

ASTORIA TRAFFIC SAFETY ADVISORY COMMITTEE

Astoria City Hall

August 27, 2013

CALL TO ORDER:

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

ROLL CALL:

Commissioners Present: President McLaren Innes, Vice-President Mark Cary, David Pearson, and Zetty Nemlowill

Commissioners Excused: Al Tollefson, Thor Norgaard and Kera Huber.

Staff Present: Community Development Director Brett Estes, Planner Rosemary Johnson, City Attorney Blair Henningsgaard, Police Sergeant Brian Aydt and Engineer Technician Steve Ruggles. The meeting is recorded and will be transcribed by ABC Transcription Services, Inc.

APPROVAL OF MINUTES—Item 3(a):

Vice-President Cary moved to approve the July 23, 2013 meeting minutes as presented, seconded by Commissioner Pearson. Motion passed unanimously.

REPORTS OF OFFICERS/COMMISSIONERS:

Vice-President Cary reported that he had followed up on a ticket recently issued to a tourist, which Drew Herzig spoke about at the Traffic Safety Committee (TSC) meeting on July 23, 2013. Sergeant Aydt explained that the tourist was driving 38 miles per hour through downtown; however, the citation was issued for a lower speed. The citation would have cost the driver \$160, as he was driving 18 miles per hour over the speed limit; however, the citation was issued for \$110. Speeding is common in the area where the tourist was ticketed. Drivers can see the increased speed limit sign in the distance as they leave the downtown area and start increasing their speed too early.

President Innes noted an increasing number of drivers have begun parking in both directions on 45th Street, between Leif Erickson and Cedar Streets. There is no signage to suggest parking is not allowed, but the issue is that with no lighting in that area, visibility is limited when turning north from 45th Street on to Cedar Street and parked cars are hard to see. She wanted to discuss the issue before an accident occurs. Director Estes stated that two groups of residents from the neighborhood spoke to Assistant City Engineer Nathan Crater about parking on 45th Street and Leif Erickson, but he was not sure if it was about the same issue. Engineer Technician Ruggles said the matter is being investigated. Director Estes said Staff would report their findings to the Commission.

Commissioner Nemowill reported hearing that the pedestrian enforcement efforts are effective. She liked seeing discussion about pedestrian safety on the Police Department's Facebook page as well. The Police Department has a good following on Facebook and she appreciates the Department's communication with the public. She asked for an update on the City Council's activity regarding pedestrian safety. Sergeant Aydt said the Police Department has conducted two pedestrian safety enforcement events since the last TSC meeting. The first event was conducted late in the afternoon when many accidents were occurring and resulted in 34 drivers being stopped in three hours. The intersection was busy from 4 p.m. to 6 p.m. and slow between 6 p.m. and 7 p.m. Eighteen citations were written for pedestrian violations and three citations were written for other violations. All other drivers were given warnings. The second pedestrian safety enforcement event was conducted in the late morning and early afternoon hours. Seven citations were issued for pedestrian violations and six citations were issued for other violations.

Engineer Ruggles reported that Staff met with the Oregon Department of Transportation (ODOT) Signal Division. ODOT said that in 2016, they would grant Astoria \$450,000 to use on signal upgrades, which will include countdown timers at crosswalks and improvements to signal mechanisms in the downtown area. ODOT has already re-striped some crosswalks and are planning to stripe more. Standard signs alerting drivers about pedestrians are being installed by ODOT at each end of town. Regarding the larger signs discussed earlier by the City Council and Committee, they are difficult to place. Engineering staff has discussed this with ODOT and he does not know what ODOT's standard signs will look like, but if they are not effective, other signs will be considered. Director Estes said Staff learned that signs like those in Sandpoint, Idaho are not regulated or approved by ODOT. City staff is continuing discussions with ODOT about the signs.

President Innes asked if anyone would have the opportunity to review the signs' verbiage before they are installed. Engineer Ruggles believed Staff would be able to preview the signs; however, they are being installed in the ODOT right-of-way. Astoria can discuss the signs with ODOT, but ODOT decides what to install.

President Innes suggesting adding a banner to the bottom of the wooden sign at the east end of town. The sign was commissioned by the City. It says, "City of Astoria" at the top and tourists often pose for pictures next to the sign. Director Estes confirmed the sign was recently repainted and is. Planner Johnson noted the sign was originally installed in the 1980s.

PUBLIC COMMENT:

Richard Covert, 447 S. Denver, Astoria, said he and his wife feel the safest place to walk is along the Riverwalk because there are fewer traffic crossings, but pedestrians are just being ignored. He discussed concerns with the following intersections on the Riverwalk:

- Approaching 39th Street from either direction, drivers traveling north on the pier often fail to stop at the stop sign. Drivers say they do not see the sign or believe they have the right-of-way over pedestrians.
 - The stop sign at that intersection is 11 feet from the curb and stands 11 ½ feet tall. Most stop signs in Astoria are two feet from the curb and stand 8½-feet tall.
 - A tree blocks the stop sign making it barely visible to drivers more than 80 feet from the sign. Cars parked on both sides of the street also inhibit visibility. Drivers must pull out onto the Riverwalk in order to see in both directions at that intersection.
 - The stop sign for southbound traffic coming off the pier is highly visible, as it should be, and those cars are the most likely to stop for pedestrians.
 - He noted three, highly-visible railroad crossing signs exist at this intersection, even though no trains run on this railroad. The trolley stops before reaching 39th Street.
 - In one hour, 67 pedestrians and bicyclists crossed the intersection at the Riverwalk and 39th Street. At 37th Street, pedestrian signs are highly-visible intersection by the coffee shop, but in an hour-and-a-half, on two different occasions, no pedestrians crossed the intersection. Signage is abundant at an intersection where no pedestrians cross, but no signage exists where many pedestrians cross on a daily basis.
- At the boat dock, drivers fail to stop as many believe they have the right-of-way over pedestrians. Yield signs are ignored by drivers pulling their boats off the ramp, as are stop signs posted as drivers exit the dirt parking lot, even when they see pedestrians. Within those 220 feet between the ramp and stop sign, drivers expect pedestrians to get out of the way.
- He suggested pedestrian crossing signs be installed at the Riverwalk intersections at 39th and 36th Street to alert drivers.
- Niagara and 7th Street is another dangerous intersection. The stop sign facing westbound traffic on Niagara at 7th Street is difficult to see as it is 10 feet from the ground, five feet from the curb and is blocked by a tree. Drivers must be in the crosswalk to observe oncoming traffic. Proper signage, located and installed correctly, will help pedestrian safety.

President Innes appreciated Mr. Covert's research, adding she was aware of the crosswalk challenges on the Riverwalk. She asked if Staff could examine the intersections identified by Mr. Covert, and if crosswalks could be painted on the Riverwalk. Director Estes noted ODOT Rail has jurisdiction over that intersection and the trolley line is still considered an active line, so Staff would have to coordinate with ODOT. The stop sign could be moved and the signage improved at 39th Street. Again, this would have to be coordinated with ODOT. The intersection at Niagara and 7th Street has been included in the Transportation System Plan (TSP) Update. Much

of the signage will be reoriented as residents in that area would like traffic to be slowed down. Four-way stops and center medians are being discussed to improve pedestrian safety.

Mr. Covert responded that those solutions seemed to be in the future. The simple solution would be to get the few signs lowered, and placed closer to the roadway, especially at 39th Street. Director Estes explained that the Engineering Department would examine each intersection then he would contact Mr. Colvert to discuss possible short-term solutions. President Innes believed feedback would be given at the next TSC meeting.

Drew Herzig, 628 Klaskanine Avenue, Astoria, stated he also observed the intersection at 39th Street. The traffic sign is behind a tree and can only be seen within half a block. The wide street narrows at the pier. The stop sign is outside a driver's line of vision when focusing on the narrowing road. He had believed the grant from ODOT was imminent and was surprised to hear the funding would not be received until 2016. Citizens will need to give input on pedestrian safety between now and 2016.

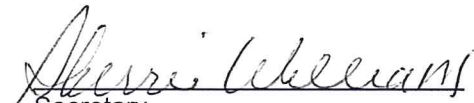
- He had walked and driven in the area where the tourist was issued a citation. He displayed a photo of the only speed limit sign on Commercial Street between 8th and 14th Streets. The sign sits on the northwest corner of 14th Street and is partially blocked by a lamp post. Turning from Marine Drive on to Commercial Street, drivers do not pass a speed limit sign until the one displayed in the photo. The City needs to post more speed limit signs on Commercial Street for drivers leaving the downtown area. Having speed limit signs posted between 8th and 14th Streets on Commercial Street would be helpful to drivers, as they would know if they are turning into a new speed limit zone. He had hoped the ODOT upgrades would be completed sooner. The speed limit sign should be moved and another speed limit sign posted on Commercial Street for drivers passing through the downtown area.

President Innes noted this is an ODOT issue and inquired if Staff has asked ODOT about more signage downtown along Commercial. Director Estes said this will be discussed and suggested City Engineer Harrington attend the next Traffic Safety Committee meeting to address some specific issues, especially with regard to more speed limit signs on Commercial. Sergeant Aydt believed 20 miles per hour is the required speed limit in the downtown area.

ADJOURNMENT:

There being no further business, the meeting was adjourned at 7:25 p.m.

ATTEST:


Secretary

APPROVED:


Community Development Director /
Assistant City Manager