

ASTORIA PLANNING COMMISSION MEETING

Astoria City Hall
October 27, 2015

CALL TO ORDER:

President Pearson called the meeting to order at 7:04 pm.

ROLL CALL:

Commissioners Present: President David Pearson, Vice President McLaren Innes, Kent Easom, Sean Fitzpatrick, Daryl Moore, Jan Mitchell and Frank Spence

Staff Present: Interim Planner Mike Morgan, Community Development Director Kevin Cronin, Special Projects Planner Rosemary Johnson, and Consultant Matt Hastie, Angelo Planning Group. The meeting is recorded and will be transcribed by ABC Transcription Services, Inc.

APPROVAL OF MINUTES:

Item 3(a): Minutes of August 25, 2015

Item 3(b): Minutes of September 1, 2015

Commissioner Easom noted that on Page 2 of the work session minutes, in Paragraph 4, Marty Palmer should be corrected to Marty Pollard.

Item 3(c): Minutes of September 16, 2015

Vice-President Innes moved that the Astoria Planning Commission approve the minutes of August 25, 2015 and September 16, 2015 as presented and approve the minutes of September 1, 2015, as corrected; seconded by Commissioner Moore. Motion passed unanimously.

PUBLIC HEARINGS:

President Pearson explained the procedures governing the conduct of public hearings to the audience and advised that handouts of the substantive review criteria were available from Staff.

ITEM 4(a):

CU15-02 Conditional Use CU15-02 by Frank Linza to operate a bed and breakfast in an existing single family dwelling at 364 Floral in the R-3, High Density Residential Zone. This item was continued from the September 22, 2015 meeting in order to allow Staff to develop Findings for denial of the request.

Director Cronin reminded that the public hearing had been closed at a previous Planning Commission meeting and nothing new had been added to the Staff report, which was included in the agenda packet. Staff worked with City Attorney Henningsgaard to develop language for the Findings, as directed by the Planning Commission at their last meeting.

Commissioner Spence moved that the Astoria Planning Commission adopt the Findings and Conclusions contained in the Staff report and deny Conditional Use CU15-02 by Frank Linza; seconded by Commissioner Easom. Motion passed unanimously.

President Pearson read the rules of appeal into the record.

ITEM 4(b):

- A15-03 Amendment A15-03 by the Community Development Department to amend the Development Code, Comprehensive Plan, and Astoria Land Use and Zoning Map to implement the Riverfront Vision Plan in the Neighborhood Greenway Area, generally described as between 41st Street and approximately 54th Street, Leif Erikson Drive to the pier head line, commonly known as the Alderbrook Area, in the A-3, Aquatic Conservation; R-2, Medium Density Residential; C-3, General Commercial; IN, Institutional zone. The recommendation of the Planning Commission will be forwarded to the City Council for consideration at a public hearing tentatively scheduled for Monday, November 16, 2016 at 7:00 pm in the City Hall Council Chambers.

President Pearson asked if anyone objected to the jurisdiction of the Planning Commission to hear this matter at this time. There were no objections. He asked if any member of the Planning Commission had any conflicts of interest or ex parte contacts to declare. Hearing none, he asked Staff to present the Staff report.

Planner Johnson and Matt Hastie of Angelo Planning Group reviewed the written Staff report and gave a PowerPoint presentation explaining the work that had been completed to date. The presentation was as follows:

- The Riverfront Vision Plan identified four areas, the Bridge Vista Area, Urban Core, Civic Greenway Area, and Neighborhood Greenway Area. The proposed amendment would implement the Neighborhood Greenway Area, which is an area between 41st and 54th Streets and Leif Erikson Drive to the pier head line, also known as the Alderbrook Neighborhood.
- The Riverfront Vision Plan recommended land use assumptions and objectives for the area, some of which can be implemented via updates to the City's Codes. The public has indicated a desire to keep the area the way it is; therefore, the recommended Code changes are intended to maintain the existing character of the area.
- Recommended updates to the Comprehensive Plan include an update to the description of the Alderbrook area and any reference to the Neighborhood Greenway area, acknowledgment of the growing impact of traffic to the neighborhood, and the addition of a policy that would allow an investigation of the possibility of extending the trolley into the Alderbrook area. Any codes related to zone changes would also be updated.
 - The A-3 Conservation Aquatic zone known as the Alderbrook Lagoon would be rezoned to A-4 Natural Aquatic zone, which would further restrict allowed uses in the area. The lagoon is not intended for development or large vessels.
 - No changes to allowed uses on land are being recommended.
- Recommended overwater development standards include limiting the height of any structure to the top of the bank and allowing exemptions for existing buildings.
- The City owns most of the riverfront parcels in the area and the Division of State Lands owns all of the submerged lands. There are also a few privately owned riverfront parcels in the area.
 - Physical access to the water is located along the Rivertrail to the end of Alderbrook Lagoon, existing street ends, LaPlante Park, Alderbrook Lagoon Park, and a ball field in the area.
 - No additional requirements for providing physical access to the river have been proposed.
- No new standards are being recommended for single and two-family homes, accessory dwelling units, and non-residential structures.
- Design standards are proposed for multi-family and non-residential structures, but not single or two-family dwellings. The standards are intended to maintain the character of the area.
 - The City is required to have clear and objective standards for multi-family structures. Staff has identified standards and guidelines, creating a two-track process. The standards and guidelines would also apply to non-residential structures in the area.
 - Staff identified and mapped all of the vacant parcels in the area where development could occur. However, the City does not currently have any plans for development. Most of the parcels are single-family dwelling sites, where no new standards are being proposed. Several parcels could accommodate multi-family dwelling units and would be subject to the proposed design standards and guidelines.
- No new standards for landscaping are being proposed for single or two-family dwellings. However, for other types of development and along the Rivertrail, Staff is recommending native plants and standards that limit the height and spacing of trees.

- All correspondence that had been received was attached to the Staff report. The Planning Commission's recommendation will be forwarded to City Council. A work session on November 2, 2015 will update City Council on what has been done to date, in preparation for the public hearing and first reading on November 16, 2015. This request will be presented for adoption by City Council in December. No new correspondence has been received and Staff recommended approval of the request.

Vice-President Innes understood the main entrance into Alderbrook was on 45th Street. Planner Johnson explained that the route through 54th Street might have access issues due to the federal lands in the area. Tourists and visitors who are unfamiliar with the area are not aware that 54th Street exits the neighborhood.

President Pearson opened the public hearing. He noted that the City is the Applicant, so the Staff report also served as the Applicant's testimony. He called for any testimony in favor of, impartial to, or opposed to the application. Hearing none, he called for closing comments of Staff. There were none. He closed the public hearing and called for Commission discussion and deliberation.

President Pearson thanked everyone who worked on the amendments, including the residents and property owners of Alderbrook. The public comments and input made a big difference and the final document includes some innovative solutions to working with commercial properties while allowing residential properties to remain as is. He commended Staff and the consultants for all of their work.

Commissioner Fitzpatrick said it was nice to receive input from property owners. Commissioner Mitchell added that Staff was very responsive to the neighborhood, which let people know their comments were heard.

Commissioner Easom moved that the Astoria Planning Commission adopt the Findings and Conclusions contained in the Staff report, approve Amendment A15-01 by the Community Development Department, and recommend adoption by City Council; seconded by Commissioner Fitzpatrick. Motion passed unanimously.

NEW BUSINESS: None

REPORTS OF OFFICERS/COMMISSIONERS:

Director Cronin announced that he had selected a final candidate for the City Planner position. Staff is currently conducting a background and reference check. He thanked President Pearson for serving on the panel that helped interview the applicants.

PUBLIC COMMENTS:

George McCartin, 490 Franklin Avenue, Astoria, said he had suggested to several people that the mayor require City Board, Commission, and Committee members to submit a resume and picture to be published on the City website. The mayor has not enforced this, so he suggested the Planning Commission publish this information voluntarily. He believed people wanted to know who was making important decisions. After City Council, the Planning Commission has the biggest influence in the community.

ADJOURNMENT TO WORK SESSION:

There being no further business, the meeting was adjourned at 7:34 pm to convene a work session.

WORK SESSION – HERITAGE SQUARE DESIGN AND REDEVELOPMENT:

Director Cronin gave the same presentation originally presented during a recent open house and published on the project website. The presentation included slides containing a list of the project values developed by the Heritage Square Project Advisory Committee, photographs of the site as it currently exists, weather maps, and design concepts. He explained how each slide pertained to various aspects of the project, including parking, view corridors, pedestrian and vehicle traffic, and the Sunday Market.

- Comments submitted at the open house indicated overwhelming support for turning 12th Street into a 'festival street', a one-lane street with parking on both sides and wide sidewalks that could accommodate street furniture and booths. Booths would be located within the parking bays to allow storefronts to engage with pedestrians. This arrangement would only be done between Exchange to Commercial during the Sunday Market.

- He showed concept photographs of what Duane Street could become and how adjacent areas would be integrated with the project area. Staff is considering a 45-foot tall library building that could include residential and commercial space above the first story. He showed photographs of libraries in other areas and presented three possible options for a mixed-use library at Heritage Square.

Staff and Commissioners discussed the details of each option, paying particular attention to the parking provided by each. Director Cronin noted that once Staff receives a Notice of No Further Action from the Department of Environmental Quality (DEQ), the site with contaminated material could be redeveloped. Developing the site as underground parking will seal off the contaminated material. Residential units in each option were shown in square feet rather than number of units. Staff can work with a developer to ensure the residential units are affordable housing. He also noted the pros and cons of each option as indicated by comments made at the open house. The concept created by Suenn Ho was not shown at the open house because it did not speak to the direction that City Council gave Staff, which was to develop a library and housing option. Commissioners and Staff discussed open house feedback about trees, greenery, and an amphitheater at the Heritage Square site.

Commissioner Mitchell believed most people at the open house were concerned about workforce housing. The decorative features are secondary to the function of the design and the ability of a multi-use building to produce more housing. Director Cronin said that as he spoke to people who did not frequent the downtown area, he learned that many people were unaware of City Council's housing goal or the concept of a mixed-use building. He tried to educate these people about how a mixed-use building could help with the housing shortage in Astoria.

Commissioner Fitzpatrick said that as the owner of property adjacent to Heritage Square, Options A and C were the best. However, he believed the best location for a mixed-use library building was the space between the old YMCA and the Shark Rock Center, not Heritage Square. The space is a dead zone on Exchange Street between 12th and 14th Streets. He has spoken with people who have indicated this space would be appropriate for a low rise library building. He believed most people understood the Heritage Square site would be more of an open town square rather than a high density space. Cyndi Mudge had said none of the three options would allow the Sunday Market to take place due to lack of space and he did not want to eliminate the Sunday Market, especially when there is another nearby space that could accommodate a mixed-use library. Director Cronin said this project provides the Sunday Market with the opportunity to think about ways they can operate differently. The Sunday Market has been doing things the same way for a long time, so more dialogue with Ms. Mudge and the Board of the Sunday Market will be necessary. It will be important to discuss the market's growth trajectory, whether 12th Street is the best location for the market, and how to ensure the market's success.

President Pearson asked for details about the next steps. Director Cronin said he would put together a packet for the Project Advisory Committee's next meeting on November 5th. After collecting more feedback from the public, a presentation with cost estimates will be given to City Council on December 7th. He is looking for an alternative location for this meeting because he believed Council Chambers would not be able to accommodate the number of attendees. City Council will direct Staff on Phase 2, which will begin in 2016.

Commissioners and Staff briefly discussed the acoustics of several alternative meeting locations throughout town after Commissioner Fitzpatrick said he found it difficult to hear at most locations outside of City Hall. Director Cronin noted a microphone could be brought to the meeting.

There being no further business, the work session was adjourned at 8:06 pm.

APPROVED:



Community Development Director