

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, and Mayor LaMear.

Councilors Excused: None

Staff Present: City Manager Estes and Planning Consultant Johnson. The meeting is recorded and will be transcribed by ABC Transcription Services, Inc.

RIVERFRONT VISION PLAN URBAN CORE IMPLEMENTATION

City Manager Estes gave a brief overview of efforts to implement the Urban Core Area of the Riverfront Vision Plan, which aligned with City Council's goals. He noted grant funding timelines, the scope of work, and anticipated expenditures. Future work would need to be done by consultants as Staff had limited capacity. The consultant work is within the City Manager's spending limit, but Staff wanted feedback from Council before moving forward.

Planning Consultant Rosemary Johnson reviewed the Riverfront Vision Plan via PowerPoint. She provided a brief history of waterfront development planning projects that led to the Plan, explained how the Plan was developed, the intent of the Plan, and the implementation work done to date.

Staff described the process they would use to implement the Urban Core Area and explained options for moving forward. Council discussed and Staff responded to comments and questions with the following key comments:

- The Astoria Downtown Historic District Association (ADHDA) was already in the process of implementing a parking district plan, which was approved by City Council a few months ago. Their first step is an analysis of available parking and parking needs in the downtown core an area from 6th to 16th Streets and from the waterfront to Exchange Street.
- Staff answered questions about the various district delineations of downtown and gave a detailed description of the difference between a local historic inventory area and a National Register Historic District.
 - Currently, the downtown parking district requires employees of downtown businesses to park outside the district. The analysis would assess potential parking needs that could arise as a result of future development, with an emphasis on taking advantage of underutilized properties. Results of the analysis would inform potential policy changes and funding opportunities.
 - Staff did not know when the ADHDA would have a complete analysis.
- Councilors discussed overwater residential development. Such development could be counter to the City's efforts to provide housing for Astorians because it would be so costly. It would also impact views, so developing policy to allow it might be pointless. However, there may be ways to allow overwater residential development while preventing second home ownership and encouraging workforce housing.
 - Staff reminded that Council could provide direction to Staff and the Planning Commission (APC) about whether to consider overwater housing. They confirmed very little overwater development had occurred due to cost. Staff had worked with some property owners on improvements, but the Plan and historic designations had prevented any new overwater development. There had been no recent interest in overwater development. Staff described the types of overwater development allowed in other areas of the Riverfront Vision Plan.
- Staff is ready to sign a contract with consultants as soon as City Council wants to proceed. This implementation process would likely take a year because all of the public meetings would be held up front before a draft is developed and the legal process is completed. The APC has already requested an orientation work session on this topic.
 - Councilors speculated on what the public would advocate for. The intent of the Plan is to balance development with protected views and there are ways to allow development without destroying views. However, citizens may advocate for protected views while businesses advocate for development.
 - Staff confirmed that implementation would be done through a legislative process, which does not restrict City Council's involvement the way a land use review process does. However, Councilors would need to

make sure they avoid any perception of bias and refrain from making a final decision prior to the public hearing.

- Staff answered questions about existing height limits and explained how Code amendments preserved view corridors in several areas of the city. The APC would review concepts and discuss what options for view corridors would be appropriate in the Urban Core Area.
- Staff explained how the workload, Staff's capacity, and other large City projects would impact the implementation timeline. Applicants for the Community Development Director position were being reviewed and the next step would be phone or video interviews with City Manager Estes. Additionally, the City was receiving a large number of permit applications.
 - Councilor Nemlowill requested that Code amendments on short-term rental permits be completed before the City began working on the Urban Core Area. Councilor Price agreed. Staff noted other Code amendments the APC was currently working on and said they would reprioritize those efforts accordingly.
- Riverfront property owners have the first right of refusal to lease adjacent overwater parcels from the Division of State Lands. Page 57 of the Plan includes a map of the properties with first right of refusal and shows which properties are leased. Staff explained the process necessary to develop overwater properties and why redevelopment was an easier and less expensive process than new development. They also provided details on Chester Trabucco's lease, his existing permits, and how the City's Code would apply to future development on his properties.
- After implementation, all new development would be required to comply with current codes. Existing buildings would be grandfathered in to an extent. Staff answered questions about how the Code would be applied in unique situations, citing examples of past development projects along the waterfront.
- Staff provided an update on efforts to develop the Clatsop County Enterprise Zone. Tongue Point, the Port of Astoria, and Clatsop Community College have expressed interest in being included in the zone area. Astoria City Council would be the first of all jurisdictions involved to review the final plan.

Staff confirmed they had received clear direction from Council about how to move forward.

Mayor LaMear called for public comments.

George Hauge, Astoria, said he hoped parking would be a requirement because he did not feel the ADHDA's efforts would be adequate. A currently proposed development already needed more parking than is available. He believed this trend would continue as the riverfront is developed further. Additionally, he did not want views blocked or limited to view corridors, but he supported the renovation of existing buildings. He asked Councilors to encourage everyone on their contact lists to appear at the public meetings on the Urban Core Area.

Jan Mitchell, Astoria, stated that when the Riverfront Vision Plan was adopted, Astoria had a very different City Council and Planning Commission, and there were people who wanted to develop waterfront properties. She appreciated that the economic collapse in 2008 prevented that development. It would have been very difficult for Council to turn down the condominium projects that had been proposed at that time because the developers were beloved citizens who had contributed to the community. Only about 30 percent of the existing condominiums on 39th Street are occupied by year-round residents; that is why that particular property does not have a parking problem. She believed there was a lot of wisdom in making choices that benefit people who live in Astoria because doing so would ultimately benefit the visitors as well. She wished that someone would do an analysis of the balance between hotel rooms and population to determine just how much tourism would benefit the community.

ADJOURNMENT

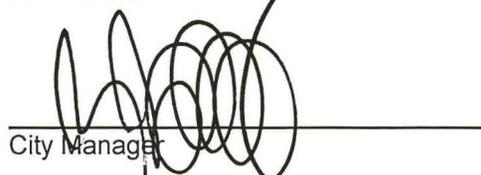
There being no further business, the meeting was adjourned at 10:38 am.

ATTEST:



Finance Director

APPROVED:



City Manager