

ASTORIA PLANNING COMMISSION MEETING

Astoria City Hall
November 24, 2015

CALL TO ORDER:

President Pearson called the meeting to order at 6:30 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: Community Development Director Kevin Cronin. The meeting is recorded and will be transcribed by ABC Transcription Services, Inc.

APPROVAL OF MINUTES:

President Pearson asked for approval of the minutes of the October 27, 2015 meeting. Vice-President Innes moved that the Astoria Planning Commission approve the minutes as presented; seconded by Commissioner Easom. 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):

MR15-01 Miscellaneous Review MR15-01 by Garrett Sign Company for Fibre Federal Credit Union to install one new 5' x 8' double-faced illuminated monument sign cabinet with changeable text at 85 Marine in the C-3, General Commercial zone.

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.

Director Cronin reviewed the written Staff Report. No correspondence had been received and Staff recommended approval of the request with the conditions listed in the Staff Report.

Commissioner Mitchell confirmed the sign would not be a scrolling sign.

President Pearson opened the public hearing and called for a presentation by the Applicant.

Joel Taylor, 811 Harney St., Vancouver, WA, presented color copies of the photographs contained in the Staff Report at the dais. He also submitted to Staff an operations manual, specification sheet, and a letter from the manufacturer confirming the sign would freeze if a malfunction occurred. These documents satisfied Conditions of Approval 3 and 4 on Page 6 of the Staff Report. The sign is very typical and Garrett Sign Company installs quite a few of them. City code specifically states messages on the sign cannot scroll or flash. Therefore, each message will remain static for at least 10 seconds with a 2-second transition time between messages. The sign will not contain any element that will distract passers by.

Commissioner Moore confirmed the computer controlling the sign would be located inside the credit union.

President Pearson 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.

Commissioner Moore moved that the Astoria Planning Commission adopt the Findings and Conclusions contained in the Staff Report and approve Miscellaneous Review MR15-01 by Garrett Sign Company; seconded by Commissioner Mitchell. Motion passed unanimously.

President Pearson read the rules of appeal into the record.

The Planning Commission proceeded to Item 4(c): CU15-06.

ITEM 4(b):

The Planning Commission addressed this item immediately following Item 4(c): CU15-06.

CU15-05 Conditional Use CU15-05 by Jason Oei and Chris West to allow light manufacturing of medical marijuana at 401 Industry in the C-3, General Commercial zone.

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.

Commissioner Easom declared a potential conflict of interest. Jason Oei is a residential tenant of Easom Property Management, but he believed he could vote impartially. He confirmed he had not discussed this project with Mr. Oei.

President Pearson asked Staff to present the Staff Report.

Director Cronin reviewed the written Staff Report, noting that the Applicant's parking improvements would not be reviewed as part of this application. No correspondence had been received and Staff recommended approval of the request with the conditions listed in the Staff Report.

Commissioner Moore noted the Staff Report states the site is not intended to be accessed by persons other than workers. However, he understood the Applicants would be pursuing a retail license.

Director Cronin noted the retail operation will be on the second floor and the manufacturing facility will be on the first floor. The employees of the manufacturing facility will access the building through the back. The building is on a sloped site, so the retail operation will have a level entryway. He confirmed this configuration complies with Finding J on Page 5 of the Staff Report. If the City or the Applicant determines this configuration does not work, Staff has the ability to amend the Conditional Use Permit.

Commissioner Easom asked how many off-street parking spaces are required to comply with Condition of Approval 2. He also wanted to know if the parking requirements were based on square footage, rather than the type of business.

Director Cronin explained the parking requirements for retail were different from manufacturing, which are based on the number of employees and this Applicant only has two employees at this time. The retail requirements are usually based on square footage. He confirmed that a variance from the parking requirements would not be necessary because the facility has enough parking spaces to accommodate both the manufacturing and retail sides of the building. The Applicant is leasing the parking lot at the gas station, which has already been approved, to accommodate overflow parking.

President Pearson opened the public hearing and called for a presentation by the Applicant.

Jason Oei, 532 Harrison Ave., Astoria, and Chris West, 664 38th St., Astoria, said they have been growing medical marijuana for patients for a couple of years. They plan to apply for a recreation license eventually. They believed this was a good opportunity to be the first in the industry to do something similar to a microbrewery or micro distillery. They plan to make artisan craft products that represent the North Coast and share their products with Oregon. There is a lot of tourism in Astoria and this location is a great spot. Another space in the same building is being rented by Sweet Relief, but they have a completely different address.

Commissioner Spence understood a lot of water and electrical conduit was needed for marijuana growing.

Mr. Oei said they upgraded the building's electrical system from a three-phase 220-amp system to a three-phase 600-amp system. Upgrades were done from the meter bases to the outlets and everything is brand new. They also worked with the power company to upgrade the transformers. He confirmed the transformers had already been installed. They reduced their lighting needs because the power company was afraid they would blow the transformers. However, they are still able to turn on all of their lights. The power company has been very nice.

Vice-President Innes asked if the Applicants had plans to make the exterior of the building look better.

Mr. Oei said they planned to paint the building. Sweet Relief has plans to do some painting as well. Once their project gets going, they will be able to afford more upgrades to the exterior. They also plan to remove the fencing and put up some planters/lanterns. There are two containers on the property that will be moved, but the property owner is currently having a difficult time finding someone to move them.

Mr. West added that in addition to the parking at the top of the property, another 10 parking spaces would be available in another area for overflow for the dispensary on the top floor.

President Pearson 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 complimented Staff on the Staff Report. He believed the request met all of the criteria the Planning Commission had been asked to review.

Commissioner Mitchell believed it was great to have a new use that will clean up the building and make it active.

Commissioner Moore moved that the Astoria Planning Commission adopt the Findings and Conclusions contained in the Staff Report and approve Conditional Use CU15-05 by Jason Oei and Chris West; seconded by Commissioner Easom. Motion passed unanimously.

President Pearson read the rules of appeal into the record.

The Planning Commission proceeded to Item 5: Communications at this time.

ITEM 4(c):

This Item was addressed immediately following Item 4(a): MR15-01.

CU15-06 Conditional Use CU15-06 by Teresa Estrada to allow an eating and drinking establishment/mobile food unit adjacent to 300 Industry in the S-2, General Development Shorelands zone.

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.

Commissioner Fitzpatrick declared an ex parte contact, stating he had discussed the business venture with the Applicant when she wanted to rent space from the Astoria Armory. However, he has not spoken with her about this location and he believed he could vote impartially on this request.

President Pearson declared an ex parte contact. He is employed by the Columbia River Maritime Museum, where possible site locations have been discussed. However, he has not discussed any site, including this site, for about six months.

President Pearson asked Staff to present the Staff Report.

Director Cronin reviewed the written Staff Report. No correspondence had been received and Staff recommended approval of the request with the conditions listed in the Staff Report.

Vice-President Innes asked if the orientation of the mobile food unit would block the view of the water. Director Cronin said the unit, which is designed to look like a boat, is very small and will not block any views.

President Pearson opened the public hearing and called for a presentation by the Applicant.

Teresa Estrada, 147 Washington, Astoria said she agreed with the conditions of approval. The boat is about 10 feet high and will sit on a very large lot and not hinder any views. She believed this was a good location for the boat because it is near the marina and other boats, such as the one that sits near the Cannery Pier Hotel under cover and the 1946 gill net boat under the bridge. The area has nice views and is a nice place for people to take pictures.

Vice-President Innes noted the Staff Report addresses restroom facilities for the Applicant and her employees, but not the customers.

Ms. Estrada confirmed public restrooms were available to the public at the Chinook Building, the condominiums, the Port of Astoria office, and near the Doughboy Monument.

Commissioner Spence asked if the Applicant intended to apply for an alcoholic beverage license. He also wanted to know what type of food the Applicant would be selling.

Ms. Estrada said she would not be selling any alcohol. Her menu options would change each day to include pasta, clam chowder in bread bowls, and other specialty items. All of the cooking will be done in her licensed commissary before the prepared foods are brought on to the boat.

Commissioner Spence asked how the business would be advertised.

Ms. Estrada said her boat would be very visible from Marine Drive. She planned to advertise on social media and place an apron sign on the boat. She has also considered adding a sign on the sign that already sits on Port of Astoria property.

Director Cronin noted the Finding of Fact clearly indicated this request meets the standards. Signage has been an issue for businesses in the past. However, because social media is largely used for advertising now, the City did not receive requests for off premise signage.

President Pearson 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.

Commissioner Spence asked if a lease had been submitted from the Port of Astoria. Director Cronin said no lease has been submitted. However, Staff received an email from the leasing manager confirming the Port is in favor of the request. Staff will verify the execution of the lease if the request is approved.

Commissioner Easom moved that the Astoria Planning Commission adopt the Findings and Conclusions contained in the Staff Report and approve Conditional Use CU15-06 by Teresa Estrada; seconded by Commissioner Moore. Motion passed unanimously.

President Pearson read the rules of appeal into the record.

The Planning Commission returned to Item 4(b): CU15-05 at this time.

COMMUNICATIONS:

This Item was addressed immediately following Item 4(b): CU15-05.

Director Cronin updated the Planning Commission on the following:

- Heritage Square - Staff is currently receiving cost estimates from the consultant. The Heritage Square Study and cost estimates will be presented to City Council at their meeting on December 7, 2015. He explained Staff's efforts to collect feedback from City Boards and Commissions, the public, and other interested parties. The comments will be addressed during Staff's presentation to City Council. The timeline for the project has been revised and published on the project website. The redevelopment strategy for Heritage Square includes the revitalization of Duane Street. He listed several businesses along Duane Street, noting the goal was to improve the look of the storefronts.
- Affordable Housing – Clatsop County is making an effort to make discussions more region wide. Clatsop Economic Development Resources (CEDR) and Columbia Pacific EDD (Col-Pac) are discussing solutions for housing in the County. He and Heather Hanson, his counterpart at the County, are co-chairing a subcommittee tasked with addressing housing needs. The subcommittee's next meeting will be scheduled within the next few weeks and will concentrate on best practices for producing and managing more housing. He will be providing updates to the Planning Commission and City Council.
- Parks Master Plan – Parks Master Planning workshops had good attendance. More workshops will be scheduled in 2016 and he encouraged Commissioners to attend. The Parks Board will make a recommendation to the Planning Commission because the master plan will become part of the Comprehensive Plan. Reviewing the master plan will be easier the earlier Commissioners get involved with the planning process.
- City Planner Position Filled – Nancy Ferber has been hired as the new City Planner/Project Manager. She will begin on December 15. Director Cronin briefly noted Ms. Ferber's background and experience. Her first Planning Commission meeting will be in January.
- City Food Drive – Donations can be made at City Hall, the library, or the Astoria Recreation Center (ARC). The location that collects the most donations will win an award. The food drive will end December 1.

Commissioner Spence asked if Mike Morgan and Rosemary Johnson would continue working on the next phase of the Riverfront Vision Plan implementation even though a new planner had been hired. Director Cronin said Mr. Morgan was no longer working with Astoria on a regular basis, but he may be hired to do some grant writing. He, Sherri Williams, and Lisa Ferguson have been administrating the Community Development Department. The Neighborhood Greenway Area of the Riverfront Vision Plan will be presented to City Council on December 7. Ms. Johnson is still working on the wireless facility project and she may have small projects here and there. However, he planned to discuss the future of her role with Ms. Ferber. Ms. Johnson has indicated she would like to train Ms. Ferber, which would be a good opportunity for Ms. Johnson to transfer her knowledge.

Commissioner Fitzpatrick believed the Planning Commission would eventually review the Central School site. He asked if Commissioners could attend their meetings and then declare an ex parte contact at the public hearing. Director Cronin said the meetings would be invitation-only for neighbors living near the site. If a Commissioner decided to attend, he recommended attending just as an observer, not a speaker. This way, Commissioners can maintain impartiality.

Commissioner Fitzpatrick confirmed he had received an invitation to attend the meetings, noting he owns property and lives near the site.

REPORTS OF OFFICERS: There were none.

PUBLIC COMMENTS:

Dulcye Taylor, 1287 Commercial, Astoria, said on Saturday, December 5, the Parks Department will host a tour of parks and facilities. Two school busses will transport attendees around to each of the properties. Anyone interested in attending should contact Angela Cosby at the Parks Department.

Director Cronin added a survey will be released within the next day. Anyone unable to attend the tour can submit their input through the survey.

Commissioner Mitchell said she was impressed with how Staff collected public input at the Parks Master Plan open house. The activity with the pennies clearly indicated there would not be unlimited funds for everything the community wants. Forcing people to choose between services for children, historic properties, and other things was a very good grounding exercise for people who are not very involved in how government works and what the funding limitations are.

Director Cronin said the varieties of activities at the open house are effective because they make it easy for people, including children, to engage.

President Pearson noted there were no items for the December meeting. Therefore, this would be the last meeting of the year.

ADJOURNMENT:

There being no further business, the meeting was adjourned at 7:16 pm.

APPROVED:



Community Development Director