

ASTORIA PLANNING COMMISSION MEETING

Astoria City Hall

January 8, 2019

CALL TO ORDER:

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

ROLL CALL:

Commissioners Present: President Sean Fitzpatrick, Vice President Daryl Moore, Pat Corcoran, Brookley Henri and Cindy Price

Commissioners Excused: Jennifer Cameron-Lattek and Chris Womack

Staff Present: City Manager Brett Estes, City Planner Nancy Ferber, Contract Planner Rosemary Johnson, Contract Planner Matt Hastie of Angelo Planning Group and City Historian John Goodenberger. The meeting is recorded and will be transcribed by ABC Transcription Services, Inc.

ELECTION OF OFFICERS:

In accordance with Sections 1.110 and 1.115 of the Astoria Development Code, the APC needs to elect officers for 2019. The 2018 officers were: President Kent Easom, Vice President Sean Fitzpatrick and Secretary Tiffany Taylor.

Commissioner Henri moved that the Astoria Planning Commission elect Sean Fitzpatrick as President, Daryl Moore as Vice President, and Tiffany Taylor as Secretary for 2019; seconded by Commissioner Price. Motion passed unanimously.

APPROVAL OF MINUTES:

President Fitzpatrick called for approval of the December 11, 2018 minutes.

Commissioner Henri requested the following change for clarity:

- Page 3, Paragraph 10 – “Commissioner Henri confirmed **with Staff** that land dedicated for public use and street trees could be maintained by a homeowner’s association.”

President Fitzpatrick noted the following correction:

- Page 3, First Sentence – “Commissioner Herman said he **she** was concerned that no turn lanes would be built...”

Commissioner Moore moved that the Astoria Planning Commission approve the minutes of the December 11, 2018 meeting as corrected; seconded by Commissioner Henri. Motion passed 3 to 0 to 2. Commissioners Price and Corcoran abstained.

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):

CU18-10 Conditional Use CU18-10 by James Neikes to locate automotive sales in an existing parking lot at 609 Bond Street (Map T8N R9W Section 8CB, Tax Lot 4400 and 4480; lot 2, McClures) in the C-3 General Commercial Zone. Continued from November 27, 2018.
UPDATE: The applicant has verbally informed Staff he is withdrawing this application. We expect to receive written notice by January 8, 2019.

Planner Ferber stated the Applicant formally withdrew the application after the public notice had gone out regarding the hearing.

WORK SESSION:

City Manager Estes provided background information on the work done to date on the Urban Core Area of the Riverfront Vision Plan. He noted this work session would focus on exterior design elements. At the next Planning Commission meeting on January 29, 2019, all of the code amendments discussed to date will be reviewed.

Item 6(a): John Goodenberger: Historic Design in Downtown Astoria/Urban Core Area

John Goodenberger, City Historian, introduced himself and described his role on City Staff. He gave a PowerPoint presentation on the history of Astoria's waterfront, the historic context of the Urban Core area, historic buildings on the waterfront, architectural designs and styles, and overall preservation philosophy.

Commissioner Price asked if the preservation philosophy was included in the two previous work sessions on the Urban Core. City Historian Goodenberger explained that the intent was to provide flexibility and the working waterfront could encompass all aspects of the preservation philosophy.

Commissioner Corcoran asked for direction on how new development could replicate historic buildings. City Historian Goodenberger said things could be subtle and should seem natural. Contrasts should not be shocking. When reviewing applications, Commissioners should consider whether the forms and details come together in a way that makes sense.

Commissioner Moore said Astoria changes regularly and the waterfront has changed many times throughout the years. The history needs to be preserved, but the question was to decide which history to preserve. Planner Johnson explained that none of the other areas of the Riverfront Vision Plan had historic districts. The Urban Core is a National Register Historic District, so projects will have to be reviewed by the Planning Commission and Historic Landmarks Commission. The design review for the riverfront must overlap with the historic review.

City Manager Estes asked the Commissioners to consider the information provided in the presentation when deciding what is appropriate for the Urban Core.

Item 6(b): Riverfront Vision: Urban Core – Draft Urban Core Code Amendments #1C (Task 3)

Matt Hastie, Angelo Planning Group, briefly reviewed previous work sessions on Code amendments for the Urban Core area. He presented via PowerPoint the recommended Code amendments pertaining to design guidelines, design standards, setbacks, and landscaping, which were included in the Staff report. During the presentation, Staff posed questions and Commissioners discussed the proposed amendments and provided feedback with the following key comments:

- Is the proposed language related to façade variation and building massing appropriate? And, should additional guidelines and standards be added to address building orientation, distinctive façade features, storefront designs, or parking location?
 - Commissioners Price, Henri, and Fitzpatrick agreed the proposed language was appropriate and that additional guidelines and standards should be added to the Code.
 - Commissioner Moore was concerned about how these guidelines and standards might be applied to historic structures that are not buildings, such as the boiler out in the water.
 - Staff advised the standards would apply to development, which extended beyond just a building per se. Comparing new construction to historic structures has been problematic in the past. The word building could be retained to specifically mean new development must be compatible with a building, or change the word building to structure so new developments have to be compatible with anything historic. However, the intent of the proposed language was to ensure new developments are compatible with the two to three block area that can be seen from a project site rather than being compatible with just one adjacent structure.
- Commissioner Price believed certain standards and guidelines should apply to the north side of buildings located on the north side of the trolley tracks, given the boat traffic that will have a view of Astoria from the river.

President Fitzpatrick called for a recess at 7:45 pm. The work session reconvened at 7:50 pm.

Staff continued with the presentation and answered clarifying questions about existing and proposed Code language. Commissioners discussed and responded to Staff's request for feedback as follows:

- Should exceptions to upper floor window coverage standards be permitted to accommodate elevator shafts?
 - After some discussion about architectural features that could prevent blank, flat facades, Commissioners Henri, Moore, Corcoran, and Price agreed exceptions should be allowed, as long as a building's features were aesthetically appropriate and consistent.
- Are any of the Civic Greenway Overlay standards for roof form, doors, windows, siding, and wall treatments, awnings, lighting, and signs appropriate for the Urban Core area?
 - President Fitzpatrick recommended more precise language, like numerical standards, for awning sizes and colors used on accent trim.
 - Commissioner Henri recommended that wall washing light should not be directed into the night sky.
- Is anything missing from the proposed Code amendments that should be addressed in the design standards and guidelines?
 - Commissioners Price and Henri wanted bright white lights on signs to be prohibited. Staff described several ways that such lighting was discouraged in other areas of the city and suggested the Code require light fixtures be recessed in cans. It would be difficult for the City to control lumens, but lower wattages could be required. Commissioners and Staff briefly discussed backlit signs and neon signs. Staff confirmed they would revise the proposed Code language for lighting in the Urban Core area according to the Commission's feedback.
- Commissioners confirmed for Staff that the proposed setbacks for the east/west rights-of-way were appropriate.
- Are the proposed landscape standards appropriate? Are there any landscape standards that should be added?
 - Staff explained that in some areas, the Riverwalk is over the water and the bank is on the south side. Therefore, the Code language would be clarified to indicate that landscaping requirements would apply to properties abutting the river even if they are not on the river side of the trail.
 - Commissioner Price suggested adding the definition of encourage. She also wanted to require permeable paving and stormwater techniques. Staff confirmed they would do research on regulatory requirements for stormwater techniques.
 - Commissioners Price and Henri debated on street tree requirements. Larger trees would block views, but only from the ground level where views would already be impacted by buildings. Additionally, only a few varieties of columnar trees would grow to 15 feet wide. Staff confirmed that the City had a list of preferred trees in the Code and the height limit could be reduced.

Staff reviewed next steps and confirmed the proposed Code language would be revised according to the Commission's direction.

President Fitzpatrick called for public comments.

Elizabeth Menetrey, 3849 Grand Avenue, Astoria, noted that balconies were related to how buildings look.

Mr. Hastie confirmed balconies had been discussed in a previous work session and the Commission's direction was to allow balconies that did not project into the step back area or obstruct the view.

Ms. Menetrey suggested the Commission amend Development Code Section 3.075 Exception to Building Height Limitations. She believed allowing exceptions when there are step backs was ridiculous. Total building height should be 35 feet without exceptions.

Sarah Lu Heath, Executive Director of the Astoria Downtown Historic District Association (ADHDA), said about half of the historic district falls within the Urban Core area. Eleven years ago, ADHDA did not want to see competing business types or use types along the river trail. The ADHDA does not currently feel that the river trail and downtown core are separate places. It is one district and the two areas complement each other. The opinion of 11 years ago has changed because it is no longer relevant.

Will Johnson, 509 Kensington Avenue, Astoria, appreciated the discussion of the view from the river, which is important to him because he works on the river every day. He did not want trees along the north/south streets. This is called a vision plan and the community wants the ability to see things. He liked shrubs. He also believed 35 feet was plenty high for buildings. He asked the Commission to represent the residents, not the tourists. He also asked Commissioners to make common sense decisions.

REPORTS OF OFFICERS/COMMISSIONERS:

President Fitzpatrick thanked the Commissioners for re-electing him as President.

STAFF UPDATES/STATUS REPORTS:

Meeting Schedule

- January 10, 2019 – Land Use Training at 6:00 pm
- January 29, 2019 – APC/TSAC Meeting at 6:30 pm

PUBLIC COMMENTS:

Will Johnson, 509 Kensington Avenue, Astoria, stated Astoria's parking issues were crazy. The newspaper just published an article about leasing parking. He wanted to know what could be done before more development occurs and increases the demand for parking. The City should take care of what it currently has.

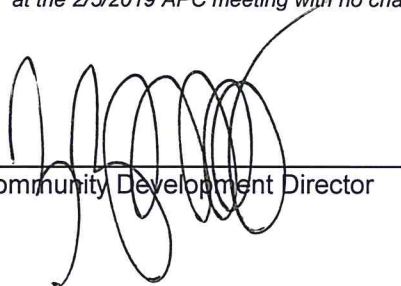
City Manager Estes suggested Mr. Johnson speak with Ms. Heath about the ADHDA's parking study.

ADJOURNMENT:

There being no further business, the meeting was adjourned at 9:05 pm.

APPROVED:

at the 2/5/2019 APC meeting with no changes



Community Development Director