

ASTORIA PLANNING COMMISSION WORK SESSION

Astoria City Hall
September 1, 2015

CALL TO ORDER:

President Pearson called the meeting to order at 6:30 pm.

ROLL CALL:

Commissioners Present: President David Pearson, Vice President McLaren Innes, Kent Easom, Sean Fitzpatrick, Daryl Moore, Jan Mitchell and Frank Spence

Staff Present: Community Development Director Kevin Cronin, Special Projects Planner Rosemary Johnson, and Consultant Matt Hastie, Angelo Planning Group. The meeting is recorded and will be transcribed by ABC Transcription Services, Inc.

NEW BUSINESS:

Item 3(a): Riverfront Vision Plan – Neighborhood Greenway Area

Planner Johnson explained this was the first work session to discuss the Neighborhood Greenway Area of the Riverfront Vision Plan. She gave a brief overview of the Plan, describing the location and boundaries of the Neighborhood Greenway area, and noted that the Plan was now being implemented into the City's Development Code and Comprehensive Plan. This work session would include an overview of the Code amendment process, as well as a review of the goals, the issues based on the goals, the Town Hall meeting held on August 20, 2015, and key issues and options for the Neighborhood Greenway Area. After input from the public and Planning Commission, staff will take guidance from the Commission on several options.

Matt Hastie, Angelo Planning Group, said several things, such as transportation projects, are necessary to implement the Riverfront Vision Plan. However, the Planning Commission would only focus on the elements of the Plan that could be implemented through the Development Code. He reviewed the goals and objectives identified for the Neighborhood Greenway Area in the Plan. He and Planner Johnson gave a PowerPoint presentation on the preliminary recommendations for the Code amendments necessary to implement the Plan in a way that would meet those goals and objectives. During the presentation, Staff posed the following questions for the Commission to consider:

1. Should residential accessory structures larger than a 1-car garage (14-feet by 20-feet, 280 square feet) require review or be allowed with no design review?
2. Should design guidelines, standards, or a combination of guidelines and standards be implemented? Design guidelines would have to be reviewed and approved by the Design Review Committee. Standards could be approved administratively if all standards were being met.
3. Should design guidelines and/or standards be implemented for non-residential structures? Standards would require a strict but simple process. Guidelines would allow more flexibility, but require the design review process. If both were implemented, a review would be required when standards are not met. Should the Code include standards and/or guidelines for roof designs?

Staff detailed next steps as follows:

- Continue to receive public feedback.
- Revise the draft Code amendments based on feedback from the public and the Planning Commission.
- Discuss revisions at the Planning Commission Work Session scheduled for September 16, 2015.
- Update amendments based on direction from the Commission given at the next work session.
- Schedule public hearings with the Planning Commission and City Council in October and November.

President Pearson invited public comments.

Michael Zametkin, 373 47th Street, Astoria, said everyone who was at the meeting attended because they love Alderbrook. The neighborhood has been described as having a small town charm and quirky vibe. He chose to live in Alderbrook for its affordability and location, which allowed him to create pottery, pursue his craft, and raise

his family without intrusive government interventions. He has lived in Alderbrook for more than 40 years and does not plan to move. Most of the people in the neighborhood mind their own business and help each other when they can. Each person has a right to their own way and individual pursuit of their own happiness. Alderbrook has been allowed to develop relatively unmolested from unnecessary rules, regulations, zoning, land use ordinances, and arbitrary City officials. The zoning does not need to be changed from A-3 to A-4 and the neighborhood does not need accessory structure ordinances or multi-family development standards. Imposing design standards that regulate the type, shape, and style of windows, and regulate roofs and exterior siding are excessive interventions into an individual's property rights. Alderbrook has become what it is today because these rules and ordinances never existed. The neighborhood has a live and let live spirit. Building codes are necessary and important because individual and public safety is involved. However, design codes have nothing to do with safety and everything to do with one's personal aesthetic taste. Taste is individual, in the eye of the beholder. He believed each person had a right to use their own property as they choose, as long as building safety codes and general zoning ordinances are respected.

Mike Abrams, 4880 Ash Street, Astoria, said he is the third generation of his family to live in Alderbrook. He asked the City to just leave the neighborhood alone because it is fine the way it is. The waterfront area is a tidal marsh zone, which goes dry twice a day, so no marina could be built. None of the old fishing docks and boat ways are left along the working waterfront because Mother Nature has destroyed them. The residents love the area. In the early 1990s, the neighborhood was rezoned from Marine Industrial to a neighborhood zone, so the working waterfront was taken away. Oregon owns everything under the water, so any overwater development will owe rent. There are already many rules in place for the area. He asked that Alderbrook be left alone.

Ken Adey, 5275 Ash Street, Astoria, said he agreed with Mr. Zametkin and Mr. Abrams. He wanted the area to be kept the way it is. He believed there was consensus at the Town Hall meeting of residents that like Alderbrook the way it is and do not want it to change. He requested the area between the sewage lagoon and the Alderbrook lagoon be rezoned from Institutional to S-5, Natural Shoreline. He believed the S-5 zone was more in keeping with the use of the property. He spends a lot of time in this area of the River Walk and has spoken to many people who say they go to this area because it is natural, peaceful, has a large green area, provides bird watching, and access to the water. These uses are important in this area. He was most concerned with the waterfront and natural areas of Alderbrook and has been working with the City and watershed association to reduce invasive plants and reintroduce native plants. Any docks built over the water would not be useful because the marsh is dry most of the time. He asked the Planning Commission to keep the area the way it is.

Martin Pollard, 5323 Ash Street, Astoria, believed Staff said at the Town Hall meeting that no changes would be made to the A-3 zone because the zoning protected the natural area. Now, Staff is saying the zone might be changed to A-4, which means uses will be more restricted. He questioned what Alderbrook had to do with the River Walk, noting that the two areas are about a ½ mile apart. He did not believe carnival rides or hot dog stands would be developed and wanted to know the purpose behind the proposed developmental changes to Alderbrook compared to the function of the River Walk. The River Walk is a pleasant place that is well maintained for walking. He asked what the purpose or vision was for the green area at the end of the River Walk. He believed the Institutional zone was part of a land grant and had limited uses. It is obvious that Alderbrook residents are happy and content with what they have, which includes multiple cultural structures. Therefore, the City cannot make a code that requires a certain roof pitch or material. The recommendations state there should not be any changes to residential development. However, he was concerned about the developmental issues and asked what was being developed and where. These Code amendments are being made for a reason, but the residents do not see the reason. He wanted to know what development would be coming to the neighborhood in the future. The neighborhood is not seeing the reason for all of these changes. The River Walk is a ½ mile from Alderbrook and he wanted to know why the City believed the River Walk impacted Alderbrook so substantially at this point.

Josie Peper, 5276 Ash Street, Astoria, believed the City should be more protective of the Institutional zoned area by changing the zoning to something more conservative. She also believed the City should figure out what to call the area. Director Cosby referred to it as the Astoria Natural Area, Planner Johnson referred to it as the Alderbrook Lagoon Park or Beach, some people call it Stinky Beach, and others call it Pretty Beach. The zoning should be changed to something that goes along with the wording in the Comprehensive Plan and Riverfront Vision Plan.

Staff responded to public comments about the Institutional Zone and the S-5, Natural Shoreland zone. The Institutional Zone includes the college campus, City facilities, and parks. The public uses allowed within the zone

have slightly different and more flexible standards than the public/semi-public uses allowed in residential zones, which require a conditional use permit. Staff had no intentions of relocating or expanding the sewage treatment plant and the park would remain a park. The recommended Code amendments are for the approximate 22 parcels that could be redeveloped. The City does not have any plans to do anything different with the Institutional Zone. Staff would need to review the uses allowed in the S-5, Natural Shoreland zone because some of the desired amenities for this area, like a walking trail, bridges, or restrooms, would be included in the Parks Master Plan.

Josie Peper, 5276 Ash Street, Astoria, understood the City had previously proposed to install windmills in the area. She was concerned about development like windmills or a dog park and asked if there was a way to create an overlay zone to further restrict uses.

Planner Johnson explained the Neighborhood Greenway Area is an overlay that would apply to the Institutional Zone, which includes the park.

Commissioner Easom said the entire area between 39th and 45th Streets appeared to be undeveloped and he wanted to know who owned the property.

Planner Johnson said properties from 39th to 41st Street include condominiums and the Astoria Business Park. The western edge of Alderbrook Lagoon includes a City-owned parcel and part of the River Trail. At about 43rd Street and up to 45th Street, there are a few houses on the south side of the river. She used a map to show the exact locations of each property in the area, noting that the City owns most of the rights to the areas over the water. She referred to Page 5 of the agenda packet, which showed parcels owned by the City and the Division of State Lands. Upland property owners have the first rights of refusal to use the parcels owned by the Division of State Lands. Very few overwater properties in this area are owned privately. She noted the condominiums and business park are within the Civic Greenway Area, as the Neighborhood Greenway Area only extends to 41st Street on its western edge.

In response to a question about whether these code amendments were necessary for the City to move forward with some planned developments, Mr. Hastie confirmed nothing had been planned. The City does not intend to develop any structures in the area. These Code amendments are necessary to implement the Riverfront Vision Plan. Current standards for overwater development in this area allow 20-foot tall structures in the A-3 zones. The recommendations in the Plan suggest open views and vistas should be maintained. Therefore, Staff is recommending additional future buildings not be allowed over the water unless they are bank height or lower. Recommended landscaping provisions are also intended to keep areas open, maintain views of green areas, and keep the area natural. The Plan indicated people like the area just the way it is, so Staff has refrained from recommending any new standards for most of the existing development. Standards recommended for larger or nonresidential development are intended to maintain the character of the neighborhood. He believed most of the recommendations would maintain the area as is.

In response to the comment about the River Trail being a ½ mile from Alderbrook, Mr. Hastie explained that the Riverfront Vision planning process from 2005 to 2007 considered the entire area between the highway and the pier head line, which includes areas over the water, the River Trail, and the residential neighborhood.

Vice President Innes reiterated that the design standards would only apply to windows and roofs on new non-residential structures of a certain size. Planner Johnson added the structures would include buildings like churches, schools, and daycare centers. Staff is not suggesting any design review of residential structures and the standards for accessory structures are very basic.

Commissioner Easom asked what prompted the recommendations for accessory structures. Planner Johnson explained that several years ago, the City received a request for a garage/pole barn in Alderbrook. The accessory structure would be larger than the residential structure. Neighbors tried to work out the issues amongst themselves, as is typical in Alderbrook. However, the property owner built the pole barn, which he had the right to do. Residents in Alderbrook did not want new restrictions on their properties, but they did not want large pole barns in the neighborhood either. Staff reviewed possible Code amendments to address the size and scale of accessory structure, but chose not to pursue implementation at that time. Staff is proposing these standards now to protect the character of Alderbrook from intrusive and large development. However, the Riverfront Vision Plan does not specifically address accessory structures.

Commissioner Mitchell said the visioning process does not help the City at all unless the zoning is changed. She believed this concept was difficult to understand. People like the views as they see them today and assume it will continue because everyone agrees they enjoy the views. However, a developer can build whatever the zoning allows. Staff cannot refer to the Riverfront Vision Plan just because it says nice things. This was an issue during implementation of the Bridge Vista Area. She was sure many people believed the City had sold them out. However, the City actually removed much of what had been allowed. It can be very difficult to understand that sometimes, Code amendments are necessary to prevent things from happening. Alderbrook is a wonderful neighborhood with a distinctive character. The traffic needs to slow down and the City should consider a way to prevent people from getting lost in the neighborhood. These recommendations will put in place the codes necessary to retain the character of the neighborhood and protect the neighborhood from inappropriate development.

Mr. Hastie agreed and said the intent is to restrict what could occur and maintain the existing character, more so in this area than in any other area along the riverfront. Staff is trying to limit the types of uses that would have further regulation. Most of the area consists of single-family and two-family homes and Staff is not recommending additional regulations to those uses.

The Planning Commission discussed the proposed Code amendments and Staff's questions. They provided feedback and responded to Staff's questions with the following key comments:

- Change the A-3 zone to A-4, as recommended.
- No overwater standards were necessary; the A-4 zone with the top of bank height limitation would limit height and width of structures.
- After some discussion of the current standards and uses for accessory structures, the Commission decided to eliminate proposed Code amendments for accessory structures. Staff will discuss residential use of accessory structures as they relate to the housing study with City Council on September 14.
- Commissioners agreed that non-residential structure designs should be reviewed after discussing design review in other R-2 zones in the City.
 - Staff noted that State law requires clear and objective standards for multi-family housing, but alternative design guidelines with a review could be offered as well. Staff explained how standards are reviewed differently from guidelines, noting that the Commission could implement both, and discussed standards versus guidelines in other areas of the City.
 - Commissioner Easom wanted to hear from the public. Staff, Commissioners, and the audience discussed current regulations for multi-family structures. President Pearson explained the design review process, confirming it was thorough.
 - The Commission decided to implement guidelines for non-residential structures. Multi-family structures should have standards, per State law, and guidelines as an option.
- On non-residential structures, roofing materials should be included in the guidelines and standards, and roof pitch should be similar to adjacent properties.
- Commissioners had no comments on the proposed landscaping guidelines for future development.

President Pearson confirmed there would be no more public comments at this meeting. However, there would be an opportunity for the public to give comments at the next public hearing.

Staff confirmed the Town Hall meeting, public comments at this meeting, and feedback from Commissioners resulted in clear direction for revising the Code amendments. Revisions would be presented in a work session at the end of the Planning Commission meeting on September 16, 2015, which starts at 6:30 pm. The public hearing is scheduled for October 27, 2015. Staff will continue to accept public comments throughout the process, but the hearing in October will be the last opportunity for the public to give the Planning Commission input.

ADJOURNMENT:

There being no further business, the meeting was adjourned at 8:04 pm.

APPROVED:



Community Development Director