

ASTORIA PLANNING COMMISSION MEETING

Astoria City Hall
January 29, 2019

CALL TO ORDER:

President Fitzpatrick called the meeting to order at 6:44 pm.

ROLL CALL:

Commissioners Present: President Sean Fitzpatrick, Vice President Daryl Moore, Jennifer Cameron-Lattek, Patrick Corcoran, Cindy Price, Chris Womack, and Brookley Henri.

Commissioners Excused: None.

Staff Present: City Manager Brett Estes, City Planner Nancy Ferber, Special Projects Planner Rosemary Johnson, City Engineer Nathan Crater, and Consultant Matt Hastie. The meeting is recorded and will be transcribed by ABC Transcription Services, Inc.

APPROVAL OF MINUTES:

President Fitzpatrick called for approval of the December 27, 2018 minutes.

Commissioner Henri moved that the Astoria Planning Commission approve the minutes of the December 27, 2018 meeting as presented; seconded by Vice President Moore. Motion passed 4 to 0 to 3, with Commissioners Price, Corcoran, and Womack abstaining.

PUBLIC HEARINGS:

President Fitzpatrick 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):

CU18-07 Conditional Use Request (CU18-07) by LAD Holdings LLC and Adrift Properties LLC to locate a maximum 40 room hotel and restaurant with parking on an adjacent lot in existing buildings at 1 9th Street (Map T8N R9W Section 8CB, Tax Lots 500 & 600; footing of Blocks 8 & 55, McClure) in the A-2 Zone (Aquatic Two Development) and the S-2A Zone (Tourist Oriented Shorelands).

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

Planner Johnson presented the written Staff report and recommended approval with conditions.

Commissioner Cameron-Lattek asked why the City did not consider parking for employees. Planner Johnson explained that when the parking codes were written, the anticipated impacts of a use considered visitors and employees, the availability of on-street parking, the availability of bus service, and bicycle and pedestrian traffic to the site. Currently, Smart Growth development processes encourage cities to reduce parking requirements and to encourage people to bicycle, walk, or take public transportation. Downtown Astoria has been built out to its limit, so there is no available parking. City Manager Estes added that parking ratios developed for the City are based on industry standards. Parking standards based on a per room basis do factor in employees. The new trend is to allocate curb space for things like ride sharing. Some jurisdictions have capped the number of parking spaces.

Commissioner Corcoran confirmed with Staff that flood and tsunami inundation zoning was not reviewable criteria. Staff would determine which Codes apply at the time of the building permit application.

Commissioner Price asked who owned what on the Riverwalk and what Riverwalk improvements would be required as part of this permit. Engineer Crater said the City owns the Riverwalk, the river trail area, and some improvements outside of that, but inside the railroad right-of-way. This specific section would require surfacing upgrades for pedestrian safety because the planks are deteriorated. Every year, the City embarks on a trestle maintenance program that focuses on the substructure, which includes some decking improvements. However, the improvements made to that area by Astoria Holdings did not last long.

Commissioner Price said she believed landscaping requirements would be flexible. Planner Johnson said the only requirement would be in the parking area on Astor. Potted plants can be used on the waterside, but the parking area needs to have a buffer from the pedestrian area along the sidewalk. The Code allows for up to 50 percent of non-vegetative landscaping.

Commissioner Henri asked if there were requirements for the valet parking to be running during certain hours and for a required number of valet staff. Planner Johnson noted that Staff has recommended a condition of approval that valet parking should be available when there are guests.

Commissioner Womack asked if the City had ever considered a conditional use permit for valet parking. Planner Johnson explained that there had been one request, but the valet parking was not a condition of approval. The Elliott Hotel had offered to do valet parking on Marine Drive across from the Columbian Theatre in a below grade parking lot. The hotel tried to offer valet parking as a service, but it was not required. In this case, the valet parking would be included with the guest room. Staff is recommending it as a condition of approval because of the location and compact parking lot.

Commissioner Womack asked how the valet parking would be enforced. Staff explained that enforcement by the City would be complaint driven. It would not be a violation for someone to park on the street. The three or four spaces allocated on 9th Street would be for short-term use when loading and unloading. These short-term spaces would be available to anyone, not just hotel guests.

Commissioner Henri asked for clarification about the location of the short-term spaces. Planner Johnson said the diagram used in the traffic impact study was created to demonstrate that those spaces could be accommodated. The City Engineer will review how the maneuvering of vehicles will occur to ensure safety. The proposed short-term loading spaces do not currently exist in the location shown.

President Fitzpatrick asked for more details about how the valet parking would work with the stacked parking. He also asked if 24-hour valet parking was a condition of approval. Planner Johnson recommended President Fitzpatrick ask the Applicants how they intended to manage their program. The condition in the Staff report requires valet parking 365 days a year.

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

Luke Colvin, 86946 Youngs River Road, Astoria, said he was with Arbor Care, Buoy Beer, and LAD Holdings. He has been involved with businesses in the community for about 15 years. He had a long-standing track record of starting, running, and growing companies that provide good jobs and have a positive impact on the community. Since he got approval and moved forward with Buoy Beer, he has a six-year track record of taking on unusual and challenging buildings on the Astoria waterfront, repurposing, and preserving a historic building that was falling into the river. Just like Buoy Beer, there is not a lot of viable options to put a sustainable business in one of the buildings on the adjacent property. The number of people who would be visiting as guest or employees is quite limited for an operation like this. The fish processing plant that has been operating for many years had far more employees and daily visitors to this location. Most of the businesses in the downtown core are doing as much or more to address the parking concerns of this project. He provides more private parking solutions for this project than most businesses in the downtown core and all of the hotels in the downtown core. He tried to look at all the positives and negatives of the project and tried to work appropriately with Staff to address all the issues to the best of his ability and in a reasonable and sustainable manner.

Vice President Moore said he was concerned that parking would overflow into the Buoy Beer parking lot. Mr. Colvin clarified that he represented LAD and the original founder of Buoy Beer. There have been numerous conversations about overflow parking with surrounding businesses, but the issues have always been resolved. He did not believe there would be much concern about the impact of the hotel on Buoy Beer. He wanted to make sure the parking issues with this new project were addressed. He added that as CEO of Buoy Beer and one of the founding partners of the proposed project, communication had been pretty open.

President Fitzpatrick said the hotel would run 24 hours a day, seven days a week, but the restaurant would not. He asked how valet parking would work in the middle of the night. Mr. Colvin said a valet employee would be on call 24/7 when guests were present, and Adrift Properties would be implementing the valet parking.

Tiffany Turner, 1107 37th Street, Seaview, WA, said she and her kids were born in Astoria. She and her husband have four hotels on the coast, two restaurants, and a distillery. Adrift is a social purpose corporation in Washington, focused on the communities they live and work in. Adrift Properties would be part of the ownership entity, and Adrift Hotels would lease the building.

President Fitzpatrick asked what would happen when a guest needed to leave and their car had been stacked. Ms. Turner said staff would be available at all times to get a car from valet. The number of people on staff would depend on the occupancy of the hotel. She anticipated three people on staff in the middle of the night during the summer, one person at the desk, one working valet, and one maintenance person.

David Kroening 1168 14th Street, Astoria, said he was part of the LAD group and one of the property owners of the proposed project and Buoy Beer. He had spoken with many of the business owners in the vicinity. Buoy Beer already overflows their parking lot, especially in the summer, so, he was definitely concerned about parking near the businesses. As part of this plan, he wanted to maximize the use of the land. LAD would retain the property on the landside, which complicates future development of the building, but it is the only way forward knowing the parking needs of the area. He was also actively looking at other properties in the area to find parking space they can lease for Buoy Beer employees, hotel employees, or valet parking. There are several developments happening within two or three blocks of the area, so he understood there were concerns in the community, but this application is best for all of the businesses.

President Fitzpatrick called for any testimony in favor of the application.

Jason Palmberg, 1790 SE 3rd Street, Astoria, said he was in favor of the project, but had some concerns about parking. The project would be a great repurpose of a currently unused building and the Applicants have a history of being good people running good businesses. He and a few property owners met with Mr. Kroening and Mr. Colvin last week to discuss all the issues, primarily parking. The property owners met with Staff yesterday to ask questions. He said Paul Larson had a concern about two blocks and one side street with 24-hour on-street parking. A lot of downtown employees use those parking spots and some of the businesses open at 9:00 am or 10:00 am.

Paul Larson, 92967 Pearson Road, Astoria, stated that by 8:30 am on Friday, 40 of the 50 on-street parking spots were taken.

Mr. Palmberg said before many of the businesses were open, there were only 10 spots left for the employees who work downtown, and it is the middle of January, not summer when things are a lot busier. The City was making concessions for the Applicants parking downtown. If the request is approved, the parking will work today, but could create congestion in the future. He asked if the Planning Commission and Staff were going to make concessions for future developments. He did not want to be the last one at the table asking for concessions only to be denied because the previous concessions had caused a problem. He had been forced into situations like that in the past with other developments. The Downtown Association is completing a parking study and they may have a lot of answers to the questions being raised. Maybe the Planning Commission should look at that study before making a decision on this.

Commissioner Price asked which businesses were concerned about parking. Mr. Palmberg clarified it was property owners who were concerned. Paul Larson owned the building that Sahara Pizza and Video Horizons used to be in, and his father owned Lower Columbia Bowl Corporation, which is directly across the street from the proposed parking lot.

Paul Larson, 92967 Pearson Road, Astoria, stated he was in favor of the project. He has worked with Buoy Beer over the years and they are good neighbors. He owned the Video Horizon building, which is on the same block. He was very concerned about parking. He read the traffic study completed for this project and assumed it would pertain to local parking. There are 173 pages of traffic study, but there is no parking study. He believed that City Manager Estes had said a parking study was not mandatory. Over the last several days, he took it upon himself to observe what was going on during the morning. He went to the area at 7:30 am and people begin filing in by 8:15 am. By 8:30 am, approximately 40 of the 50 parking spots are taken by business people and employees who work in his building, Buoy Beer and Pier 11. Everyone crowds into the two city blocks that are left and the downtown parking is very congested. He stayed until 11:00 am and no one had pulled out of those 40 parking spaces. The remaining 10 parking spaces were available when several businesses were not yet open, like Sahara Pizza, the bowling alley, the Video Horizon building, and Buoy Beer. City Manager Estes had said parking was not mandatory because the request is for a conditional use but bringing in 40 units would be difficult. He owns the Purple Cow Toy Store building and the parking changed completely when the Commodore Hotel came in. People have to walk a little bit to get to the building. When someone comes to stay at a hotel, they will roll in at all hours and are there until check out time. If this proposed hotel is allowed, there will be a fair amount of stay overs as people come in to work. It is treacherous getting across Marine Drive and if there is no parking around 7th and 8th Streets, the business people will have no place to park. He wanted to see the hotel go in. The Applicants are nice and have supported his company. He disliked having to throw a curve in their project, but the parking is a real problem. The parking lot in front of the Columbia House Condominiums is an open parking lot, so that could be a possibility.

Debbie Lou Schmidt, 89919 [no street name stated] Warrenton, stated she owned Fog Bounders Antique Mall, which is in the area of the proposed hotel. The Applicants had not spoken to her. Her employees have to park on Astor and the hotel and restaurant would take their parking spots. She liked the idea of valet parking, but the hotel guests should be required to park there. Her husband would never use valet parking because he wants the ability to get his car when he wants to. She was in favor of the hotel because it would be good for her business, just as Buoy Beer has been good for her business. People come in to her store as they walk by it, but parking is a big issue.

President Fitzpatrick called for any testimony impartial to the application.

Chris Farrar, 3023 Harrison Avenue, Astoria, said he was not impartial. He had some concerns but was in favor of the project. He encouraged the Planning Commission, the City, and any developer who comes to Astoria to consider adding electric charging stations to parking facilities because Astoria has a very limited number of stations to charge electric vehicles. Parking is a huge issue. He was a great fan of Buoy Beer until about a year ago when their parking lot shrunk and became an issue. He did not like dealing with the hassle of the traffic in that area and inadequate parking. He supported the idea of a hotel, especially since it is not a four-story monstrosity blocking views. It is using an existing building, which is the way the city should be going. Existing space should be used as is, but it takes inventive minds to figure out how to do that. He would never use valet parking and would park on the street. The Planning Commission needs to address parking on all projects. The city will become very unpleasant to be in if no one can park or drive anywhere.

President Fitzpatrick called for any testimony opposed to the application. Hearing none, he called for the Applicant's rebuttal.

Ms. Turner said there would definitely be an electric charger in the parking area, just as they have at their other properties. Her largest property has 82 rooms and a full-service restaurant and bar with almost 90 seats, and 82 parking spaces plus employee parking. Even when the hotel is at full occupancy, people are not always at the hotel. This was addressed in the Staff report. Guests often arrive between 5:00 pm and 9:00 pm and then leave between 7:00 am and 11:00 am the next morning, so it is rare to have all parking spots occupied even when the hotel is at full occupancy. It is not her intention to gouge people for more money with the valet parking. It was a creative solution to a big problem. The hotel would likely charge a typical parking fee as part of the room rate for the valet parking instead of charging an additional valet parking fee.

Commissioner Henri asked if there was a backup plan for inadequate parking. Ms. Turner stated there were not a lot of options, but she was looking at all viable options. If the City requires 43 parking spaces, there is a chance the project cannot be built. Currently, there are no long term leads available, so the one-year trial is

great. Purchasing a lot further away will take more time. She believed the solution was creative and adequately addressed an issue that may or may not be an issue. There is no backup plan. Guests need to park somewhere, so the hotel would try to provide the best possible experience for their guests by making sure they have parking. She believed 30 parking spots would be adequate for guests and staff.

Commissioner Henri asked if there was any way to reduce the number of rooms or add parking in the building. Ms. Turner said she had all of those conversations. The shed building will have bike parking and bike storage. She served on the Economic Development Council in Pacific County and there is a lot of talk about bike trails and encouraging cyclists to come through, so, she hoped there would be fewer cars. One big issue is safe storage for bikes. She could not reduce the number of rooms. A 40-room hotel is not huge. The project is about community and fun. The project has to make money, but that is not the sole purpose. Anything smaller than 40 rooms would be really hard to pencil out. If the Planning Commission required a 30-room hotel because there are only 30 parking spaces, the building would stay as is because that would not be financially viable.

Vice President Moore asked if the Applicants ever spoke with the City about leasing or purchasing the park on 9th and Astor for parking. Ms. Turner replied she had not. Mr. Colvin added he was told the park was a historic site.

President Fitzpatrick called for a recess at 7:55 pm. The meeting reconvened at 8:00 pm.

President Fitzpatrick called for closing remarks from Staff.

Planner Johnson stated that if an outright use went into this location, there would not be any off-street parking requirements. This conditional use would guarantee 30 off-street parking spaces. Additionally, the valet parking service would be required 365 days a year while this use was in operation. Land use planning considers the cumulative impacts of the proposed use. In this case, the use will provide parking where parking is not required. The off-street parking helps to mitigate the use. Each conditional use request is considered on its own merit. Staff has determined that this particular use should not be permitted if the Applicants are unable to provide parking.

President Fitzpatrick closed the public hearing at 8:02 pm and called for Commission discussion and deliberation.

Commissioner Henri said she was trying hard not to let her biases influence her decision because she was excited about the potential of the project and was passionate about urban infill. She was very tired of the parking discussion. She agreed with the findings in the Staff report. If this were an outright use, off-street parking would not be required. In all fairness, the Planning Commission needed to consider that almost every project that is reviewed by the Commission has some kind of parking issue. It would not be fair to set precedents and each project should be judged individually and fairly. She hesitated to prohibit this project from moving forward because of parking issues. The parking issue is a bigger problem that requires problem solving beyond just a project. She was in favor of the project.

Commissioner Corcoran said he supported the project, the people, and their ideas. The concerns are in the broader context of parking. The valet approach will involve a lot of hustle and hand trucking and in the context of difficult parking, he liked the initiative demonstrated by the Applicants. He was in favor of the application.

Vice President Moore stated he was not worried about parking. He appreciated the provisions in the conditions and the fact that the Applicants were willing to go to lengths to provide parking in an area that did not require parking. He does not experience parking problems when he is downtown, and he is curious to see what the parking study will produce. This project could potentially give up some overwater development that would be useable for water dependent uses. While there is no huge demand to bring water dependent industry and commerce to Astoria, there is a very limited and dwindling supply of overwater facilities for water dependent uses. Economic Goal 4 in the Comprehensive Plan is to continue to encourage water dependent industries to locate where there is deep water, adequate backup space, and adequate public facilities. The policy associated with that goal is to maintain areas of the city in order to provide sufficient land for water dependent and non-water dependent industries. He believed this application met the reviewable criteria but wanted to point out that Astoria was running low on water dependent facilities. The Planning Commission should keep that in mind moving forward.

Commissioner Price said she was not worried about parking and appreciated the work put into the project to find parking. The Applicants have operated with great respect for the community and run beautiful businesses. She agreed with the findings in the Staff report. Astoria still has many other areas that can be used for water dependent uses if needed. She was in favor of the reuse of this building and supported the project. Parking is a much broader issue than one project can take on. She hoped the Downtown Association survey would give the City something to engage with.

President Fitzpatrick asked if Commissioner Price was suggesting the Planning Commission wait until the parking study was complete before making a decision on this request.

Commissioner Price answered no, it could be a while before the study was complete and she did not believe parking was a problem. She believed the Downtown Association was simply conducting a survey of available parking. The City Engineering Department would have to develop recommendations for increasing available parking. She did not see any reason to hold up a project that has gone beyond the Code to find parking.

Commissioner Womack stated he believed the concept of taking the building from what it looks like now and turning it into something beautiful on the waterfront would be economically beneficial. He believed the project met the reviewable criteria.

Commissioner Cameron-Latteck said she supported the project. She believed it was a good reuse of the property and it is in the hands of people she knew to be good, community-minded people who have seriously considered the concerns of their neighbors. She stayed in a hotel in Portland that required valet parking because of the location. With no charge for valet service, it was much easier to make the decision to use the valet parking in that situation. This hotel would be similar because the valet service would be so practical. She hoped the hotel would have a high usage rate of their valet service. She appreciated that the Applicants worked hard on this project and took it seriously.

Vice President Moore added that the Commission wished they could see the future projects, but they can only make decisions based on what is before them. The Commission considers how this application impacts the area. If an identical request is submitted down the road, it might not be appropriate at that time.

President Fitzpatrick said he did not believe it was likely this building would be used for something else. There is a dialysis center going in that will take up parking previously used by Buoy Beer customers. He visited the site at noon that day to look at the buildings, parking, and access to the site. Five years ago, he could get a parking space at Buoy Beer. Now, that is not so easy. Generally, he did not worry about parking if he only had to park about two blocks away. However, parking is becoming an issue. There was a large parking lot that was used for a long time and Buoy Beer has reduced their parking in that lot. There is construction going on at the dialysis center and a couple of piers are torn up, so Buoy Beer employees are parking on Buoy's property because there are not many spaces nearby. He was very concerned about the parking. While an allowed use would not require parking by the City, the people who worked there would still need parking. When the fish processing plant was in operation, he often saw three, four, or five workers getting out of a vehicle. The city is running out of parking downtown and the property owners and business owners who are there on a daily basis would recognize the parking issues best. Since the valet service is untested in Astoria, there is no way to know how it will work. He asked what other Commissioners believed would be a reasonable amount of parking to require for this project. He said he was in favor of the project.

Commissioner Henri said she did not know if 30 parking spaces was appropriate for this project. When the hotel is at capacity, the hotel would need a space for each room because no trains come to Astoria. Even though there is bus service from Portland, people usually drive to Astoria. She wanted the City and the Planning Commission to allow projects like this. For the future, she suggested a park and ride program or a parking district. If the Commission required more than 30 parking spaces, the project might not happen. Parking is not just about convenience. It is also about economics, accessibility, and equity.

Commissioner Corcoran stated he was surprised by the number of spaces, but parking is not required. The valet is a creative experiment and could be part of the mix for future parking. There is a huge effort for adequate parking and a proposal for an innovative approach for dealing with parking. He wished there was more parking

available, but the valet is something no one else is doing. The valet approach is something the City could use more broadly in the future.

Vice President Moore said when he sees occupied parking spaces and full parking lots in downtown, he is excited because it demonstrates an active and vibrant downtown. Half full parking lots and a lot of empty spots on the street is not what Astoria wants downtown. Astoria has not reached 100 percent of its parking needs, so this application is a good idea and he was excited to see what the Applicants bring with this project. Revitalizing a building will bring excitement to the downtown core. A minimum of 30 parking spaces is excellent in his opinion.

Commissioner Cameron-Lattek stated she was comfortable with 30 parking spaces. The hotel will only be at full capacity about 20 percent of the time they are open if they are doing well. Her business is adjacent to a hotel and their occupancy directly affects her business. During check in time around 4:00 pm, one 15-minute loading parking spot is used. There is never a time when she has seen the streets full of hotel guests. The guests use the hotel's off-street parking in the lot across the street and that lot is never at full capacity. People check in starting at 4:00 pm and her business closes at 4:00 pm. Check out time is 11:00 am, but she could not say what time most guests leave and move their cars.

Commissioner Corcoran asked if the hotel would need to a full-time person to keep people who are not hotel guests out of their parking lot.

Commissioner Cameron-Lattek noted that in the past three or four years, there was only one time someone parking in her reserved spot located in the hotel parking lot. Appropriate signage would result in adherence to the rules.

Vice President Moore believed the lot would be clearly marked as a private lot.

President Fitzpatrick reopened the public hearing. He asked what time Buoy Beer began serving and what time they closed.

David Kroening 1168 14th Street, Astoria, said Buoy Beer opens at 11:00 am and closes between 9:00 pm and 11:00 pm depending on the time of year.

President Fitzpatrick called for public testimony. Seeing none, he closed the public hearing.

President Fitzpatrick said he was closer to being convinced that 30 parking space would be appropriate. However, he was still concerned that if the valet service did not work, the Applicants would have 90 days to find more parking.

Planner Johnson added that Applicants are required to have 30 off-street parking spaces and the current configuration would require valet service. If the valet service was lost, the Applicants would have 90 days to address the problem and provide 30 spaces. If 30 spaces were not provided, the hotel would have to cease operations.

President Fitzpatrick said if the valet service did not work, he hoped the Applicants would continue to be good neighbors and work to find sufficient parking without creating an impact.

Commissioner Cameron-Lattek moved that the Astoria Planning Commission adopt the Findings and Conclusions contained in the Staff report and approve Conditional Use CU18-07 by LAD Holdings LLC and Adrift Properties LLC, with the additions of Conditions 24 and 25, specifying that valet parking is required while the use is in operation; seconded by Vice President Moore. Motion passed unanimously.

President Fitzpatrick read the rules of appeal into the record.

WORK SESSION:

Item 5(a): Riverfront Vision – Urban Core / “Urban Core Code Amendments: Summary of Draft Recommendations (Task 4)”

Consultant Matt Hastie gave a Power Point presentation on the recommended Code amendments to implement the Urban Core area of the Riverfront Vision Plan, highlighting modifications made in response to Commissioner feedback given at previous work sessions. During the presentation, he and Staff answered clarifying questions by Commissioners, Mr. Hastie also posed questions of the Commission and requested feedback, and the Commission took public comments.

President Fitzpatrick called for public comments on the recommended limitation areas, non-limitation areas, and allowances.

Larry Allen, 690 11th Street, Astoria, said on December 12, 2018, the City Council tentatively approved Hollander Hospitality to build a four-story Marriott on the river front. He was stunned at the statements released by the three Council members who voted for the approval, saying they had no choice. The issue came down to a lack of clarity in the City's Development Code with the wording leaving things open to interpretation. If the community does not want four-story buildings, then the Code needs to be amended. The Council agreed with Hollander's argument that it was not clear which standards applied to new construction and which applied to existing buildings. The duties of the Planning Commission are vital to the final decisions made by City Council. It is important to continue requiring conditional use permits for all aquatic zones. The Planning Commission should have more input before City Council makes a final decision. Since Heritage Park has been approved, he hoped there would not be structures placed in front of the park.

Chris Farrar, 3023 Harrison Avenue, Astoria, said he wanted the height limits kept as low as possible.

Jim Allegria, 1264 Grand Avenue, Astoria, stated he supported Option 1 with no building in the limited zones. He also recommended that the non-limited parcel with pilings be limited because no one wants a building on that parcel.

Steve Fick, 1 4th Street, Astoria, said he lived in Astoria for most of his life and valued what was here. He wanted a quality city with quality buildings, but he also wanted flexibility. He owns a fish plant and other developments, and he planned to do something with the brick building. It is very expensive to live over water. Sometimes it is necessary to think outside of the box. Businesses will change and come and go. If he needed an ice house, he might need 45 feet. He wanted the opportunity to have housing in the area or open a restaurant. He worked on the Riverfront Vision Plan and thought it did a good job creating open spaces, congested spaces, and some in the middle for a variety of uses. There will be a tremendous amount of tax revenue from the dialysis center and hotel. Those funds could be designated to purchase the old can company. He walks the waterfront 300 days per year. There is one warehouse that blocks a lot of the ocean front. The City could purchase that warehouse with tax revenue. He asked that the Planning Commission leave flexibility in the plan. He was concerned that the City did not have the assurance that applicants had the financial strength to complete projects and make money. There are only three or four properties like his that do not have height restrictions. He had no intentions of abusing that. The Commission can always say no to something down the road, but it would be difficult to get something back. He has a large pile field and it is too cost prohibitive to put a condominium there. He waited a year and a half to get two bumper pilings replaced on his dock. Overwater construction is very challenging and he did not think it would not be a problem.

Staff confirmed for Commissioners that existing buildings and structures taller than the proposed height limits would be allowed to remain as is.

Commissioners were divided on limitation areas. Commissioner Price wanted to prohibit overwater development and limit shore development to 35 feet high. Vice President Moore and Commissioners Henri, Corcoran, Womack and Cameron-Lattek supported Option 1 with the recommended allowances. While the public is opposed to overwater development, the Comprehensive Plan and Riverfront Vision Plan support and promote development in the Urban Core. Variances for existing structures and business could be a good compromise.

President Fitzpatrick called for public comments on the recommended Codes for physical access to the river.

Chris Farrar, 3023 Harrison Avenue, Astoria, said he believed the recommended setbacks were too narrow and it would turn people off from coming to Astoria. The waterfront would be given up to wealthy investors who come to build big buildings on the river. He believed City Council would vote this down. The maximum square footage is too large and should be scaled down. He asked if the Planning Commission was supposed to represent the community or do its own thing. He also wanted to know why the Planning Commission did not listen to the citizens.

Jared Rickenbach, 37734 Eagle Lane, Astoria, said the feasibility is challenging because the idea of building out the spaces or creating access to the river is very expensive. What is feasible down the road will be different from what is feasible right now. Therefore, flexibility will keep Astoria alive. If the Codes are too rigid, Astoria will have closed doors to opportunities. He believed that currently, it would cost about \$400 per square foot to build over the water, compared to \$150 per square foot on land.

Steve Fick, 1 4th Street, Astoria, asked if he would get his property taxes back on his property if he had to start scaling back what he could do. Allowing people to walk on his dock might not be a good fit.

Commissioners discussed the recommended options for developers to provide physical access to the river. Most of the Commissioners supported all of the options, but Vice President Moore believed, and Commissioner Womack agreed, that developers should only be allowed and required to build out the right-of-way. He believed the recommended options might be appropriate for commercial uses, but not industrial uses. Staff responded that Vice President Moore's idea would likely require a public/private partnership and could result in issues related to enforcement and property ownership. However, they offered options for implementing the idea citing other similar situations that already existed in Astoria. As a compromise, Commissioner Henri suggested that the option to allow mid site access be eliminated and add the option to build out over the right-of-way.

City Manager Estes noted it was about 10:00 pm and the Code work was a long way from being complete. He suggested scheduling a work session with no other agenda items. After discussing availabilities, Staff and the Planning Commission agreed to schedule a work session on Tuesday, February 5, 2019 at 6:00 pm.

REPORTS OF OFFICERS/COMMISSIONERS:

There were none.

STAFF UPDATES/STATUS REPORTS:

Item 7(a): Save the Dates

- February 6, 2019 – 4:30 pm to 6:30 pm TGM Uniontown Reborn Public Meeting at Holiday Inn Express
- February 26, 2019 – 6:30 pm APC meeting

PUBLIC COMMENTS:

There were none.

ADJOURNMENT:

There being no further business, the meeting was adjourned at 10:01 pm.

APPROVED:

[at the 2/26/2019 APC meeting / no changes]



Community Development Director