

## ASTORIA TRAFFIC SAFETY ADVISORY COMMITTEE

Astoria City Hall

September 24, 2013

### CALL TO ORDER - ITEM 1:

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

### ROLL CALL - ITEM 2:

Commissioners Present: President McLaren Innes, Vice-President Mark Cary (via telephone), David Pearson, and Al Tollefson (via telephone).

Commissioners Excused: Zetty Nemowill, Thor Norgaard, and Kera Huber.

Staff Present: Planner Rosemary Johnson, Police Sergeant Brian Aydt, City Engineer Jeff Harrington, and Engineering Technician Steve Ruggles. The meeting is recorded and will be transcribed by ABC Transcription Services, Inc.

### APPROVAL OF MINUTES - ITEM 3(a):

David Pearson moved to approve the August 27, 2013 Traffic Safety Committee meeting minutes as presented, seconded by President Innes. Motion passed unanimously.

### OLD BUSINESS

City Engineer Harrington began by discussing the dangers of over-signage in light of the suggestions or requests being heard with these key comments:

- Slow Children at Play signs, for example, were very popular at one time, but the engineering community recommends these signs not be used. Over time, these signs have not changed the behavior of drivers, nor do they improve the safety of children in a traffic setting. He cited an article, noting the following key issues identified with these signs, including drivers disregard the signs over time; the signs may hint that there are no children playing in other areas; and the signs may breed a false sense of security, implying that a street can be used as a play area.
  - The *Federal Highway Administration Manual of Uniform Traffic Control Devices* states "the use of warning signs should be kept to a minimum, as the unnecessary use of warning signs tends to breed disrespect for all signs." The more drivers are distracted, the less they will see what is important and the important signs. Signs will not fix everything. Engineers must optimize the signs they install by properly locating the signs, keeping trees trimmed to increase visibility, etc.
- A recent *Wall Street Journal* article on distracted drivers stated pedestrian collisions are increasing after decades of decline. The death rate, especially among people age 70 and older, is twice that of younger victims. There are more pedestrians and bikers, as baby boomers are walking more, and ODOT funding encourages multi-modal transportation systems. Drivers and pedestrians are distracted with smart phones or are under the influence of alcohol, drugs, and prescription medications. Violations include running lights, speeding, and failing to stop for pedestrians. Like the City, the article recommends that drivers refrain from speeding or using the phone and drive with care.
- He noted the importance of uniformity with regard to the pedestrian-friendly signs at the entrances of Astoria. Drivers have a limited time to react to a sign. Astoria has many signs about State parks, National historic areas, hotels, restaurants, and advertisements. To have the most effect on drivers, signs must be recognizable and consistent from town to town so drivers can easily recognize them.
- Statutory speed limits are in effect even if a sign is not posted. Speed limit signs within zones that have statutory speed limits are considered redundant signs.
  - For example, he displayed photos of the 20 mph speed limit sign coming into the downtown business district. While this sign would be considered redundant it is in a good location, providing a reminder for drivers on the straight stretch after coming through the curve on 8th and Commercial Street. However, that sign has been blocked by a historic light pole and could be moved to the middle of the block between 9<sup>th</sup> and 10<sup>th</sup> Streets in front of Knutsen's Insurance.

#### Item 4(a): Stop Sign at 39<sup>th</sup> Street and Pedestrian Safety Concerns at 37<sup>th</sup> Street/Riverwalk

The stop sign is in its current location because a water utility line conflicts with any different placement. Moving the stop sign would require relocating the water line, which can be expensive. The City has written the property owner requesting that he trim the tree, which will improve visibility of the stop sign.

#### Item 4(b): Stop Sign at Niagara/7<sup>th</sup> Streets

Engineer Harrington explained that the stop sign is too high, as a school sign is installed underneath it. Other signs are prohibited at stop signs, so the school sign has already been removed and the stop sign lowered. Taking such action will improve the City's favorability for ODOT grants. The tree will also be trimmed to increase visibility of the stop sign.

Richard Covert, 447 S. Denver, Astoria, asked if stop signs needed to be installed a certain distance from the street. Most signs in town are installed 2 ft from the curb, while the sign at 7<sup>th</sup> and Niagara is 5 ft from the curb.

Engineer Harrington believed there might be a recommended range, but installing stop signs farther from the curb allows for ADA accessibility. He displayed a photo of the stop sign and said he would find out if a utility was located where the stop sign should be located. The Transportation System Plan (TSP) Update has identified a project at this intersection that will improve conditions.

#### Item 4(c): 45<sup>th</sup> Street Parking

Engineer Harrington said he has visited the area five times and has yet to see a car parked along the street. Historical photos dated back to 1965 do not show any cars parked there either. The City Manager, who lives near there, agreed that something in the use has changed which has resulted in more cars in the area. President Innes stated there are two rental properties on the corner, so there are more vehicles. Engineer Harrington explained that no parking is allowed within 30 feet of the intersection because doing so would block a driveway. The other side of the street allows for one car to park on the corner. The Engineering Department recommends removing this parking space, which would extend the no parking zone to 50 feet. This will allow a vehicle to get off the highway and get past an oncoming vehicle. If removing the parking space does not resolve the issue, this matter will be revisited.

#### Item 4(d): Pedestrian Safety Update

Engineer Harrington gave an update on pedestrian safety efforts throughout Astoria, as follows:

- Pedestrian safety at the East Mooring Basin Boat Ramp has been an issue for some time. Usage of the boat ramp has not increased dramatically, but mixed use definitely exists with the Riverwalk intersecting with the boat ramp. Staff has had many meetings with the Port, who controls the boat ramp, to discuss various issues. Trucks with boat trailers will traverse the Riverwalk, make a 90-degree turn, then back across the Riverwalk, so Engineer Harrington has sent another email to the Port about this particular issue asking the Port to find a solution by the next fishing season.
  - Two thirds of the fishing boats that use this ramp are from out of State and about 300 licensed guide boats fish in the area. He has verified that the Port of Ilwaco still allows guide boats and while that port has its own problems, it has the proper facilities and no businesses suffer as a result. He hoped to work with the Port to find some solutions for the boat ramp.
- The current pedestrian safety project for crosswalks and related pedestrian signage is being funded by a \$100,000 Quick Fix Grant and implemented by the Oregon Department of Transportation ODOT Traffic Division.
- Standard stripes are required at signalized intersections because ODOT does not believe the Continental-style crosswalks include a statutory required stop bar. Astoria has requested that all other intersections on the ODOT system be the Continental crosswalks. He recalled that City Councilor Herzig suggested using a double-striped crosswalk; however, ODOT will not allow cities to choose their preferred style of crosswalk. The ODOT Traffic Engineer should be approving the long list of crosswalks in Astoria this week and funding will be available next week. The striping crew will begin work as soon as possible. Once the striping has been done, the Astoria Public Works Department must follow up by striping City crosswalks with matching markings.



- Getting "pedestrian-friendly town" signs approved is a lengthy and cumbersome process, similar to erecting a billboard. ODOT has suggested using their standard signs, and he reminded the APC about the importance of standardization due to the way people process information. He displayed photos of the ODOT signs, adding that the signs would be improved and placed at three entrances to Astoria. The signs will state the number of miles that drivers should watch for pedestrians. Staff is hoping to get approval on yellow-green signs, like the school signs, and signs that are as large as possible.
- The \$450,000 crosswalk signal project will be completed as part of the State Transportation Improvement Program (STIP). Research is currently being conducted and then a design will be created. Work may be contracted out or may be completed by STIP operations employees. As a Federally funded project, environmental and archeological research must be conducted. The extent of the work that will be done is uncertain, but has been scheduled to begin in 2016. He has requested that the work start sooner, which may be possible as ODOT wants to see successes and tax dollars on the streets.
- No feedback has been received on the pedestrian safety flyers sent out with the utility bills. The City is able to send out flyers for four more billing cycles. The City only pays \$0.02 each for the newer flyers, but no increase in postage is required when mailing with the utility bills.
- Parking removal is being investigated to find out if sight distance at intersections could be increased without losing parking. Parking spaces in Astoria are designed to accommodate trucks, so condensing the spaces would affect capacity, such that drivers would take longer to back into a parking spot. This issue is being discussed at TSP meetings and Staff is waiting for the TSP consultants to make a recommendation. Astoria cannot afford to lose parking and does not have a good location for an open parking lot. Parking has been an issue in the City for decades. A study conducted 30 plus years ago identified the site and cost for a parking lot, but it was voted down.
- The City is still waiting for ODOT to respond on sign color standards and rapid flashing beacon funding. As noted, Staff received positive feedback from ODOT on the signal modification.

Mr. Covert asked for details about securing a stop sign at 39<sup>th</sup> Street via above ground measures. Engineer Harrington explained the sign needs to be on a concrete slab. Mr. Covert believed this should take priority over the Fed Ex box near the sign. Engineer Harrington replied he would look into it, adding that most signs do not require a large foundation, but high winds can cause signs to fall over. Many signs downtown are just bolted into the sidewalk. Trimming the tree may resolve that issue.

REPORT OF OFFICERS - ITEM 5: No reports.

PUBLIC COMMENT - ITEM 6:

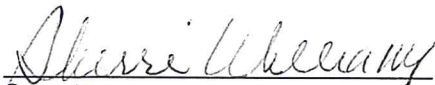
Mr. Covert asked for details about the Traffic Advisory Safety Committee. President Innes explained that the committee is comprised of seven members who are appointed by the Mayor. Each member serves a four-year term, which can be renewed. Officers are elected each year. The Traffic Safety Advisory Committee is tasked with drafting new ordinances, promoting traffic safety, and making recommendations to City Council.

Planner Johnson explained that the Traffic Safety Advisory Committee is an advisory committee to the City Council. Citizens who are not able to get issues resolved through the Engineering or Public Works Departments can bring issues to the Traffic Safety Advisory Committee, which can direct Staff to gather information that is used to make a recommendation to City Council. The Committee does not have the authority to make decisions. The Planning Commission can make decisions on permits, but the decision is appealable to City Council. Any amendments to a Code are made as a recommendation to City Council, which ultimately has final control over all decisions.

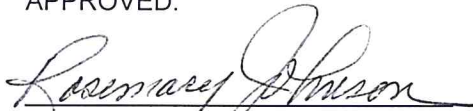
ADJOURNMENT - ITEM 7:

There being no further business, the meeting was adjourned at 7:45 p.m.

ATTEST:

  
Secretary

APPROVED:

  
Planner