

ASTORIA TRAFFIC SAFETY ADVISORY COMMITTEE

Astoria City Hall

January 28, 2014

CALL TO ORDER:

President Nemlowill called the meeting to order at 7:00 p.m.

ROLL CALL:

Commissioners Present: President Zetty Nemlowill, Vice President McLaren Innes, Thor Norgaard, Peter Gimre, David Pearson, and Sean Fitzpatrick

Commissioners Absent: Ron Williams

Staff Present: Community Development Director/Assistant City Manager Brett Estes, Planner Rosemary Johnson, City Attorney Blair Henningsgaard, and Engineering Technician Steve Ruggles, City Engineer Jeff Harrington. The meeting is recorded and will be transcribed by ABC Transcription Services, Inc.

APPROVAL OF MINUTES:

Vice President Innes noted the minutes were dated November 26, 2014, while the agenda stated November 28, 2014. Director Estes clarified that the date on the minutes was correct.

Vice President Innes moved that the Traffic Safety Committee approve the minutes of November 26, 2014 as presented, seconded by Commissioner Pearson. Motion passed unanimously.

City Engineer Jeff Harrington arrived at 7:02 p.m.

Engineer Harrington updated the new Commissioners about the purpose of the Traffic Safety Committee, the Committees activities over the last year and what has been planned for the upcoming year. City Staff is always accessible when concerns require immediate attention. Staff appreciates the opportunity to solve problems outside of Traffic Safety Committee meetings; however, the meetings are a good forum to address bigger issues. He reviewed steps taken within the last year to mitigate pedestrian safety issues, which include new signs and upgrades to crosswalks. Grants from the Oregon Department of Transportation (ODOT) would help fund many of the pedestrian safety projects throughout town. In 2014, the City will be working with ODOT on the "Pedestrian Ahead" signage at all three entrances to town. ODOT is currently evaluating the best locations for each sign. The City is also working on pedestrian improvements at the East Mooring Basin boat ramp, where the boats cross the Riverwalk. Staff would like to have this issue resolved before the next fishing season begins. While grant money from ODOT has been approved for some of these projects, the money may not be received right away. Astoria is in line to receive funds and Staff will work to obtain funding as quickly as possible. He explained that pedestrian safety issues are about driver and pedestrian behavior, which are not unique to Astoria. He distributed copies of an article for the Commission's review that explains how driver and pedestrian behaviors lead to accidents.

Director Estes stated the draft Transportation Systems Plan (TSP) has been recommended by the steering committee to the Planning Commission. A public hearing has been scheduled before the Planning Commission for February 27, 2014. A recommendation to City Council for public hearing is anticipated in March and April 2014. Planner Johnson added the Commission should receive copies of the large packet of information about three weeks prior to the February 27 meeting.

Engineer Harrington noted that all pedestrian safety issues discussed by the Traffic Safety Committee have been forwarded to the TSP consultants and addressed in the TSP. Many project recommendations involve pedestrian safety improvements.

REPORTS OF OFFICERS/COMMISSIONERS: No reports.

PUBLIC COMMENT:

Libby Lawrence, 97221 Asmo Road, Astoria, asked if there was a plan to get pedestrians and bicyclists safely from the high school to the new sports facility.

Engineer Harrington replied a project is planned to provide pedestrian access from the high school to the Short Stop Mini Mart. Director Estes noted the City is still awaiting approval of a grant by the Oregon Transportation Commission, but it appears as if the City will be awarded the funds. Engineer Harrington explained the project would fill the gap of missing sidewalk from the high school to the Mini Mart. The TSP recommends pedestrian infill projects that focus on getting a route around town. The TSP consultant was asked by staff to review how much of a pedestrian access improvement could be legally required. They stated that they felt the City could not require the school district to fund a full connection. Staff has been considering several options to provide access to the sports complex.

Director Estes added Staff and pedestrian advocates have been discussing trail connection opportunities, such as connecting Shively Park across Williamsport Road to the sports complex. The advocates have offered to help the Parks Department in facilitating the project. The community, school district, Parks Department, and other pedestrian advocates are looking for ways to get pedestrians to the sports complex through a set of trails.

Engineer Harrington noted the school would look at transporting students to the sports complex for games. The City is addressing spectators that will be going to the game. Sight distance improvements will be done where the Shively Park Trail intersects Williamsport Road. This will create the opportunity to put pedestrian access in that area, which will require a crosswalk. Using Pipeline Road would require pedestrians to cross at the intersection by the treatment plant, which is a concern. However, the network of trails is extensive and ties to the middle school so opportunities for connections exist.

Ms. Lawrence stated that pedestrian access between the high school and sports complex would be specifically for people who do not drive or do not have access to cars, like students. She believed the superintendent's comment begging people not to walk was a short-term solution. She wanted the City to pursue a variety of safe and effective pedestrian options to get many different groups of people to the sports complex.

President Nemlowill understood the issue would not be addressed in the TSP, but that the City has opportunities to resolve the issue. ODOT is not able assist, but she supports the concept.

Vice President Innes assumed a lot of energy has gone into resolving this issue and agreed work on the project should continue. Engineer Harrington welcomed anyone with ideas to volunteer. Director Estes noted the Parks Department and the school district may need to coordinate their efforts to secure grants to build the trail. He added that Engineer Harrington would be considering appropriate crosswalk locations while doing sight distance improvements on Williamsport Road. Community projects may also be necessary.

Commissioner Fitzpatrick asked if the access road to the power lines could be used as part of the trail. Engineer Harrington replied the trail that comes out of Shively Park goes through to the access road but it is on private property. The property owner may be willing to grant a pedestrian easement. However, it may also be possible to cut near Williamsport Road and stay on City-owned property in that area. The current curve correction cut would result in a big bench, creating a great surface for a trail. However, crosswalks must be kept out of the intersection because 60 percent of the traffic is busses that come off Highway 202. Sight distance improvements will allow drivers to see a few hundred feet. Advance crosswalk signs will alert drivers that there is a pedestrian crosswalk is ahead.

President Nemlowill suggested the discussion continue at the next meeting. Engineer Harrington agreed this is an important issue, adding that the Shively Park Trail looks promising because it is currently well used. Crossing at the bottom of the trail would be much safer than crossing at the top.

Drew Herzig, 628 Klaskanine Avenue, Astoria, noted his earlier inquiry about converting Taylor Street from a one-way street to a two-way street. Staff had indicated, and ODOT confirmed, this would not be possible because the street had been narrowed. However, the flow of traffic on the one-way street could be changed to flow north to south, which would solve problems for drivers trying to cross Marine Drive from Hamburg Circle and vice versa. He asked the Committee to consider converting Taylor Street from northbound to southbound traffic.

Director Estes stated Staff had discussed this with ODOT, who noted the City's only dump station for recreational vehicles is on Taylor Street. If the direction of traffic were reversed, the dump station would be on the wrong side for the recreational vehicles to use the station. ODOT said they could make the change at that location but it would pose concerns for longer vehicles turning off Marine Drive south to make the corner. It was doable, but these are the logistics to consider.

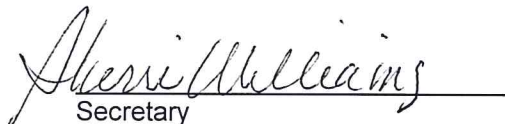
Mr. Herzig said he expected to receive objections due to the dumpsite. He respectfully asked the Committee to look into the issue because drivers on Hamburg Circle feel very unsafe when trying to turn on to Marine Drive. He asked the Committee to direct Staff to look at possibly reversing the direction of traffic on Taylor Street from north to south. Director Estes noted this information was considered in the TSP update as the concern was also heard during that update process.

Mr. Herzig stated some merchants have asked him what happened with his request for ODOT speed trailers on Marine Drive. He believed there must have been a misunderstanding as he had not requested permanent placements of these signs, but the free loan of temporary trailers from ODOT that are placed along the roadside. He recalled a previous Traffic Safety Committee meeting where Staff reported they did not intend to install permanent signs, so he thought there was a misunderstanding. He is still being asked about placing a temporary speed trailer on Marine Drive. He noted the permanent electronic sign on West Klaskanine, near Alameda in the Coast Guard housing. The sign is effective because it has been placed on a downward slope where it is easy to speed. He believed this type of sign would be appropriate on 16th Street, coming down from the college. The sign is slim, unobtrusive, and solar powered. Part of the problem with pedestrian and driver safety behavior is getting the word out. It is difficult to get the *Daily Astorian* interested in a story on this topic. However, he believed that Donna Quinn's program on KMUN would be a good place for a Committee member or Staff to talk about driving while distracted and things the City was initiating, such as the new Continental crosswalks. This could be an effective way of getting the message out to some people.

ADJOURNMENT:

There being no further business, the meeting was adjourned at 7:29 p.m.

ATTEST:


Secretary

APPROVED:


Community Development Director /
Assistant City Manager