges \$5 per day for parking. Crater Lake charges \$15 for a seven day pass and \$30 annually. The trolley costs \$2 per day per person. The Heritage Museum charges \$4 per day per person. The Flavel House charges \$6 per day per person. He listed the daily per person fees charged at several other places in Astoria and reminded that the Friends are proposing just \$5 per car per year, which is less than \$0.015 per day.
- The Friends are trying to get a handful of people to fund the Column, which belongs to the community. It is not fair that the Board is expected to come up with \$500,000 of their own money to fund the restoration. The Friends do not believe that \$5 per car per year is outrageous. If Mr. Schnitzer had given \$250,000 to the hospital, he would have a room named after him. However, nothing is named after him at the Column. The Board members donated because of their dedication to the facility.

City Council Action: Motion made by Councilor Price, seconded by Councilor Warr to authorize the fee schedule amendment for the Parks and Recreation Department, as recommended by staff. Motion carried unanimously. Ayes: Councilors Price, Warr, Herzig, Nemlowill and Mayor LaMear; Nays: None.

NEW BUSINESS & MISCELLANEOUS, PUBLIC COMMENTS (NON-AGENDA)


Ron Zilli, 1444 16th Street, Astoria, believed the increased parking fee at the Column was too high. As a resident, he was willing to pay more than \$5 to use the Column. Astoria is lucky to have such gracious and generous Friends that support the Column; however, the information provided indicated that 98.5 percent of Column visitors are not local. He believed most people spent less than an hour at the Column. People who decide to visit the Column because they saw it as they drove by will change their mind when they see the fee attendant and learn of the \$5 fee. He was not opposed to fee increases and believed more incremental fee increases would allow the Column to keep up with the economy. The Column is a magnet and there is a dilemma about how to fund it. He understood the infrastructure required maintenance, but believed an increase to \$5 was too much. He had wanted to provide this information prior to Council making a decision on the fees.

Mayor LaMear apologized for failing to call for public comments on the fee increases prior to voting. She called for a recess at 8:31 pm. The City Council meeting reconvened at 8:36 pm and Mayor LaMear confirmed there were no more public comments.

ADJOURNMENT

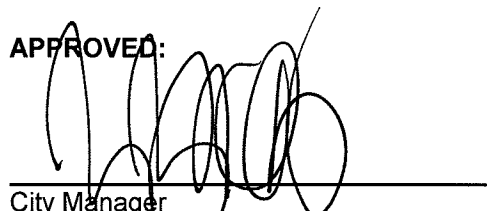
There being no further business, the meeting was adjourned at 8:36 pm to reconvene the Astoria Development Commission meeting.

ATTEST:



Finance Director

APPROVED:



City Manager