

ASTORIA PLANNING COMMISSION MEETING

Astoria City Hall
February 27, 2014

CALL TO ORDER:

President Nemlowill called the meeting to order at 6:30 p.m.

ROLL CALL:

Commissioners Present: President Zetty Nemlowill, Vice President McLaren Innes, David Pearson and Sean Fitzpatrick

Commissioners Excused: Thor Norgaard, Ron Williams and Peter Gimre

Staff and Others Present: Community Development Director Brett Estes, Planner Rosemary Johnson, and City Engineer Assistant Nathan Crater; Consultants Matt Hastie, Angelo Planning Group and Chris Maciejewski, DKS Associates. The meeting is recorded and will be transcribed by ABC Transcription Services, Inc.

APPROVAL OF MINUTES:

ITEM 3(a): January 7, 2014

ITEM 3(b): January 28, 2014

Commissioner Fitzpatrick noted a correction on the January 7, 2014 minutes to Page 5, Paragraph 1, Marie Johnson should be identified as "LaRee Johnson ...".

Vice President Innes corrected Page 7, last sentence of the January 28, 2014 minutes under Adjournment to state, "There being no further business, President Nemlowill adjourned the work session at 9:30 p.m."

Commissioner Fitzpatrick stated on Page 6, Paragraph 4, he stated that his comments were taken out of context in the following statement. "Commissioner Fitzpatrick said he preferred the development be implemented as a planned unit development (PUD)..." He clarified that he meant if he were to develop a similar project, he would implement a PUD. He said in the future, he would be clear about whether he was speaking as an individual or as a Commissioner. Director Estes stated Staff would make the clarification in the minutes to Page 6, Paragraph 4, Sentence 4: "Commissioner Fitzpatrick said, as a developer himself, he preferred".

Vice President Innes moved that the Astoria Planning Commission approve the minutes of January 7, 2014 and January 28, 2014 with the changes noted; seconded by Commissioner Pearson. Motion passed unanimously.

PUBLIC HEARINGS:

President Nemlowill 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):

CU14-01 Conditional Use CU14-01 by Nancy Karacand to operate a one bedroom home stay lodging with owner occupancy at the same time as guests in an existing single family dwelling at 1293 15th Street in the R-1 zone.

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

Planner Johnson reviewed the written Staff report. No written correspondence had been received, but Staff did receive a phone call from a neighbor of the Applicant in support of the application. Staff recommended approval of the request with the Conditions listed in the Staff report.

Vice President Innes asked where guests would park. Planner Johnson explained that a paved area, which has been measured, has ample space for two vehicles. The Applicant also has a garage. Vehicles can park on the Applicant's property parallel to the street or in the paved driveway, which encroaches into the right-of-way, but is still beyond the curb. Ample parking is available.

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

Nancy Karacand, 1293 15th Street, Astoria, thanked Planner Johnson for structuring the application in a way that covered all of the bases. She said she is the homeowner and is very responsible. She did not want guests on her property when she is not there because she cares about her property. She has spoken to her neighbors and they have been supportive.

President Nemlowill called for any testimony in favor of, impartial to, or opposed to the application. Hearing none, she closed the public hearing and called Commission discussion and deliberation.

Commissioners Pearson, Fitzpatrick, and Vice President Innes said they supported the application.

President Nemlowill believed the application was good, but was concerned about the long-term effect of these types of rentals. The Comprehensive Plan states neighborhoods should be protected from unnecessary intrusions and incompatible uses. Collectively and over time in Astoria, these types of rentals could change the neighborhoods. She recognized that she would be outvoted, as she did not support the application.

Commissioner Pearson moved that the Astoria Planning Commission adopt the Findings and Conclusions contained in the Staff report and approve Conditional Use 14-01 by Nancy Karacand, with conditions; seconded by Commissioner Fitzpatrick. Motion passed 3 to 1. Ayes: Vice President Innes, Commissioner Fitzpatrick, and Commissioner Pearson. Nays: President Nemlowill

President Nemlowill read the rules of appeal into the record.

ITEM 4(b):

A14-01 Amendment A14-01 by the Community Development Department, City of Astoria, to adopt the 2014 Transportation System Plan (TSP); adopt implementing ordinances in the Comprehensive Plan, Development Code, and City Code. The Planning Commission recommendation will be forwarded to City Council tentatively scheduled on April 7, 2014 at the City Council meeting at 7:00 p.m. for public hearing at 1095 Duane Street.

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

Planner Johnson reviewed the written Staff report. Copies of the Staff report were made available for the audience. Since the draft Transportation System Plan (TSP) was mailed to Commissioners, Section L, Tech Memo 11 of the TSP has been updated. The update was mailed to Commissioners with the staff report separate from the Plan. The updates identified potential code amendments and discussions about those amendments. A letter of support from the Astoria Downtown Historic District Association (ADHDA) was included in the Staff report. Staff recommended approval of the request.

Director Estes noted that Staff worked directly with the Oregon Department of Transportation (ODOT) and the State Department of Land Conservation and Development (DLCD) to develop the document and review the Findings. Staff understood that ODOT and DLCD were comfortable with the entire document. This public hearing would be ODOT's and DLCD's first opportunity to raise any concerns and Staff understood they had no concerns.

President Nemlowill recalled that at the last Traffic Safety Committee meeting, a member of the public spoke about pedestrian access to the new sports complex. The discussion indicated this was not included in the TSP. However, pedestrian access to the new sports complex has been included in the TSP. She asked Staff to explain this. Planner Johnson confirmed a project in the TSP identifies pedestrian access from Niagara to Williamsport Road as a needed project.

President Nemlowill asked for more information about the connection to the high school. Planner Johnson said there are multiple other projects in the TSP, including a sidewalk along West Marine Drive, discussion about trails connecting the middle school to Klaskanine and 7th Street, and additional trails identified in the Trails Master Plan.

President Nemlowill asked if Staff believed that the TSP adequately addressed pedestrian access to the new sports complex from a road point of view, not a trail point of view. Planner Johnson replied the TSP identifies potential projects, but does not identify the details of how each project should be implemented. As long as the TSP states intended projects, the exact location can change. The concepts of the projects are the key elements included in the TSP so that Astoria can seek out funding. The TSP indicates Astoria's goal to provide pedestrian access. The details would be worked out later. She confirmed that Staff believed the projects identified in the TSP were adequate.

President Nemlowill called for the PowerPoint presentation from Matt Hastie of Angelo Planning Group and Chris Maciejewski of DKS Associates.

Chris Maciejewski, 720 SW Washington Street, Suite 500, Portland, OR 97205, said the presentation would review highlights of the TSP and Code amendments. He began by defining a transportation system, which manages growth while maintaining community values. His presentation was as follows:

- Improvement, safety, and capacity projects contained in the TSP cover all modes of transportation. Roadway projects tend to be so costly that only a small portion of them are likely to be funded, but almost all of the biking projects can be funded.
 - The projects included in the Plan are concepts that should be feasible, though some of them may not be implemented. A number of steps would still be necessary to implement each project. The TSP does not offer any funding commitment, so funding for each project would still need to be obtained. A design process would also be necessary before implementing a project.
- The TSP includes a 20-year budget projection that indicates about \$6.4 million would be a reasonable amount for the City to invest in capital improvement projects. Implementing all of the projects in the Plan would cost about \$45 million. High priority and aspirational projects were identified. The high priority projects would cost about \$6.4 million and the aspirational projects would need funding. Inclusion of the aspirational projects in the Plan will help the City obtain funding.
- A Project Advisory Committee guided the technical team on projects. Stakeholder meetings, community meetings, neighborhood meetings, and an interactive website were used to collect public feedback on the projects included in the TSP.
 - The City and the Oregon Department of Transportation decided that a by-pass around Astoria was not likely to be funded in the next 20 years. Therefore, the TSP was built around no by-pass. The TSP includes position statements from both jurisdictions regarding the by-pass with the City continuing support of the concept.
 - Public feedback included a lot of discussion about Downtown and Marine Drive, west of Downtown. Other areas of discussion included Marine Drive near the high school, 8th and Commercial heading towards Downtown, Niagara and 7th, Highway 30, federal streets near Tongue Point, and Bond Street.
- Projects included in the TSP were based on public feedback and are as follows:
 - The downtown traffic signals will need to be replaced and the TSP recommends a feasibility study and community engagement regarding one and two-way streets in the downtown area.
 - A section of Marine Drive just west of Downtown should be repurposed. A center turn lane and a pedestrian refuge should be installed, which would make room for bike lanes.
 - Sidewalks should be installed by the high school.
 - Continue a single lane through the curves west of Downtown and open up to two lanes on Commercial between 8th and 9th Street. The traffic signal would need to be moved from 9th to 10th Street.
 - At Niagara and 7th, vehicle speeds need to be reduced through narrowing curbs or providing landscaping.

- An Irving Street extension to Emerald Heights is recommended. This would not be a major arterial or alternate route project, but would be a local street. This extension would be located outside of the Urban Growth Boundary (UGB), but would remain within Astoria city limits.
- The roadways at Tongue Point need to be upgraded.
- Bond Street should be re-opened to two-way traffic with traffic calming methods to protect the neighborhood. If this is successful, Irving Street should be narrowed to three lanes.
- Implementation of the TSP should result in improvements to motor vehicle operations, safety, and facilities over the next 20 years.
- ODOT has approved the following projects since the packet was mailed out:
 - Repurposing the lanes through the curves on 8th Street
 - On Niagara, east of 15th Street, project maps have been modified to reflect a complete walking route around Niagara to get to Williamsport Road
 - A realignment project to correct the curve at 16th and James
 - The required goal exception to accommodate the portion of the Irving extension located outside of the UGB.

Mr. Hastie reviewed Code amendments via PowerPoint as follows:

- He recommended incorporating goals and policies that were updated during the TSP process and moving other planning documents into a volume of the TSP.
- The code amendments are necessary to address the details of the TSP, to implement specific recommendations, to refer to the TSP, to refer to the City's design and engineering standards, to comply with statewide documents, and/or to resolve issues identified by Staff.
- Some sections of the code are simply being moved from one section to another.
- Vehicular access and circulation codes will be added as a new section. The amendments will relate to subdivisions, some new development, and certain changes in land use. These codes govern the location, number, spacing, and design of approach roads, driveways, and connections to roads.
- All of the amendments are consistent with the State's Transportation Planning Rule (TPR) and the basis for specific code language comes from either the Model Code for Small Communities in Oregon or other jurisdictions.
- Pedestrian and bicycle access and circulation will be added as a new section. This section will address requirements of the TPR and allow for the implementation of the TSP. These codes will apply to new development and land use changes where a new or modified street connection has been proposed. The location and design of walkways within a development are governed by these codes.
- Transportation standards will be added as a new section. This section will include new requirements related to transportation impact studies and standards for the location and design of streets.
- Vehicle and bicycle parking standards will be updated.
- New language will be added regarding ODOT's review of development applications.
- Transportation facilities have been added as permanent use in many zones.
- Vision clearance standards will be added as a new section. The updated standards ensure unobstructed views on a corner or adjacent to a driveway.

President Nemlowill believed there was a discrepancy between state and local vision clearance standards. Director Estes responded there was also a discrepancy between Astoria's Municipal Code and Zoning Standards. Planner Johnson noted that President Nemlowill may have been referring to parking on a city street at a corner, which is a different issue.

Mr. Maciejewski added that one additional change to the draft TSP that was still pending, as he had not yet heard back from ODOT before earlier meetings. He explained the draft TSP recommended the connection to Hamburg be closed between Marine Drive and Taylor near the roundabout and traffic be converted to two-way so that traffic would come out near Florence on the south side of the roundabout. ODOT was concerned about the safety of access near Florence and the highway, so they recommended one-way traffic on Taylor and a reduction of traffic at the intersection of Taylor, Florence, and Marine Drive. The project was removed from the draft TSP because ODOT did not support two-way traffic. He noted next steps would include updating a final adoption version of the TSP that includes the updates discussed at this meeting. If the Plan is adopted, the City will be set up to pursue funding. The City will continue to work with ODOT and other agencies to implement the projects.

President Nemlowill asked the Commissioners if they had questions for the consultants or Staff. Hearing none, she opened the public hearing and called for any testimony in favor of the application.

Drew Herzig, 628 Klaskanine Avenue, Astoria, said that prior to being elected to City Council, people were asking him to re-open Bond Street to two-way traffic. He was very happy that the project was included in the TSP. The Bond Street project has a lot of community support and it is being implemented in a way that should make the neighborhood comfortable with the possible increase in traffic. Keeping the downtown area in the discussion is good because there are very strong feelings on both sides of the issue. He was happy that the City would continue to examine the issue. He urged the consultants and the Planning Commission to keep the discussions as open and transparent as possible because the public needs to feel like they are being heard. He suggested the Advisory Committee and stakeholders be identified regularly so the group does not remain mysterious. The public needs to know who is weighing in on this issue. He reiterated that he was glad the downtown area would continue to be discussed. Offering as much public input and transparency as possible will make this issue better for the future. He confirmed that the Traffic Safety Committee (TSC) would only be meeting quarterly.

President Nemlowill noted that since the TSC met in January, the next meeting would be scheduled for April. Director Estes said he had spoken to the Mayor about changing the frequency of the TSC and the Mayor believed meeting on a quarterly basis would allow the community to raise issues, give the Engineering Department time to investigate the issues while continuing to work with the citizens who have concerns, and return to the TSC to explain how the issues were resolved.

Mr. Herzig said he needed to continue to advocate for the people who live on Hamburg, as they are still contacting him with concerns about Taylor Avenue. He appreciated the information from ODOT, but the residents feel as if they are being put in jeopardy by having to cross three lanes of traffic to turn south from Hamburg. He did not know what the solution was. He recalled the discussion about converting Taylor to one-way southbound traffic, but ODOT was concerned about traffic congestion on Florence. He reiterated that he was still being contacted by people who want the City and the TSC to look into this issue because they feel they are being put in jeopardy. The residents have said they would speak to the Traffic Safety Committee and he must tell them that the meetings have been moved. This is still a concern. He understood that everyone is trying to find ways to make this work. He urged the Commissioners to keep this issue in mind because he was still being urged to bring it to the attention of the Traffic Safety Committee. He added that the TSP has been a picnic compared to the Riverfront Vision Plan. He thanked the Planning Commission and the consultants for all of the time they spent working on the TSP. He understood that some people wanted to get the work over with, but he was glad some of the conversations took place as it was important to have the full community behind some of the decisions.

President Nemlowill thanked Mr. Herzig for his support. She called for more testimony in favor of the application. Hearing none, she called for any testimony impartial to the application.

Fred White, 2011 Irving, Astoria, said he was pleased that the Spexarth Building would not be torn down, as he heard at a meeting that it would be. One-way traffic all the way to 9th Street is the way. He recalled that one of the consultants mentioned Irving Avenue during a discussion about the building. However, Irving Avenue was never mentioned at the meeting he attended at the Liberty Theatre, which may have been the meeting held on September 11, 2013. He believed the Irving Avenue extension was a bombshell that the City should pay attention to. Irving is one lane with parking on each side between 35th and 38th. He did not understand how trucks and traffic loads from Highway 30 would get through this corridor. This section of Irving already receives traffic from Highway 30 when there are traffic issues closer to town. The Irving Avenue extension sounds like an alternate route for Highway 30. He did not understand how this could be implemented without destroying the neighborhood. He understood that there were no alternatives and suggested traffic be routed through Alderbrook on Blue Ridge Road when there are traffic issues. However, there would still be a gap between 45th and 37th. He believed the City needed to be very transparent about this issue because it may sound a lot like selling urban property. This project has been kept under the radar. He did not go to many of the meetings, but did attend one at the Liberty Theatre and heard nothing about the Irving extension until it was mentioned by the consultant in a side conversation. He urged the Planning Commission to get the issue out to the public or there would be many unhappy people if the project snuck out in 10 years. People will ask where the project came from and the City would respond that it was included in the Plan in 2014. However, there are not many people at this meeting.

Director Estes responded that he believed the meeting Mr. White attended was one of the neighborhood meetings. Mr. White said he was at the main meeting at the Liberty Theatre. Mr. Hastie added that the meeting Mr. White attended was either the second or third community meeting. Mr. White noted that he was out of the country until just before the June meeting.

Director Estes explained that community input indicated a desire for an additional east/west thoroughfare. The proposed extension would not be of the same scale as Highway 30, but just a neighborhood route to connect Emerald Heights residents to the rest of town. If Highway 30 needed to be closed, the extension would allow some relief. The Plan does not require this extension to be built. A vote by City Council would be necessary and the City would need to secure funds. The TSP simply facilitates the possibility of the extension.

Mr. White said he realized that the TSP was aspirational, but believed aspirational was a strange word. He asked why ODOT is taking so long to change the walk signals, north and south, in the downtown area. The signals have been at three seconds for about two years. He has been to City Council and Planning Commission meetings and he continues to be told that ODOT will work on the signals as part of the TSP. He asked how difficult it was for ODOT to change the walk signals that are three seconds long. He cannot drive through the intersection in the time that the walk signal is on. The signal blinks for 13 seconds before the light turns red. In three seconds, a pedestrian cannot walk to the middle of Commercial Street.

ODOT representative Bill Johnston said he would explain as best as he could, noting many other people were involved in this issue. He understood that the walk signal was three seconds long in addition to the flashing warning.

Mr. White interjected, stating, if you blink, you miss the walk signal. He is 70 years old and many of the cruise ship visitors are around the same age. The situation is dangerous. Pedestrians cannot get to the middle of the street with 13 seconds of blinking lights and three seconds to cross. He reiterated that the situation is dangerous.

ODOT representative Johnston said that ODOT was very concerned about safety, moving traffic, and the City's concerns. ODOT is looking into the situation, but he was not knowledgeable enough to comment further.

Assistant City Engineer Crater explained that about three to six months ago, the City approached ODOT with some questions about pedestrian safety in the downtown area and upgrading some of the signal infrastructure that has become outdated. The City was notified of some funds that would become available, allowing ODOT to improve the pedestrian signals in the downtown area. He did not know exactly when the funds would become available, but the project could be another year or two out. The project is in the pipeline. A number of upgrades will be completed, including the short walk times.

Mr. White asked if pedestrians could get three more seconds to cross the street, he understood the signal was just operated by a computer. Assistant City Engineer Crater believed the issue was more complicated, noting that he was not a signal engineer. Many elements go into making the lights communicate with themselves so that people are not stopping at every single block.

Mr. White said he was not suggesting the timing on the green signals be changed, but was only suggesting pedestrians be given more time to cross the street while leaving the rest of the signals alone. Assistant City Engineer Crater explained that all of the signals were linked together; adding that signal timing is more complicated than it appears.

Mr. White recalled that traffic calming and pedestrian safety were mentioned throughout the TSP process. He and many others have come before the Planning Commission and TSC to discuss speeding in the city. He was glad to hear that the consultants believe traffic calming is necessary. Past committees have brushed off the citizens, saying the issues were all in their heads. The police have said they were not willing to enforce 25 mile per hour speed limits unless a driver was going 35 or 40 miles per hour. As he has said several times, the right turn permitted signs at intersections throughout town are an invitation to speed. He did not believe many people at the meeting drove standard transmission vehicles and noted that stopping while going up 11th Street could cause issues with the clutch. He did not believe the City needed the right turn permitted signs. He challenged the Commissioners, as he did City Council, to travel from Astoria City Hall to Warrenton without taking Highway 30 and without having to stop more than twice after leaving the downtown corridor. Crossing 11th Street to the other

side of Exchange, and then heading up the hill, will prevent you from stopping at a stop sign or signal until you get to the Senior Center. From his house at 20th and Irving, he only has to stop once.

President Nemlowill thanked Mr. White for his careful attention. She called for more testimony impartial to the application. Hearing none, she called for any testimony opposed to the application. There was none. President Nemlowill closed the public hearing and called for Commission discussion.

Vice President Innes said she was satisfied with the information she had been given and had no questions.

Commissioner Pearson said calling the TSP a document was an incredible understatement. The TSP is more than a document. He thanked the original visioning committee, the consultants, ODOT, and Staff for doing an incredible job. He hoped the process could go more quickly and said he completely supported the application.

Commissioner Fitzpatrick agreed with Commissioner Pearson. He added that one-way streets turning into two-way streets is an important issue. From his home and office, he sees many people driving in the wrong direction where the one-way street turns into a two-way street. He believed the ADHDA would agree that they see the same scenario from their office near 12th Street. It is very important to continue to consider this issue. He agreed with Mr. White that traffic calming is necessary. He has seen speeding cars while walking in the downtown area and agreed that there is a serious need for traffic calming in the area.

President Nemlowill said she was grateful to everyone who worked on the TSP. She thanked the ADHDA for their letter of support. The issue with the couplet was a tough issue because of Michelle Reeve's recommendations. It was difficult to find a solution that would work for downtown businesses. She appreciated the ADHDA's involvement, which helped make her decision easier. She thanked the City Council members that attended.

Vice President Innes moved that the Astoria Planning Commission adopt the Findings and Conclusions contained in the Staff report for Amendment A14-01, and recommend that the Astoria City Council adopt Amendment A14-01, amending the Astoria Development Code, Comprehensive Plan, and City Code for the adoption and implementation of the 2014 Transportation System Plan (TSP); seconded by Commissioner Fitzpatrick. Motion passed unanimously.

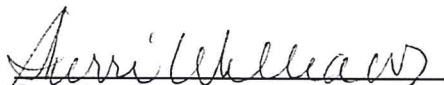
President Nemlowill read the rules of appeal into the record.

REPORTS OF OFFICERS/COMMISSIONERS:

ADJOURNMENT:

There being no further business, President Nemlowill adjourned the meeting was at 7:38 p.m.

ATTEST:


Secretary

APPROVED:


Community Development Director/
Assistant City Manager