

## **ASTORIA PLANNING COMMISSION MEETING**

Astoria City Hall  
January 24, 2018

### CALL TO ORDER:

Vice President Easom called the meeting to order at 6:35 pm.

### ROLL CALL:

Commissioners Present: President Sean Fitzpatrick, Vice President Kent Easom, Jennifer Cameron-Lattek, Daryl Moore, Jan Mitchell, Joan Herman, and Brookley Henri.

Staff Present: Planners Nancy Ferber and Mike Morgan. The meeting is recorded and will be transcribed by ABC Transcription Services, Inc.

### APPROVAL OF MINUTES:

There were none.

### PUBLIC HEARINGS:

Vice President Easom noted the Supplemental Staff Report for Amendment Request A17-02 dated January 23, 2018 had been provided to the Commissioners at the dais and he allowed them time to review the information.

Vice President Easom 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):

A17-02                      Amendment A17-02 by Garry Vallaster, Astor Venture, LLC, represented by Jennifer Bunch dba Wickiup Consulting, LLC, for a map amendment to the Development Code to change zoning from Attached Housing – Mill Pond (AH-MP) to Local Service (LC) on approximately 1.04 acres (45,452 square feet) of land, and a text amendment to remove certain uses from the LS Zone between 23<sup>rd</sup> and 29<sup>th</sup> Streets north of Marine Drive. The intent is to construct a retail grocery that will accommodate the expansion of the Astoria Co-op Grocery.

Vice President Easom 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.

President Fitzpatrick declared that he had several potential conflicts and considerable ex parte contacts. Therefore, he recused himself. As there was no room for him to sit in the audience, he remained at the dais.

Commissioner Mitchell declared she was a member of the Astoria Co-op Grocery. She had been careful to limit her ex parte comments and refrain from talking to people about this application. She believed she was capable of making a decision based on the information provided during the hearing. She did not believe her membership would influence her decision.

Commissioner Henri declared she was a member of the Co-op and attended their information session in the fall regarding this application. However, she did not believe that would influence her decision.

Commissioner Cameron-Lattek declared she was also a member of the Co-op. She has had a few conversations and had been following this topic in their newsletter. However, she would remain impartial.

Commissioner Herman declared she was a member of the Co-op and attended the informational meeting, but she did not believe that would inhibit her ability to be impartial.



Commissioner Moore declared he was a member of the Co-op, but believed he could make an evaluation based solely on the criteria presented during the hearing.

Vice President Easom declared he was also a member of the Co-op, but had not had any ex parte contacts regarding this matter. He believed he could make an impartial decision.

Vice President Easom asked Staff to present the Staff report.

Planner Morgan stated he was a member of the Co-op, but had never served as a Board member and was not an investor. He reviewed the written Staff report and said Staff recommended approval of the request.

Commissioner Moore clarified that the request was to rezone part of the parcel shown on the map, not a lot line adjustment.

Planner Morgan explained the rezone was the first step. If the rezone is approved by City Council, the Applicant would still have to apply for a lot line adjustment and a design review to complete the development. He confirmed the Applicant would not be obligated to apply for a lot line adjustment if the rezone were approved. He noted the line on the map represented what had been proposed by the Applicant to accommodate the store and it had not been surveyed.

Commissioner Henri confirmed that DKS completed the traffic study at the request of the Applicant, and that Oregon Department of Transportation (ODOT) and Astoria's Engineering Department found the proposal to be in compliance.

Commissioner Cameron-Latteck noted the Staff report did not contain Exhibit 1, the table of information that was mentioned on Page 18 as part of the traffic study.

Planner Morgan said the Applicant would address that during her presentation.

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

Jennifer Bunch, Wickiup Consulting, PO Box 1455, Astoria, stated she was a member of the Co-op and presented the application via PowerPoint. The proposal was to rezone just over one acre, 1.04 acres, from AH-MP to LS. The line on the map has not been surveyed yet. However, the City will be provided with a legal description of the property prior to the City Council hearing. The proposed text amendments limit uses in the zone between 23<sup>rd</sup> and 29<sup>th</sup> Streets. The uses were for things that might be considered undesirable in the Mill Pond area. The zoning comparison on Page 12 of the Staff report compared the uses currently allowed in the AH-MP zone with the proposed changes to the uses in the LS zone and the uses allowed in the adjacent C-3 zone. The proposed uses for the LS zone are very similar to the uses already allowed in the Mill Pond zone. She wanted to allow for a larger retail use.

- During discussions with Staff, she believed the proposed uses were a good transition from the Mill Pond zone to the C-3 zone. The traffic study, which was required by City Code and Oregon State Administrative Rule, was completed by DKS from Portland. The traffic impact analysis contains three main sections. They first analyzed existing conditions to determine the transportation infrastructure, who owned the roads, and what types of roads existed. DKS looked at traffic volumes by going out into the field to do traffic counts. They also examined safety issues and the safety history of the roadways in the area. The second part of the study is the impact analysis, which includes access to the proposed site, trip generation, the distribution of that traffic, and potential future build-out. The third section of the study is the Transportation Planning Rule Assessment, which is a 20-year projection of future transportation conditions. Those projections allow DKS to determine whether this development would have a significant impact on local transportation facilities now or in the future. The study analyzed four intersections, Marine Drive/Commercial/21<sup>st</sup> Street; Marine/Exchange, Marine /23<sup>rd</sup>, and Marine/29<sup>th</sup>. Traffic counts were taken during peak hours at these intersections in September. DKS determined the highest hour was between 4:15 pm and 5:15 pm. The intersections were monitored through mobility targets intended to maintain a certain level of efficiency from motor vehicle travel in the area. DKS used volume to capacity ratios to gauge intersection operations in the area. They also considered site access.
- She displayed the proposed layout of the store, noting the two locations for ingress and egress into the parking lot on Steam Whistle Way, and the loading dock area on 23<sup>rd</sup> Street. The route down Steam



Whistle Way is not expected to be active for drivers entering and exiting the site as most of the site traffic is expected to utilize 23<sup>rd</sup> Street or Commercial. A total of 114 trips is expected to be generated by the store during the peak hour between 4:15 pm and 5:15 pm. Of those 114 trips, 41 trips would be by people already passing by on Marine Drive who did not make that trip specifically to go to the Co-op, leaving a net of 73 new trips generated during the peak hour, which results in 36 new trips into and out of the parking lot.

- She displayed trip distributions, showing the inbound and outbound traffic at the site. Thirty-two percent of the traffic would access the site from Marine Drive at 23<sup>rd</sup> and Commercial, 38 percent would come from the west on Marine Drive, 25 percent would come from the east on Marine Drive, and only five percent from Exchange Street at Marine Drive. The traffic analysis determined that the added traffic associated with the proposed zone change was expected to have little impact on operations when compared to the 2039 baseline operations. Most of the intersections studied were expected to operate with a volume-to-capacity ratio of 0.86 or better and meet mobility standards. Volume-to-capacity ratios of one or more are at or exceeding the roadway's capacity. The intersection at Highway 30 and Exchange is the exception where right-turn, eastward movement from Exchange to Highway 30 was expected to exceed the volume-to-capacity ration during the peak hour. However, this would not cause operations at the intersection to degrade, since only a minimal amount of the site-generated traffic is through Exchange. The Astoria Transportation System Plan (TSP) recommends a traffic signal at that intersection. The transportation study concluded that no transportation facilities would be significantly impacted and the proposed amendments did not degrade the performance of existing or planned transportation facilities such that it would not meet performance standards identified in the TSP or Comprehensive Plan.
- She displayed the letter from ODOT dated January 9, 2018 that stated ODOT agreed with the results of the transportation impact analysis.
- One of the public comments submitted indicated concern that a City park was being sold for this project. This property has been privately owned for years. There have been concerns about losing land for multi-family housing. The Buildable Lands Inventory states there are currently 52 acres in the R-3 zone and 23 acres in the R-2 zone that are currently available for multi-family housing. The City allows 26 units per acre in those zones. This project would only remove one acre from the inventory.
- There have been concerns about what would happen if the Co-op is not built after the zoning change. The Co-op will be built. They currently have a 30-year lease on the property and have already raised more than \$1.5 million for this project. There were also concerns about the impact of the 11,000 square foot building on the Mill Pond neighborhood. She did not agree that a larger retail facility would result in a larger impact. Current Mill Pond zoning allows retail uses up to 6,000 square feet and this two-acre site could accommodate three or four 6,000 square foot buildings.
- She noted that Exhibit 1 mentioned on Page 18 of the Staff report was an exhibit included in the application packet that was submitted to the City. She presented a copy of the exhibit at the dais.

Commissioner Moore asked what time of year the traffic study was done.

Ms. Bunch said she did not have a specific date, but the study stated it was done in September 2017.

Commissioner Herman asked if the traffic study looked at the impact of a driver turning left from 23<sup>rd</sup> Street onto Marine Drive.

Ms. Bunch answered yes, the study showed that during the peak hour in September, there were five turns by drivers heading south on 23<sup>rd</sup> Street and turning left on to Marine Drive heading east.

Commissioner Mitchell asked how many additional trips would make that same turn.

Ms. Bunch showed the trip distribution slide that indicated 75 percent of the traffic would come from the west. The 25 percent coming from the east would most likely return to the east.

Vice President Easom calculated this to be nine new trips making the left turn from 23<sup>rd</sup> to Marine during the peak hour.

Commissioner Mitchell asked if the report discussed potentially requiring a traffic signal at 23<sup>rd</sup> and Marine.



Mr. Bunch said no, the only note about a traffic signal was the one recommended in the TSP.

Commissioner Moore asked for an explanation as to why a rezone has been proposed instead of a variance from the conditional uses allowed in the current zone or a change to the allowed uses in the current zone.

Ms. Bunch said Mr. Vallaster originally spoke with her about changing the text of the Mill Pond zone to allow for a larger retail use. She worked with the former Community Development Director and current Staff to extend the local service zone. They all seemed to agree it was a logical progression. One consideration was that the uses in the LS zone are very closely aligned to what is allowed in the Mill Pond zone, so there were no huge increases in conflicts due to the limits on uses between 23<sup>rd</sup> and 29<sup>th</sup> Streets.

Commissioner Mitchell recalled when the site was a brownfield, adding the cleanup was an interesting and exceptional project. She always had the sense that the property was expected to be a commercial use and, for a long time people thought the credit union would build on that site. She asked why the LS zone was chosen over a more standard commercial zone.

Planner Morgan stated when conceived, the LS zone was an attempt to accommodate the uses that already existed. The property was referred to as the Wauna site as Mill Pond was being developed, but was incorporated into the planning efforts of the Mill Pond area. The LS zone has been proposed for this project because variances require the Applicant to show a hardship. It would be difficult to draft findings demonstrating a hardship in this case, so Staff believed the zone change was more appropriate.

Commissioner Cameron-Lattek why the Applicant had proposed the LS zone allow retail sales establishments greater than 14,000 square feet instead of something smaller.

Ms. Bunch responded that text amendment was proposed by Staff.

Planner Morgan explained that the remaining property to the east would remain undeveloped until Mr. Vallaster came up with another use. The area could be a larger retail establishment. The Co-op will be less than 14,000 square feet. However, if a larger retail facility wanted to build next to the Co-op, the City would want housing on top of the retail space. This would also cover the eventuality that if the Co-op was not developed, another larger development would have to put housing on top of the retail space and the requirement would only apply within the zone east of 23<sup>rd</sup> Street.

Don Vallaster, 711 SW Alder, Portland, offered to answer any questions about the history of the site. Of all of the uses proposed, he was most excited about this one and believed it was the most appropriate. He was very happy to see the proposal come forth.

Matt Stanley, 664 Kensington, Astoria, stated he had been the Co-op's general manager for the last ten years. It was exciting to be so far in the process. He thanked the Planning Commission for their serious consideration of the Co-op's application. He asked members of the audience who were in support of the application to raise their hands and he thanked them for attending. The proposed project is the culmination of almost five years of work. Five years ago, the Co-op Board and staff realized their lease would expire and that the Co-op's existing facility was beginning to feel cramped and limited their ability to serve the community and offer the additional services being requested. So, they began a thorough engagement process. Almost 800 people participated in their shopper survey, which was lengthy. More than 95 percent of respondents supported the Co-op doing something like this in town. They held focus group sessions, meet and greets with the Co-op Board, and met with key stakeholders in the community. The resounding answer was that people wanted the Co-op to go to the next level, emulate some of the other fine Co-ops on the West Coast, and be a full line grocery store for the community.

- The Co-op's next step was to create a strategic plan, which focused on growing the local economy, having a welcoming community store, spreading health and nutrition throughout the community, and having a thriving Co-op culture. The base of the strategic plan was the idea that they would expand the business so that they could be a full line grocery and operate as a professional grocer, as the current facility does not allow them to do that in many ways.
- The Board created site selection criteria and conducted two market studies in the last five years, commissioned by independent, third-party companies. The site needed to be highly visible, which meant it had to be on Marine Drive. If the Co-op expanded at its current location, sales would plateau at a level



far below what could be achieved at the proposed location. People expect grocery stores to be convenient and have lots of parking, so a pretty big parcel was needed. The search was exhaustive, and at first, the number of appropriate sites looked very limiting. The Board even held meetings at some of the sites being considered. The subject site is one of the finest pieces of land that could be used for the desired type of retail use, based on market research and working with Co-op peers throughout the country who have done similar expansions. The Co-op also has a developer partner who will invest significantly to make this project happen. The Co-op could not buy land, build a shell, and spend the money to turn it into a grocery store on its own. As a business that was not heavily capitalized, the Co-op did not have the means.

- A building size was chosen that was just big enough to turn the Co-op into what most people would consider a full line grocer. Services and products the community has asked for would be added, including a full service deli with hot food; indoor and outdoor seating areas, each with seating for 25; a full service meat department; local seafood; in-house meat processing; and more room to shop. The produce department does an amazing amount of sales, but it is a cramped little corner of the store and not conducive to an enjoyable shopping experience. Although the proposed size is double the 6,000 square feet currently allowed, it is still very small for a grocery store, and the store would still have a Co-op community feel.
  - The store will not be sprawling by any means; the actual retail square footage is less than 7,000 square feet. The rest will be for efficient operations, including a proper receiving area. Currently, deliveries are received out in the rain in front of what was meant to be an office suite. The current site was not set up to be an efficiently run grocery store.
- The Co-op is in a really competitive industry; natural foods are hyper-competitive. Competition is inevitable and a competitor is coming to Warrenton and this is the Co-op's response. Co-ops tend to grow slowly, so it has taken them a while, but they have come a long way.
- There will be a big impact to the local economy, as mentioned a bit in the Staff report. The Co-op is owned by members of the community, so no single entity would benefit from this project. Most recently, the Co-op went to its community members for investments, and raised more than \$1.6 million in a short amount of time. Those investors invested in this project as specifically described in this application, not in a generic co-op expansion. They took a risk that their public officials would see that this is a value to the community, which says a lot about how much support there is for this project. The Co-op is expecting about 35 new jobs from this new store. Many of those positions will be in the deli to make a lot of food in-house, which will bring a lot of value. The deli will make the Co-op a destination. People will want to come and hang out in the new Co-op more than they do now because currently, there is no place to sit, hang out, or park.
  - Wages would be more than \$16.00 an hour and the expansion would provide opportunities to grow careers at the Co-op. As the Co-op grows to a new level of sales, it will need to operate at a more mature level, so there will be more positions to fill. The Co-op will be able to provide more meaningful jobs that require more training, thus bringing more skill building opportunities into the community.
  - Producers are also a large part of the Co-op's strategic plan to grow the local economy. While the Co-op already does as much as possible in the existing small space, the plan is to expand its work with producers, especially in produce. Currently, the Co-op has such a tiny amount of shelf space that it cannot always merchandise produce from some small farms. And, there is no space to tell the stories about those farmers, which is necessary to educate people about the value of buying local products. Almost 20 percent of the Co-op's sales are from various local producers, which is a big number that circulates a lot of money in the local economy.
- The proposal is not unchecked development. The project is very intentional and connected to the community, and coming from the more than 4,000 community members who co-own the business.
- He noted that Paul Benoit, the Community Development Director when Mill Pond was being envisioned, worked with Art Demuro on this project. Mr. Benoit's letter not only confirmed that prime commercial property like this is really hard to find, but he affirmed also the property was always supposed to be something commercial, but the City wanted it to be something special. Thirty years ago, the City picked a number that would stop big box retailers; it was an experiment to try to create something special in Mill Pond. It is neat to hear that even Art Demuro, in Mr. Benoit's opinion, would have thought this could not be a better fit for what was envisioned there.
- This new, full-service Co-op will reflect and serve the Astoria community in a big way and it will improve quality of life in Astoria. He hoped the Planning Commission would approve making the Co-op a special part of the gateway into their awesome city.



Vice President Easom called for any testimony in favor of the application.

Stuart Bell, 240 Lincoln, Astoria, said he came to show his support for this project. He has been a member of the Co-op and its predecessor organization for more than 43 years. This community has shown its support and need for a natural foods store all during that time. The need is beyond the capabilities of the non-profit volunteer group that previously ran the Co-op for a long time. When the store became a true Co-op, a wonderful general manager was hired and the growth has been phenomenal. The need and interest in what this store would do has been abundantly demonstrated. He had read the letter by Mr. Benoit and was so pleased to see his support. The new Co-op will be such an asset for the entire community from an economic development aspect. Also, as people drive into Astoria from the east, they will say, 'Oh wow, I didn't know that was here.' The Commission has a quasi-judicial job to do, and he hoped they would facilitate the development of this store in every possible way.

Tammy Krushank, 1025 Franklin, Astoria, urged the Commission to support the proposed amendments and pass them on to City Council. She became a member of the Co-op before she moved to Astoria because, it was important for her to find the foods and products that she wanted. As a visitor, the Co-op is very difficult to find in its current location. She looked forward to people seeing the store as they came into town on Highway 30, particularly those who do not expect it be there. This Co-op will expand employment, which is very important. It will not be just for an elite or specific use for people to spend thousands of dollars as they get farther down the coast. It will provide important jobs here. It represents a welcoming site. She frequently walks around Mill Pond, which connects her to the Riverwalk. The vacant lots at this proposed site have attracted their fair share of garbage. Putting something on that land will limit the amount of misuse. Once a week, she delivers meals to several seniors who live in Mill Pond, and one is a member of the Co-op. The new facility will be within walking distance for people who live in Mill Pond. It will be more than just a grocery store as it will also provide amenities to have a cup of coffee or a meal within easy walking distance from the apartments where a large number of seniors live. The expansion of this store is needed by the people who live here and in the surrounding area. It offers competitive pricing in terms of what is available at general grocery stores, but also continues to offer many items that cannot be purchased elsewhere on the north coast. The expansion promises even more such items will become available. The new Co-op will only improve the quality of life in Astoria.

Jim Wilkins, 101 W. Grand, Astoria, said he was involved when Art Demuro bought the Mill Pond property, which was a dirty wasteland with debris left behind by the old plywood mill. With his men and equipment, and Mr. Demuro's money, the property was cleaned up, and utilities, streets and sidewalks were installed. They knew the southern portion, the portion being discussed now, would eventually be developed, but they did not know how. He stubbed out the utilities for the property, so the Co-op will be able to hook up to water and sewer.

Danny Rasmussen, 92076 Svensen Market Road, Astoria, Produce Manager, Astoria Co-op, said he moved to Astoria about six years ago and was not sure he would stay. When he was hired at the Co-op, he did not know anything about food or grocery stores, but the wonderful staff taught him so many wonderful things. His eyes were opened to the complicated food world. He was also educated by the wonderful member owners about what food looks like and a better way of buying and consuming food. Five years later, he is still in Astoria. He bought a home and started a small farm. He owes that mostly to the Co-op instilling food values in him. As a manager in the store, he wants to pass those values on to current and future employees. They work very hard to develop their employee's skills by sending them to conferences, so they can bring home ideas about what a good local food economy looks like. They have an amazing staff, but it is difficult to develop them in their current space. Their lives would be a lot easier with a full line grocery store where they could eliminate the daily quirks that come with the current site. He believed the greatest foods were the fruits and vegetables that come from local farms. The Co-op only has a couple hundred square feet of retail space in their produce department, so every day, especially in the summer, he has to make decisions about which local farm he can carry each day. Last year, the Co-op spent about \$40,000 on local produce from farmers within 30 miles of Astoria. That number could grow if they had a larger, dedicated space for produce. The farmers rely on the Co-op for their livelihoods and the Co-op relies on the farmers to make the store special. The Co-op can grow the local farm scene if farmers are given a larger space to sell their goods.

Michael Cameron-Latteck, 1820 SE 3<sup>rd</sup> Street, Astoria, said he was a member of the Co-op and a local business owner. His cafe works with a lot of the same farmers, growers, and producers as the Co-op. He would not have discovered some of those growers without the Co-op. The Co-op provides a year-round marketplace for some of the growers. Astoria has a seasonal farmer's market, but the market does not have a way to connect growers



with customers in the winter. This area, from Puget Island to Nehalem, is an incredibly vibrant and growing community of growers. A lot of things can be grown on the north coast. As the Staff report stated, almost 40 cents of every dollar is reinvested in the local economy. So, this Co-op is more than a thriving business wanting to expand and provide more jobs. It is also a marketplace for local growers, which are small businesses run by local families. Providing space for a larger Co-op creates a larger marketplace for local farmers. This is a very important stimulant to the increasing number of growers who want to do business with local restaurants. The Co-op serves as a hub where people can connect. There is also a market for people to buy local produce and meat. If the Co-op could not provide a larger framework to showcase these incredibly hardworking farmers, the growth of both the Co-op and some local farmers would be stifled.

Allie Evans, 388 Exchange, Astoria, President, Astoria Co-op Board, stated the Board has been working on this plan for the past five years as a vision to do what they do better, more efficiently, and to have a greater impact. Each step of the way, the Board has asked people for help and insight to make sure it was doing more than its due diligence. It has been remarkable to see how much has gone into every decision the Board has made. Every detail, including the size of the store, is far from arbitrary, but is very deliberate and very well researched. The Board decided to develop a strategic plan because they did not have a map of where they were headed. The strategic plan answered questions about why the Co-op does what it does. Obviously, they want to run a great business, but more than that, they have a purpose for existing. Most Board members agreed the Co-op was a hub. When she travels, she always visits the Co-op first so she can figure out what to eat, what the theater has going on, and cool places to visit. The Astoria Co-op can be so much more than a grocery store. It can be the center point that allows a community to gather together in a society where people are very isolated. Their vision is to get more people together. The Co-op model is like swimming upstream in a very corporate world. So, to be growing at the rate the Co-op is growing, compared to other Co-ops, is remarkable. The Board wants the City to let it do more of what it was doing, do it better, and help it build more of a hub.

Anne Robindot, 3735 Grand, Astoria, said she was a member of the Co-op. After she turned 30, she decided it was time for her to find a small town to spend the rest of her life. She knew of Astoria from her childhood. One of her requirements was that the small town had to have a food Co-op. At one point, she was on the Co-op staff as a manager and is now an investor. She has seen the amount of methodical detail that has gone into this plan and has had extensive conversations with the Co-op's staff about the plans. She believed the staff did their homework. The Co-op's vision to continue to see the store expand and bring all of the goodness in the groceries and the community to Astoria also continues to be a passion of hers.

Venus Weller, 239 Kensington, Astoria, Astoria Co-op Board member, said the Co-op is going into this space with the intent it was envisioned for. As a health educator, she sees the benefits of eating good food and the sense of community that the Co-op provides. The site is in close proximity to senior living apartments and that access is incredibly important. As people ask about the Co-op, the biggest concern is the traffic. She believed the due diligence had been done. People doubt that predictions can be made out so far, but Astoria is growing and that is exciting. Every year, the traffic gets worse. But in the grand scheme of things, the Co-op does not have traffic. She works at the hospital and traffic was a big issue with the expansion of the pavilion and cancer center. However, traffic has not been the issue that people imagined. It is exciting that the community is growing, but the other exciting part is that people can walk. Walking on the Riverwalk and downtown is what makes this community amazing. Many people chose to live in Astoria because they do not want to live in the suburbs. People want a place to gather, sit, and meet people. She encouraged the Commission to approve the request.

Angela Sidlo, 516 Summit, Gearhart, said she has been an Astoria Co-op Board member for the last couple of years, but her Co-op culture goes back 40 years. Every place she has lived, she has been part of a co-op community. She connected with communities by looking for co-ops along the way and exposing her kids to the co-op culture as well. She has been through the strategic planning part of this project. The Board really came together to work hard with the help of their governing body that helped build other co-ops. She is also a health coach. It is important to have a co-op so she can help people achieve health. Her tag line is 'healthy individuals create healthy communities.' This is an opportunity to expand on that by providing good food and good jobs so that people can find their roots in Astoria. She knew the Commission would review all of the information and make the right decision. She appreciated the Commission's service to the community.

Todd Holm, 1237 Alameda, Astoria, said he had been an Astoria Co-op Board member for the past few years. He could not think of a better jewel for this community at the gateway. This will provide great jobs, support farmers, and bring greatness to the community. He thanked the Planning Commissioners for their consideration.



Vice President Easom called for any testimony impartial to the application.

Don Patterson, 1635 SW 14<sup>th</sup> Warrenton, said he owned a gas station property in Astoria. He did not have a problem with the Co-op, but was not a member. The transportation studies are not correct. The reason only five cars go out of the property between 4:15 pm and 5:15 pm is because it is so difficult to get out of there. He was able to make a left hand turn out of his store today, but eight months out of the year, it is a problem. During those eight months, he drives through Mill Pond and did not take the route the study cited. Just because the traffic study, the State, DKS, and the City say one thing, he sees the traffic problems on a daily basis. He has been in the grocery business for 40 years and knows that the busiest time of the day at a grocery store is between 3:30 pm and 5:30 pm. Taking a left from Marine Drive to 23<sup>rd</sup> Street was not mentioned. That intersection is just past the entrance to the hospital and also needs to be considered. He has seen the police do stings on the crosswalk at that intersection. He has seen wrecks and people almost getting hit. Something needs to be done at that intersection because it will be a problem. He was nervous about the parking. A lot of the hospital traffic parks on 23<sup>rd</sup> Street and the Co-op employees would probably also park somewhere in the area.

Pamela Wev, 1566 Irving, Astoria, said she was a land use planning consultant. She was sorry that this discussion was centered so much on the Co-op. She believed everyone agreed the Co-op is one of Astoria's most wonderful things; however, this is a zoning map amendment; it is not about the Co-op. It is not an occupancy or development permit, but a zoning change. Anytime a zone line is moved, it should always be according to a property line. She hoped that if this request was approved, the Planning Commission would add a condition that the property owner make a lot line adjustment and create a legal parcel for the edge of the zone's boundary. Any time the zone is moved, the other side of that zone must be considered. Zoning is not for six months or a year. Zoning is done for 20 years in Oregon, so, the City must consider what ought to happen on the other side of the parcel and nearby parcels. When responding to this application for a specific use that is not even addressed when the zoning map is addressed, the Commission's action has nothing to do with the Co-op. This application is about what the City is designing on the land. She hoped the Commission would take that 20 to 30 year view of this location and consider the whole scene.

Vice President Easom called for any testimony opposed to the application.

John Ryan, 2495 Mill Pond Way, Astoria, said he lives just north of the property and had submitted written comments. He agreed this was not a question about the Co-op, it is a question about the zoning. This project impacts the community of Mill Pond as much as anything else. The traffic in the area is just horrendous in the summer time. Drivers cannot move down Mill Pond Lane. He was an engineer and was familiar with traffic studies, but he was not a traffic engineer. The entire traffic study is based on statistics that work throughout the country, but do not work in Astoria. The City needs to take a look at the real impact to Mill Pond, which will be impacted by whatever happens on that property. There was nothing in the area when he built there and he understood construction happens. However, he thought Wauna Bank would be built on that property. Now, the zoning will change to allow many other things to be built there. If this project does not happen, which is always a possibility because the Co-op cannot guarantee anything, no one knows what would go on the property. Residents moved in to Mill Pond on certain parameters. This building will be double the 6,000 square feet allowed, but it could go up to 14,000 square feet without any other zoning. And if the Co-op goes to 14,000 they will have to put apartments on top of the building. Apartments are not like retail. People live in apartments but everyone in town would go to a retail use. The two uses are completely different. Mill Pond is impacted by all of the other lands in the area. The museum is doing the auto shop. The freight line and Napa are moving out. What will happen to that area? The community needs the zoning and the Commission to look at the total picture regarding what will happen to Mill Pond. The neighborhood is locked in by the highway, which is impossible because the traffic backs up to downtown sometimes at 5:00 pm when drivers are trying to get out of town. The whole area will be so impacted by whatever happens to that piece of property. He needed the Commission to take his concerns into mind when making a decision. The Co-op is asking for this zone change, but this is a larger issue than just the Co-op. The Co-op is not on the property yet. The Co-op is a great organization and they have given all the reasons why this should happen, but moving in there is always a big maybe. Mill Pond needs to be considered as a unique community in Astoria and should be protected by the City.

Ron Sweet, 2879 Mill Pond Lane, Astoria, said he was against the application, not the Co-op. He serves on the Mill Pond Homeowner's Association Design Review Committee, which reviewed and rejected an application for this project. The traffic impact on the Mill Pond residences adjacent to the Co-op property would be severe. All of



the vehicular traffic will be routed down 23<sup>rd</sup> and on to a small street 16 feet wide and into the parking lot. This is the only way in and out of the residences. He asked the Commission to take this into consideration. He recommended the traffic be routed off 23<sup>rd</sup> Street, but has been told the City has reasons this would not be possible. However, the City can change its rules just as it can change the zoning. If traffic can be rerouted off 23<sup>rd</sup> Street, the Mill Pond Design Review Committee would support the request.

Tricia Long, 280 Maritime Lane, Astoria, said she lived in Columbia Landing, which is a development locked by the in and out traffic between the Police and Fire Departments and the Pepsi plant. There is another way in to her neighborhood through Mill Pond, which she uses quite a bit. She understood the concerns about how to get into the proposed Co-op. She is a Co-op member and was not against the Co-op; however, she could not understand how she would be able to get into the Co-op through the proposed routes. Without having the information mentioned in the document, she could not understand the impact of the traffic to the overall area. Mill Pond, Columbia Landing, and the senior living apartments would all be impacted by traffic. She wanted to know if the Co-op could still build on the upper section of this property if the zoning request were denied. She clarified with Staff the exact location of the proposed Co-op on the map, and asked if there were any other zoning options than what was proposed. She agreed this is a zoning question, not about supporting or not supporting the Co-op. She asked what was wrong with keeping the existing zoning. She reiterated she was not against the Co-op, but she wanted answers to her questions about the use of the area and the impact.

Vice President Easom called for a recess at 8:24 pm and reconvened the Planning Commission meeting at 8:33 pm. He called for the Applicant's rebuttal.

Ms. Bunch agreed with comments about this not being about the Co-op, but the application. The Commission has an application for a zoning map amendment and a text amendment. The application demonstrated and Staff has concurred that the proposal meets the requirements for a recommendation from the Planning Commission to City Council. The application should be evaluated on its own merits without consideration of the overall development of the surrounding area and other parcels. If the City was interested in doing that, a special overlay zone should be created to make requirements for a large area of development. Several people have testified that this property has always been intended for commercial development. The site plans for when Wauna planned to develop the property showed access from Steam Whistle Way. Steam Whistle Way and the road through Mill Pond are public streets and the public is allowed to use these public streets. She and Mr. Vallaster have not received an official rejection of their proposal to the Mill Pond Homeowner's Association Design Review Committee. They are still in communication with, working with, and meeting with the Association, discussing design aspects of the project. These discussions will continue in the City's design review process, which is required. She asked that the Commission stay focused on the merits of the application for the zoning map and text amendments.

Mr. Stanley stated this is about the Co-op. The Co-op does not have a Plan B. They have done an incredible amount of due diligence looking for a retail site that would work and this site is the one. The Co-op will lose its investments if this request does not move forward. The business would be seriously jeopardized. Part of the Mill Pond Plan was that the area would be walkable. People who chose to purchase land next to a commercial lot knew this impact was always a possibility. Up to four, 6,000 square foot spaces could have been built on the site, and traffic would have been generated by those stores. This will allow most of the people in Mill Pond to walk to a very nice grocery store that will have better pricing than it does now. The store will have healthy options for deli foods, hot soups, and sandwiches made with local and organic ingredients. The new Co-op will ultimately increase property values. Traffic is a reality that everyone deals with. He currently walks to work, but the new store is an extra half mile from his house. However, people who are getting a large load of groceries will probably have to drive to the Co-op. The services and co-op community will make that drive worth it.

Ms. Bunch added that in early discussions about the text amendments and zone changes, she and consultant Rosemary Johnson had talked about recommending a condition of approval that if the Co-op had not met the definition of substantial construction within two years, the City would initiate a rezone to change the zoning back to AH-MP. The Applicants would also welcome a condition of approval requiring the property line adjustment.

Mr. Stanley noted that the Co-op's lease contains excluded uses on the adjacent property. The lease is more detailed than the zoning requirements. The Co-op wants to be a good neighbor and will continue to work with the homeowner's association to work out the details of their concerns.



Vice President Easom called for closing comments from Staff.

Planner Morgan recommended including the conditions of approval requiring the lot line adjustment and substantial construction within two years.

Vice President Easom closed the public hearing and called for Commission discussion and deliberation.

Commissioner Mitchell said she wanted the Co-op in that location, but was concerned about the traffic issues. About a year ago, the Traffic Safety Committee discussed the use of the street with the neighborhood. The street is public, but it was not built to standards that would accommodate two-way traffic with parking on both sides.

Planner Morgan stated the street was 20 feet wide from curb to curb. Without parking on either side, the width is acceptable to the Fire and Engineering Departments.

Commissioner Mitchell said there is a difference between acceptable to the Fire Department and the travel lane being 12 feet wide and it needs to be discussed. For four or five months out of the year, there are days when traffic is backed up. It would have been nice if the design dealt with that on site, instead of counting on using the back road, which is a service road to the garages of the houses.

Commissioner Henri asked that the site plan be displayed on the screen. She works for an architecture and engineering firm that works on transportation projects. She believes the traffic studies were very neutral, which was part of the professional ethic. Just because the Applicant requested the study, does not mean the study is biased in any way. However, she was uncomfortable with not knowing what day in September the study was completed because Astoria still has some tourism in early September; however, in late September, after school has started, tourism dies down quite a bit. One of the letters opposed to the request suggested the City require a traffic light. She believed this should be considered as a condition of approval. Establishing the legal lot line and the two-year time limit are good ideas. She worked on a solid bridge construction project in Portland for two or three years. While on site, she would go to the New Seasons in Sellwood, which was a similar size to the proposed Co-op. Sellwood is small and crowded. There was one entrance/exit to the New Seasons on the main street and one entrance/exit on a private street for deliveries. The area was always very crowded at lunch time and during the evening rush hour as people were grocery shopping on their way home. It could be hard to find a parking space, but there was already traffic. Sellwood traffic would slow down from something up the route or down the route and getting in and out of New Seasons was not that big of a deal because you were in the flow of traffic anyway. She would often exit the parking lot via the private drive, which was a narrow residential street with parking on both sides, just like Steam Whistle Way. People were incredibly considerate. Delivery trucks were all over the place and she could still get through. The traffic never seemed like a huge deal, even with all of the lane closures and congestion due to the bridge construction. This project is possible, and DKS is a professional, impartial company. The site is great and if she lived in the neighborhood, she would be thrilled to have the Co-op come in. She believed the Co-op would be a good neighbor.

Commissioner Herman said she was concerned about the traffic. She did not believe anyone could turn left heading east on to Marine Drive in the summer. If she lived on the east side of town, she would not drive into Astoria just to go to the Co-op. She would head west to find an easier way to turn around. However, the property is commercial and a prime commercial spot. She could not think of a better business to be on that property. The Co-op is a serious business and had not raised \$1.6 million just to back out of this project. The City can reverse the zone change if the Co-op does back out and substantial construction has not begun in two years. She supported the request.

Commissioner Moore clarified that the AH-MP zone is not a commercial zone, but a mixed-use zone. Limited commercial uses are allowed, but so are residential and professional uses. The parcel is complicated. The zone has its own restrictions, but the property is also within the Gateway Overlay Zone and Civic Greenway Zone. Both overlay zones impose significant construction hurdles for any development, like building massing requirements that make a single-story building very difficult to build without a significant variance. The Civic Greenway imposes height restrictions that limit multi-story options. Those hurdles will remain regardless of the zoning. His biggest concern was for the neighborhood. Conditional uses for the AH-MP zone are designed to control impacts to the neighborhood. The amended LS zone would allow this commercial use outright and the neighborhood would lose that control. He agreed the City should refrain from rezoning half of a parcel, so he would require a lot line adjustment. Approving an amended LS zone that only applies to one property



unnecessarily complicates the Development Code. He recommended the Commission deny the request. Any commercial use in the Mill Pond neighborhood needs to be a conditional use.

Commissioner Cameron-Lattek believed the Commission recognized the contribution of a business like the Co-op. This request feels drastic and complicated, and she would need a significant reason to approve a request like this one. The economic benefits provided by the Co-op include good family wage jobs and benefits to the food community, which is growing in this area. That makes her feel more comfortable about being flexible with the zoning for this project. The Advance Astoria Project supports economic development policies that allow more flexibility in zoning when there are good economic reasons to do so.

Vice President Easom stated he was concerned with rezoning a piece of a parcel for one business. He was also concerned about the traffic, but said traffic issues would exist regardless of what is developed on that property. Three, 6,000 square foot buildings could generate even more traffic than the Co-op. Traffic in that area is worse than it's ever been, but Astoria is growing. He was undecided on this request.

Commissioner Mitchell added that she believed the Co-op was a wonderful use for that site. However, she wondered why the proposed portion of the lot was chosen. If the building were situated differently on the lot, there could be more room to go in and out of the property without using Steam Whistle Way. This would impact 23<sup>rd</sup> Street, but the site needs more space to allow drivers to get to the Co-op without going through Mill Pond. She assumed there were reasons that the building would not face the street.

Planner Ferber said orientation, massing, and to some extent access are reviewed during the design review process. Access should be discussed as part of the zone change, but the Co-op site plan is not currently a consideration.

Commissioner Mitchell believed access to the site was important regardless of what is built on the site.

Commissioner Henri asked where accesses would be located if three smaller retail uses were built with the existing zoning requirements. She also wanted to know why the Applicant proposed access from 23<sup>rd</sup> Street. Planner Morgan explained the loading zone would need access from 23<sup>rd</sup> Street. Because of the size of the building, it would not be possible to provide separate accesses to the parking and loading zone. There are other design options. The site plan for Wauna Credit Union had access to the property from 23<sup>rd</sup> Street. The bariatric/memory care facility had two designs, one of which had access from Steam Whistle.

Commissioner Herman clarified that she had meant to say the property was a prime location with excellent frontage and visibility. She understood the request was to change the zoning and the proposed use was not currently allowed outright. This is the most visible piece of vacant land available for commercial use in Astoria. Therefore, she believed the City would receive other requests, even if the property is difficult to develop. The City would be better off going with a business the community knows and is local. The property will be developed commercially. Planner Morgan added that the vacant parcel east of the proposed store can only be accessed from Steam Whistle because ODOT does not allow access from Highway 30.

Commissioner Cameron-Lattek asked if ODOT would be required to install a traffic light. Planner Morgan said ODOT has indicated that a light is not warranted. It was a long and difficult battle to get the traffic light at Safeway and the City ended up paying for a large portion of that project.

Commissioner Mitchell added the Safeway light is part of the reason traffic backs up. Traffic lights are not always a helpful solution and they are very expensive. Cities need to charge adjacent uses for part of a traffic light's expense. She did not believe a traffic light would help in this situation. ODOT wanted to put a traffic light by the bridge, but Astoria fought for the round-a-bout.

Commissioner Henri said slowing down traffic could help facilitate entering and exiting the property. The main concern is for the residences on Steam Whistle Way. Three of the parcels directly across from the proposed site are currently empty.

Vice President Easom called for a straw poll. Commissioners Henri, Cameron-Lattek, Mitchell, Herman and Vice President Easom supported the request. Commissioner Moore was opposed. Vice President Easom also



supported additional conditions of approval allowing the zoning to revert back if construction had not begun in two years and requiring a lot line adjustment.

Commissioner Moore said allowing the zoning to revert back is an indication that the rezone should not be approved. This decision is about a property, not a business. The request is overly complicating and unnecessary. The decision is not a reflection of the Co-op.

Commissioner Cameron-Lattek stated this was also a decision about the development of the community. The two-year rule does feel awkward, but it accomplishes what the Commission wants.

Commissioner Mitchell added development of the community was complicated by the fact that a State highway went through town.

Commissioner Henri said she agreed with Commissioner Cameron-Lattek about the two-year requirement.

Commissioner Herman moved that the Astoria Planning Commission adopt the Findings and Conclusions contained in the Staff report, approve Amendment A17-02 by Garry Vallaster, Astor Venture, LLC, and recommend adoption by the City Council, with the following additional conditions of approval:

- If significant construction has not begun within two years, the LS zone would revert back to the AH-MP zone.
- The Applicant shall obtain a lot line adjustment.

Seconded by Commissioner Cameron-Lattek. Motion passed 5 to 1. Ayes: Vice President Easom, Commissioners Mitchell, Henri, Herman, and Cameron-Lattek. Nays: Commissioner Moore

Vice President Easom read the rules of appeal into the record.

President Fitzpatrick returned to the dais.

#### REPORTS OF OFFICERS/COMMISSIONERS:

Commissioner Moore stated the next Planning Commission meeting would include a work session to discuss the Code amendments he had proposed.

#### STAFF UPDATES:

Planner Morgan confirmed Commissioners had a copy of the Code amendments proposed by Commissioner Moore, noting that the work session had been scheduled for February 27, 2018.

MISCELLANEOUS: None

#### PUBLIC COMMENTS:

There were no public comments.

#### ADJOURNMENT:

There being no further business, the meeting was adjourned at 9:09 pm.

#### **APPROVED:**

  
City Planner