

A work session of the Astoria Common Council was held at the above place at the hour of 9:00 am.

Councilors Present: Nemlowill, Price, Brownson, Jones (via telephone), and Mayor LaMear.

Councilors Excused: None

Staff Present: City Manager Estes, Community Development Director Cronin, Parks and Recreation Director Cosby, Finance Director Brooks, City Engineer Harrington, and Library Director Pearson. The meeting is recorded and will be transcribed by ABC Transcription Services, Inc.

CITY COUNCIL GOALS AND DEPARTMENT HEAD STATUS REPORT UPDATES

Mayor LaMear has set the purpose of this work session to discuss City Council Goals. In preparing for the meeting, Staff has prepared department status updates to provide background as to what is happening day to day within each of the departments. Additionally, information as to progress on City Council goals has also been included. This includes information on FY 17-18 Goals (which took effect July 1) and the prior set of Council goals.

The Mayor has asked that Councilors review the materials in advance of the meeting, as no formal presentations will be provided. Department heads will be in attendance to answer questions.

Director Brooks introduced Jason Pollack, Astoria's RARE AmeriCorps representative, who would be helping Staff with the City's disaster and emergency preparedness goals. Staff described the specific objectives that Mr. Pollack would be working on and explained how achieving these objectives would positively affect the City's insurance rates in the future.

Staff answered questions about the status reports as follows:

- Director Brooks confirmed that organizations must provide mid-year reports to be eligible for the second half of their Arts and Cultural Community Grant funds.
- Director Pearson explained that stabilizing staffing and updating processes at the library has allowed him to open the library for eight hours on Mondays.
- Director Cosby explained why ultraviolet lights were installed in the children's pool and hot tub, but not the swimming pool and lap pool. The lights are in addition to the chlorine treatment, so chlorine levels would remain the same. However, the lights would reduce the need for water changes, allowing the children's pool and hot tub to remain open for longer hours.

Review of 2015-2016/2016-2017 City Council Goals

Investigate locating the Astoria Public Library as a part of a mixed-use residential development within Heritage Square, to facilitate redevelopment of this space.

Director Pearson handed out a project schedule for the library renovation and noted that the Foundation was collecting grant and fundraiser monies. He explained that the renovation would provide the community with services and amenities it cannot currently offer. He updated Council on recent facility, program, and staffing changes the library has made with the renovation in mind.

Councilors briefly discussed the historic collections in the library basement and the impact of the schools no longer having librarians.

Begin development of a City of Astoria strategic plan / vision

City Manager Estes noted this goal had been postponed to focus on higher priorities.

Promote positive economic development through strengthening partnerships and streamlining processes

Mayor LaMear noted that development of the Advance Astoria initiative was successful.

Improve the safety and efficiency of the transportation system by: advocating for the bypass; an evaluation of downtown chair walls; and fixing pedestrian problems

Mayor LaMear noted that Oregon Department of Transportation (ODOT) does not have the funding for a bypass project.

City Engineer Harrington presented a brief update on the downtown chair wall project, which was included in the agenda packet. He offered to provide Council with a copy of photographic renderings of the chair wall system, City street, and subsurface.

Councilor Nemlowill noted the goal for a bypass evolved into the chair wall project as the City began considering ways to prevent trucks from going through the downtown. She added the County was considering a bypass in the region and hoped Astoria would support that effort.

City Engineer Harrington updated Council on crosswalk and intersection improvements planned for the downtown area. ODOT will be evaluating all crosswalk ramps and replacing those that are not ADA compliant.

Promote housing that Astorians can afford

City Manager Estes said he would provide updates on the County Housing Study once it was complete. He gave details of construction excise taxes (CET) in other communities and asked Council to consider CETs for Astoria.

Councilor Nemlowill wanted the City to discuss CETs with the construction industry.

Staff answered questions about the vacant house registry, noting that Staff found it difficult to contact the owners of properties going through the foreclosure process. A CET could provide funds to incentivize redevelopment projects. The only other incentive funds available are Urban Renewal Funds, but Urban Renewal Districts do not have much housing.

City Council and Staff discussed factors affecting the housing market and incentives for developers to upgrade vacant and derelict properties. Property owners could be incentivized to sell or renovate their properties through the derelict building ordinance or a tax abatement program.

Staff explained how CETs could be used by developers to fund projects, noting how developers and the City would benefit. Director Cronin offered to set up a meeting with contractors to discuss any concerns, answer questions, and get feedback about CETs. He noted the funding could be used on single-family and multi-family projects. Astoria does not have much vacant land, so it would be best to recycle what the city already has.

Councilor Brownson noted the City could sell some of its unneeded vacant properties that could accommodate development. The community had resisted this idea in the past, but he believed it would be beneficial to reconsider the sale of City-owned properties. He believed City Council had a strong case for selling certain properties. Staff and Council discussed specific properties that were vacant and expensive for the City to maintain. They also discussed issues with the City's previous efforts to sell City-owned properties. Councilor Price agreed that selling properties for housing should be reconsidered and noted that strategic planning could help the City avoid future housing issues and other problems.

Councilor Nemlowill reminded that selling the Astoria Recreation Center property could provide multi-family housing. This would require expansion of the Aquatic Center, which would make the Parks Department more efficient. Staff noted that efforts to implement the Parks Master Plan would include a feasibility study on a combined recreation and aquatic center and evaluation of land sales.

Continue implementation of the Riverfront Vision Plan

City Manager Estes stated that implementation of this plan continues to move forward.

Develop a City of Astoria parks master plan

City Manager Estes noted the master plan had been completed.

Councilors recalled previous goal setting discussions that led to the decision to make strategic planning a lower priority than implementing the Riverfront Vision Plan. Funding is available this fiscal year to begin strategic planning, and a vision and strategic plan could guide the process for implementing the Plan. However, Councilor Price was concerned about what could be developed in the Urban Core Area in the meanwhile. She suggested a work session to discuss this further. Staff explained that they could not predict when funds would be available if the City's application were approved. Councilors shared their reasons for prioritizing either the strategic plan or the Riverfront Vision Plan.

Updates for the following goals were included in the Agenda packet, but were not discussed during the work session:

- Address cemetery maintenance / funding issues
- Develop a master plan for the western entrance to Astoria
- Hold an emergency preparedness presentation oriented to citizens of Astoria

Review of 2017-2018 City Council Goals

Updates for the following goals were included in the Agenda packet, and were discussed as part of Council's review of 2015-2016/2016-2017 goals (above):

- Begin the process to renovate the existing library building, in place, with the intent to develop a design that will serve the needs of the community for the long term. It is anticipated this project will be completed by 2020.
- Complete Comprehensive Plan / Development Code amendments for the Urban Core Area of the Riverfront Vision Plan
- Enhance the community's most valued programs and places by creating a more manageable Parks and Recreation Department
- Implement the provisions contained in the City of Astoria Affordable Housing Study to increase the number of housing units within the City, for permanent residents. Special attention should be given to derelict and/or vacant properties

Pursue a public-private partnership for the redevelopment of Heritage Square to include the development of housing

City Manager Estes said Staff wanted to discuss the development of a Request for Information with City Council at a future work session. Developers will need guidance from the City in order to submit proposals, so Council will need to identify their specific goals for the property. Staff offered to present Council with some case studies and examples of successful downtown revitalization projects in other cities.

Councilor Price believed a strategic plan would guide this project. The Commission and Staff continued to discuss how to prioritize the Riverfront Vision Plan, strategic planning, and the redevelopment of Heritage Square. Staff shared details about their current workload and explained how these projects would impact their capacity. Council and Staff agreed future work sessions would be necessary and shared ideas for moving forward successfully on strategic planning. Councilors continued to debate the priority level of each goal. They discussed which goal to move forward on first, the possibility of working on multiple goals simultaneously, and how each goal would impact the others. All three goals being debated would require funding and Staff time. After much discussion, Council agreed that they should move forward on Heritage Square and continue to discuss strategic planning. Councilor Nemlowill directed Staff to provide Council with case studies of downtown revitalization projects, affordable housing design concepts, and potential incentives for the City to offer developers.

Explore a variety of options for revenue generation, expense reduction, and streamlining internal processes to allow staff to focus on priorities

Staff noted that each department had been consistently reducing expenses and increasing efficiencies. However, demands for services continue to increase. Generating revenue will be a challenge, so the City might need to prioritize services.

Council and Staff discussed the difficulties and concerns about generating revenue through bonds and increased tax revenue resulting from development. While development would increase revenue, the City would have to increase services to meet the needs of that development.

City Manager Estes said his priority was to address internal staffing issues that impact service delivery to citizens. He explained why Staff was not prepared to discuss Police Department finances and suggested the next work session be about strategic planning or Heritage Square.

Build community awareness on disaster resilience; continue efforts on water service resiliency projects; and begin exploring a public safety facility outside the tsunami inundation zone

Mayor LaMear noted that Jason Pollack would be working on this goal. City Manager Estes added that Chief Ames had begun to consider concepts for moving forward based on issues he had already identified and the Public Works Department would be working on making infrastructure more resilient.

Councilor Nemlowill asked Staff to identify a City owned property for a resiliency station prior to moving forward on affordable housing. She also asked Staff to coordinate with the schools and other entities.

Develop a downtown parking master plan that provides additional parking, addresses parking options / enhancements, and optimizes pedestrian safety

Mayor LaMear said a parking master plan would fit into strategic planning and she believed people would need to start paying for parking. Council and Staff discussed how Astoria has changed, but the parking has remained the same. They also talked about the availability of parking downtown, its impact on pedestrian traffic, and safety issues. Councilor Price asked for more data on current parking trends and needs in the city. City Manager Estes said he had been in contact with the Astoria Downtown Historic District Association (ADHDA) to take note of their concerns about parking and pedestrian safety downtown. Staff would consider making parking spaces in that area smaller because the spaces are currently a variety of sizes. Other possible solutions noted in the Building Blocks Master Plan would also be considered. A parking garage would cost about \$30,000 to \$50,000 per space, so funding would be a challenge. He updated Council on the ADHDA's efforts to hire a new downtown parking enforcement officer.

Council and Staff discussed parking fees in Hood River and at the Port of Astoria and shared ideas for implementing parking fees in Astoria. They also discussed the perception that parking is limited downtown because people compare downtown parking to parking in a shopping center parking lot. These perceptions will be outlined in the results of a cluster analysis recently completed by the ADHDA, which will be published in October.


City Council and Staff discussed priorities and next steps. After some discussion, Staff confirmed they would prepare for a work session on Heritage Square and strategic planning.

Mayor LaMear confirmed that the City would have to pay for a Fire and Police facility on top of the hill through a bond measure. This would require the City to prioritize resources since the City is already in compression. Staff reminded that Council would need support from the community for a bond measure to pass. Mayor LaMear added that a strategic plan would help Council prioritize the City's needs and resources.

ADJOURNMENT

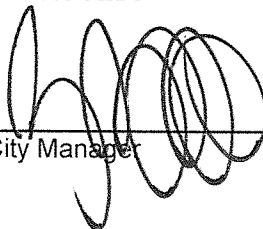
There being no further business, the meeting was adjourned at 11:31 am.

ATTEST:



Finance Director

APPROVED:



City Manager