

ASTORIA TRAFFIC SAFETY ADVISORY COMMITTEE
Astoria City Hall
May 28, 2013

CALL TO ORDER:

Acting Chair Nemlowill called the meeting to order at 7:02 p.m.

ROLL CALL:

Commissioners Present: Zetty Nemlowill, Thor Norgaard, Al Tollefson, David Pearson and Kera Huber

Commissioners Excused: Vice-President Mark Cary, President McLaren Innes

Staff Present: Community Development Director Brett Estes, Planner Rosemary Johnson, City Attorney Blair Henningsgaard, Police Sergeant Brian Aydt, Engineering Technician Steve Ruggles and City Engineer Jeff Harrington.

Kera Huber introduced herself, stating she has been affiliated with the Wet Dog Café and Astoria Brewing Company for about 15 years. She has lived in Astoria all her life and attended college at Portland State University (PSU).

APPROVAL OF MINUTES – ITEM 3(a):

Acting Chair Nemlowill asked for approval of the minutes of the April 23, 2013 meeting.

Commissioner Norgaard moved to approve the April 23, 2013 minutes as noted; seconded by Commissioner Tollefson. Motion passed 4 to 0 to 1 with Commissioner Huber abstaining.

REPORTS OF OFFICERS: No reports.

OLD BUSINESS – ITEM 5(a): Pedestrian Safety Update – Jeff Harrington

Engineer Harrington explained Staff had broken pedestrian safety items into two categories: physical engineering solutions and public education. The engineering solutions were being addressed by the Engineering Division, which is part of the Public Works Department. The Public Works Department is working closely with the Police Department, which has taken the lead on many of the public education solutions.

- The city has a low traveling speed through town. The 25 mile per hour speed limit on Highway 30 is an advantage. He has been researching accidents that occur in 45 to 55 mile per hour speed zones, where pedestrians experience much more severe injuries.
 - Prior to the last few accidents, a University of Portland professor pointed out that Astoria had a below average rate of collisions. Engineer Harrington does not like to focus on this statistic because the issue still needs attention. Statistics do not eliminate problems. Astoria is still sensitive to pedestrian collisions. The City wants to do everything possible to reduce the likelihood of an accident. He agreed pedestrian collisions were an issue everywhere.
- Public education is the key issue. If all pedestrians made eye contact with drivers, wore bright clothes, and avoided distractions, like texting while walking, it is very unlikely they would be struck by a vehicle. If drivers avoided distractions, like texting, eating, or drinking while driving, they would be less likely to hit a pedestrian.
 - The first round of pedestrian safety brochures have been sent out with the water bills.
 - The Police Department is doing a lot with the Safe Routes to Schools program and they publish information on Facebook. The dDpartment is focused on doing whatever it can, including collaborating with other groups.
- The Engineering Division staff has held several meetings with Community Development Director Estes and Public Works Director Cook. While the City will continue working diligently on the discussed solutions, they decided to work more closely with the Transportation System Plan (TSP) program. The goal is to integrate these concepts and ideas into the TSP priorities, so they can be funded most diligently. The priorities would

be identified by citizens through the public meeting process, not just by Staff. The Engineering Division has shared all of the proposed concepts with the TSP consultants.

- Any project not funded through the TSP will be completed as funding allows, like the new signs being installed near the schools. New crosswalk markings will cost about \$2,500 per intersection. Decisions were needed about whether such projects should be included in the TSP as a high priority project to be immediately eligible for funding or if existing paving money should be spent to do the project.
- The Engineering Division will meet with the Oregon Department of Transportation (ODOT) to discuss the availability of Quick Fix Grant funds for the rapid flashing beacons (RFBs). Five locations have been identified for the RFBs, some new and some existing.
- Funding from ODOT is uncertain at this time as that agency is currently being restructured. Some programs are being combined, so it has become more difficult to apply for funds. Astoria did receive a \$100,000 Quick Fix Grant to use on the intersection at 8th and Commercial Streets.

Acting Chair Nemlowill appreciated that Engineer Harrington has taken the issue seriously and is working with the TSP process, which seems important to do. She also appreciated the outreach conducted by the Police Department, including their Facebook posts, which emphasize pedestrian safety. Engineer Harrington added that the Education Service District (ESD) published an article about pedestrian safety in their current newsletter. The article is oriented toward autistic children and can be found on their website. He is impressed with the education currently occurring in the schools.

Acting Chair Nemlowill called for public comment on traffic safety issues.

Drew Herzig, 628 Klaskanine Avenue, Astoria, stated that he raised the pedestrian safety issue at the last City Council meeting on May 20th, where he was politely informed that a City Councilor should not preempt the Traffic Safety Advisory Committee (TSC) in these discussions. He would like to be part of the solution but does not know how to proceed. Unless the TSC specifically suggests certain actions to City Council, an individual Councilor cannot speak on the issue.

- He noted public comments were made about the pedestrian flags at the May 20th City Council meeting. With the recent collision near Safeway, City Council is taking a beating by the public for failing to take action. This is not the TSC's problem. However, the City Council cannot take action without the TSC making suggestions.
- He appreciates the efforts being made by the TSC, Engineer Harrington, and Sergeant Aydt. However, there seems to be a disconnect because the TSC minutes go into the Consent Calendar, which means they are not discussed at City Council meetings, but are simply approved.
- He would like City Council to have the ability to take action, as they are being faulted for taking no action. Pedestrian safety is a 2013 goal for City Council. He was frustrated, and would like to serve as a liaison, but has been told it is not appropriate to preempt the authority of the TSC.

Acting Chair Nemlowill stated that this is new territory for the TSC. She believed Mr. Herzig has been acting as liaison, even if he is not an official liaison, because he is a City Councilor that attends most TSC meetings. She appreciated that he speaks at most of the TSC meetings. She asked if there was a specific recommendation Mr. Herzig would like the TSC to make to Council. Mr. Herzig replied the pedestrian flags are currently the big issue. A decision is needed about whether the program should be continued, restructured, or eliminated. He believed most people would like the program eliminated, but he has heard arguments supporting all three options. He would like more public input. Vandalism is a big problem, not theft. People are deliberately breaking the flags and someone attempted to dislodge one of the support poles. Installing cameras was one suggested solution, which would require spending more funds. This issue must be addressed because the City will run out of flags soon. The City will need to buy more flags, eliminate the program, or change the program so that it will work. Mr. Herzig added that he does not have an opinion on the issue, one way or another.

Acting Chair Nemlowill explained she is an appointed official, not an elected official. Based on conversations with citizens and her own observations, she believed the flag program should not be continued. However, that decision should be made by City Council, who are elected officials. She supports making a recommendation to the City Council that continuation of the flag program be explored. She asked if the TSC supported that recommendation.

Commissioner Norgaard asked why it was necessary for the TSC to make a recommendation.

Director Estes explained that ODOT installed cameras after the last TSC meeting. The City is beginning to analyze the 50 hours of recorded video footage from the cameras. More information will be available over the next few weeks that could factor in to this issue.

Mr. Herzig agreed it would be premature to make a recommendation to City Council without that information.

Acting Chair Nemlowill added she wants to support any efforts Mr. Herzig had to make the city safer for pedestrians. Mr. Herzig appreciated that everyone is trying to gather more information on this issue. Everyone is taking pedestrian safety seriously. Ultimately, the Council will have to decide on the future of the flag program. When information from the video is available, the TSC will be able to assess the data and forward it to City Council.

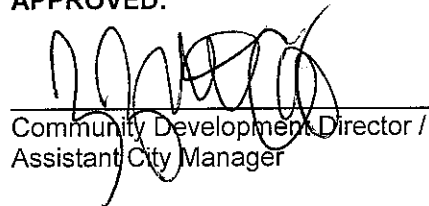
ADJOURNMENT:

There being no further business, the meeting was adjourned to convene the Planning Commission Meeting at 7:18 p.m.

ATTEST:


Secretary

APPROVED:


Community Development Director /
Assistant City Manager