

A regular meeting of the Astoria Common Council was held at the above place at the hour of 7:00 pm.

Councilors Present: Nemlowill, Jones, Price, Brownson, and Mayor LaMear.

Councilors Excused: None

Staff Present: City Manager Estes, Community Development Director Cronin, Planner Ferber, Parks and Recreation Director Cosby, Finance Director Brooks, Fire Chief Ames, Police Chief Johnston, Public Works Director Cook, Assistant City Engineer Crater, Library Director Pearson, and City Attorney Henningsgaard. The meeting is recorded and will be transcribed by ABC Transcription Services, Inc.

REPORTS OF COUNCILORS

Item 3(a): **Councilor Jones** reported that he recently attended a meeting with some of his constituents who operate Airbnbs. All of the Councilors have received emails from people on each side of the issue and it was interesting to hear their viewpoints about why they would or would not rent a room in their home to a permanent resident. While Council is not directly addressing this issue, he encouraged people to continue sharing their opinions. He confirmed for Councilor Nemlowill that the meeting was arranged by Yvonne Edwards, a Ward 4 constituent who invited to him to the meeting via email.

Item 3(b): **Councilor Price** had no reports.

Item 3(c): **Councilor Brownson** reported that he hosted a Meet the Councilor session the previous week. He was able to speak with Astoria residents, but only one person from his ward attended. He would host another session next month, starting at 5:15 pm because 4:00 pm was not a very convenient time. He invited his Ward 2 constituents to attend the meetings or contact him through the City or social media.

Item 3(d): **Councilor Nemlowill** invited everyone at the meeting to sing *Happy Birthday* to Councilor Jones and they did.

Item 3(e): **Mayor LaMear** reported that she saw the play *Astoria* in Portland with a group from the Maritime Museum. She received a poster signed by all of the actors, which will be framed and put on display. The play was wonderful and she encouraged everyone to see Part 2 when it is shown. She wanted the play to come to Astoria, but the set would take up the entire Liberty Theatre. She also attended the Clatsop County Mayors and City Managers luncheon during the previous week. It was interesting to hear about what is going on throughout the County in other jurisdictions. She got to hear about problems they have in common with Astoria and issues that are unique to each community.

CHANGES TO AGENDA

City Manager Estes stated that Mayor LaMear has added the following items to the agenda:

- Item 6(d): Resolution Declaring the City of Astoria as a City of Inclusivity with Respect to Immigrants and Refugees
- Item 6(e): Gillnetting on the Columbia River
- Item 6(f): Resolution Opposing Proposed Oil, Methanol, and Coal Exports on the Lower Columbia River

Mayor LaMear clarified that Item 6(f) should not be added to the agenda at this time. The agenda was approved with the addition of Items 6(d) and 6(e).

PRESENTATIONS

Item 5(a): Brooke Stanley of North Coast Watershed – “Bear Creek Working Group”

Brooke Stanley, Watershed Coordinator for the North Coast Watershed Association (NCWA), will provide Council with a report regarding the "Bear Creek Working Group" which is comprised of citizens who meet monthly to discuss Astoria's drinking water.

Brooke Stanley, 488 Lexington Avenue, Astoria, explained that the NCWA is a small non-profit that works with watershed councils throughout Clatsop County. The Bear Creek Working Group, a citizen group, was created a year and a half ago to look at Astoria's drinking water, which comes from Knappa. Astoria is lucky to own its entire watershed because this allows the City to have a say in how the drinking water is managed. The working group is interested in gathering more information and having transparency about the drinking water so that information can be shared with the public more often than just once a year. She explained that the recent high levels of haloacetic acids that were in violation led to a lot of community interest and the working group learned that there was no clear understanding about what happened. People found out after the fact that they had been drinking the water. It would be wonderful if information could be published sooner than later. Haloacetic acids can be harmful to pregnant women, elderly people, and people with compromised immune systems. She did not become aware of the high levels until her mom told her about the article published in the *Daily Astorian*. She stopped drinking the water because she is pregnant. She was never notified of any resolution to the problem, so she called the City to find out. Fixing this breakdown in communication can help the community trust that the City is managing the drinking water well. She believed Staff was doing an amazing job at meeting all of the requirements, but better communication would lead to better understanding about what the drinking water quality really is. Bear Creek Working Group would like to see more testing in the watershed and the test results published. The City tests for chlorine multiple times a day and it would be wonderful if that information were available. The working group serves as an ally for the City to disseminate information and apply for grants to improve the drinking water quality, do more testing, and work with the public. She looked forward to working with the Public Works Department. More information is available on the NCWS website, ClatsopWatersheds.org.

Item 5(b): SarahLu Heath of Astoria Downtown Historic District Association (ADHDA)

SarahLu Heath, Executive Director, Astoria Downtown Historic Downtown Association (ADHDA), will make a presentation regarding the ADHDA's services to the local business community for 2016 and 2017 year to date.

SarahLu Heath, 854 Glasgow Avenue, Astoria, updated Council on ADHDA's annual events, new and upcoming events, ongoing beautification efforts, and awards the ADHDA has earned. She explained how each event benefits the community and Astoria's economy. She also reviewed via PowerPoint how the ADHDA's partnership with the Oregon Main Street Association affects revitalization in the downtown core.

Councilor Nemlowill asked how the ADHDA was involved in the Advance Astoria project. She also wanted to know how their cluster analysis fit into the City's economic development strategy. Ms. Heath said Director Cronin is on the ADHDA's Business Development Board. Also, she has given Director Cronin feedback about public meetings and she plans to attend the Advance Astoria meeting on March 9th.

Item 5(c): Nancy Ferber of Community Development Department regarding Historic Preservation Grant Program 2017

City Planner/Project Manager Nancy Ferber will discuss the City of Astoria's receipt of an \$11,000 grant from the Oregon Heritage Commission and State Historic Preservation Office (SHPO) to assist Astoria property owners with renovations of historic homes.

Planner Ferber announced that grant funds are now available to homeowners in Uniontown for exterior alterations. The City is offering a 50/50 match up to \$3,000 per project. She gave a PowerPoint presentation on grant eligibility, application procedures, and past grant funded projects. If the City cannot spend all of the funds in Uniontown, the grant will be opened up to the rest of the City with the same eligibility rules and application procedures. She made informational post cards available to the public and said updates would be posted on social media and the City's website.

Councilor Price confirmed the projects had to be complete by the end of July.

REGULAR AGENDA ITEMS

Item 6(a): Ordinance Revising Legal Description to the Astor-West First Amendment (1st Reading) (Community Development)

The Astoria City Council approved an ordinance to expand the Astor West Urban Renewal Area on November 21, 2016. After adoption, the amendment was sent to Clatsop County for recording. The County Surveyor's office noted an error on the legal description, which is a requirement to establish the exact boundary of the amendment. The contracted surveyor has made the corrections and the County Surveyor has approved as to form. The City Attorney has recommended readopting the First Amendment through a revised ordinance. No other changes to the ordinance are proposed. The City Attorney has approved as to form. It is recommended that the City Council hold a first reading of the ordinance and readopt the First Amendment to the Astor West Urban Renewal Plan.

City Council Action: Motion made by Councilor Nemlowill, seconded by Councilor Brownson, to hold a first reading of the ordinance and readopt the First Amendment to the Astor West Urban Renewal Plan. Motion carried unanimously. Ayes: Councilors Price, Jones, Nemlowill, Brownson, and Mayor LaMear; Nays: None.

Director Cronin conducted the first reading of the ordinance.

Item 6(b): Spur 14 Water Line Project – Final Pay Adjustment (Public Works)

The goal of the Spur 14 Water Line Project is to provide a direct connection to the City's best quality water source. The project has been completed and will provide better operational control over source water selection, better flow monitoring, reduced maintenance on existing pressure relief valves, and should reduce the level of disinfection byproducts in treated water. This enhances the City's ability to stay in compliance with United States Environmental Protection Agency drinking water regulations. In June 2016, Council authorized award for construction of this project to Big River Construction, Inc., in the amount of \$286,007. During construction, two pay adjustments were processed that totaled \$6,440.51. This final pay adjustment of \$26,279.89 accounts for unforeseen conditions associated with existing infrastructure and changes in scope necessary to complete the project. Funds are available for the final pay adjustment in the Capital Improvement Fund, Fiscal Year 2016-17 budget; however, a budget amendment will be required at the end of the fiscal year. It is recommended that Council authorize Staff to approve the final pay adjustment in the amount of \$26,279.89.

Councilor Price asked if Staff could address some of Ms. Stanley's concerns about reporting test results. Assistant City Engineer Crater said the City tests the water system daily for various items. The City only reports what is required by the State, but Staff can work with the Bear Creek Working Group to develop strategies for sharing information while balancing Staff time needs. City Manager Estes added that funding the cost of additional reporting needs to be considered.

City Council Action: Motion made by Councilor Price, seconded by Councilor Jones, to authorize Staff to approve the final pay adjustment in the amount of \$26,279.89. Motion carried unanimously. Ayes: Councilors Price, Jones, Nemlowill, Brownson, and Mayor LaMear; Nays: None.

Item 6(c): City Council Goals for Fiscal Year 2017-18

The City Council held a work session on January 13, 2017 to set goals for Fiscal Year 2017-18. From that work session, a list of Council goals was drafted. The draft goals were presented at the Council Work Session meeting of February 8, 2017 and posted on the City website. In addition, an article reviewing the goals was published in the February 9, 2017 edition of *The Daily Astorian*. These goals are being presented for Council's consideration.

Councilor Price confirmed one goal was to implement the provisions contained in the 2015 City of Astoria Affordable Housing Study, which was completed prior to the Affordable Housing Strategy.

Councilors Jones, Brownson, and Nemlowill agreed the draft goals accurately captured Council's recommendations. Councilor Nemlowill believed it would be ambitious to complete the library renovation by 2020, but she hoped this goal would be achieved.

City Council Action: Motion made by Councilor Jones, seconded by Councilor Nemlowill, to adopt City Council Goals for Fiscal Year 2017-18. Motion carried unanimously. Ayes: Councilors Price, Jones, Nemlowill, Brownson, and Mayor LaMear; Nays: None.

Item 6(d): Resolution Declaring the City of Astoria as a City of Inclusivity with Respect to Immigrants and Refugees

This item was added to the agenda during Item 4: Changes to the Agenda.

Jorge Gutierrez, 3734 Franklin Avenue, Astoria, said he was proud of the Hispanic families who attended the meeting. He read the following statement:

“Good evening Mayor and City Councilors. I stand here today on behalf of the Hispanic and immigrant community of Astoria to request that you consider adopting an inclusivity resolution. Our immigrant community has expressed fear and concern about what is happening at the local, state, and national level. We believe that now is the time to explore the possibility of an inclusivity resolution. To be clear, we are not asking that the City become a sanctuary city. Instead, we are asking for a resolution that affirms the progressive values of our City and recognizes that our immigrant population is vital to our community and local economy. Most importantly, in the face of the continued rhetoric that is attempting to dehumanize this population, an inclusivity resolution sends a clear message to our Hispanic community that we stand with them, that they are our friends, family, and neighbors. We urge the City to move forward with exploring this possibility, but we also urge that it is done with prudence. At a time when policies at the federal level are changing rapidly, it is important that we remain nimble in our approach and that our actions are moved forward by reason and not by fear. To that end, the language from a sample inclusivity resolution has been provided to the City. We ask that this go through the appropriate channels to determine how this type of resolution might be adopted in our City. During that process, we hope that we continue to engage the Hispanic community so that whatever path the City follows, their voice is taken into account during the process. On behalf of the Hispanic community, we thank you for your continued support and for your consideration of this request. We are confident that we live in a City that opposes any form of discrimination, including that which is based on national origin, race, or ethnicity. We know that the City will take the right steps to ensure everyone, including our immigrant community, feels welcomed and supported in our City.”

He confirmed for Mayor LaMear that he had provided Staff with a copy of a resolution drafted by attorneys from Causa and the American Civil Liberties Union (ACLU) and enacted in Portland. Six to eight cities in Oregon have adopted similar resolutions. Causa and the ACLU have affirmed their support and have agreed to work with the City to draft a resolution that makes sense for Astoria.

Mayor LaMear said the draft resolution provides a good start because it covers many things Astoria wants to make sure is covered. Astoria values its Latino community and wants to make sure people feel safe here.

Mr. Gutierrez stated that if any action is taken, it would be important to do so only after weighing all of the facts first. He believed there was a lot of fear in the community. Everyone has good intentions to act, but he believed it was necessary to step back, look at the big picture, and think about what makes the most sense. He asked Council to begin thinking about what makes the most sense for the city.

Mayor LaMear thanked Mr. Gutierrez for initiating this conversation.

Councilor Brownson said he believed inclusivity was very important and he appreciated everyone who attended just for this reason.

Councilor Nemlowill added that Astoria was built by immigrants and she supported the immigrant and Hispanic community in Astoria. She also supported the resolution.

Councilor Price agreed and said she would provide Staff and Council with whereas statements that reflect Councilor Nemlowill's comment.

Councilor Jones said he fully supported the spirit of the resolution. Of the 13 clauses in the draft resolution, he supported clauses one through 11. With regard to Clause 12, he asked if City funds, equipment, or personnel

were currently used to enforce federal immigration laws. Chief Johnston said no and explained that State law prohibits the use of City funds to enforce federal laws.

Councilor Jones confirmed that the provision of services or benefits by the City with regard to Clause 13 were not contingent upon a residents federal immigration status. He said Clauses 12 and 13 would prohibit actions that Astoria does not currently take and asked how the language in Clauses 12 and 13 differed from the language designating a city as a Sanctuary City. He wanted to make sure this resolution would not establish Astoria as a Sanctuary City under a different name. Chief Johnston explained that the name Sanctuary City provides specific implications. Astoria cannot control federal actions and there are active Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE) agents stationed within the city. Therefore, it seems presumptuous to say that Astoria is a Sanctuary City. Astoria does not have the ability to provide the services of a Sanctuary City, but it can be and already is a City of Inclusivity.

Mayor LaMear called for public comments.

Gustavo Valadez, 5 McCain Road, Apartment 2, Astoria, said he believed the country's new employee, President Trump, would not do any good for the United States. The entire country, not just Astoria, is made up of immigrants and it is important to consider the big picture. Astoria's police are local, not federal. He thanked Chief Johnston for refraining from enforcing federal laws. This allows him to tell his friends not to be afraid that the police might stop them to ask for papers. He asked Council to consider the big picture and adopt the resolution.

Mayor LaMear directed Staff to use the draft resolution provided by Mr. Gutierrez to develop a resolution for Astoria and present it to Council for adoption at the next regular City Council meeting. Councilor questions and comments should be directed to City Attorney Henningsgaard or Chief Johnston.

Councilor Brownson noted that Councilor Price's preamble would make a nice addition to the resolution. He hoped the Hispanic community would not be afraid to contact the proper authorities to report any abuses or trouble.

Item 6(e): Gillnetting on the Columbia River

This item was added to the agenda during Item 4: Changes to the Agenda.

Mayor LaMear said the City received a request to write a letter of support for gillnetting, the right to continue fishing on the Columbia, and maintaining the 2016 fishing limits without any changes.

Council agreed that Mayor LaMear should write the letter.

NEW BUSINESS & MISCELLANEOUS, PUBLIC COMMENTS (NON-AGENDA)

Jennifer Cameron-Lattek, 1820 SE 3rd Street, Astoria, said many people are not familiar with the process of getting a green card. She is an American citizen and her husband is German. They went through the incredibly complicated green card application process several years ago. There are times when two different forms asking for the same information contain contradictory statements. She is a native English speaker and she and her husband are both educated, so she expected that they would be able to figure out the process on their own. They invested at least \$1,000 and it took a long time to figure everything out. This past December, all of the costs increased by 20 percent. The large expense and all of the hurdles of trying to get a green card need to be considered when it comes to undocumented immigrants. The overwhelming majority of undocumented immigrants in this country are economic migrants and should be recognized as such. All of our ancestors risked a lot to get here and make a better life. Today's immigrants are doing the same thing, working some of the hardest labor jobs with long hours. They are often exploited and not recognized for the contribution they make to our society. America has good quality products and a good lifestyle because of many of the immigrants. They deserve our respect and protection and she was proud to be part of a community that understands this.

Misha Cameron-Lattek, 1820 SE 3rd Street, Astoria, said he wanted to add an immigrant's perspective. From a jail in Birmingham, Alabama, Martin Luther King, Jr. wrote, "We should never forget that everything Adolf Hitler did in Germany was legal. And everything the Hungarian Freedom Fighters did in Hungary was illegal. It was illegal to aid and comfort a Jew in Hitler's Germany. Even so, I am sure had I lived in Germany at the time, I

would have aided and comforted my Jewish brothers.” He hoped that each person, not as elected officials, but as fellow members of the community, would find the strength to help people that need it the most right now.

Loretta Maxwell, 1574 Grand Avenue, Astoria, Grandview Bed and Breakfast, said Councilors have made Facebook posts about an Airbnb permit that will be considered at the next Planning Commission meeting on Tuesday. She believed that the people who rent through Airbnb and who were not aware of the proposed permit were undercutting the small businesses, particularly her bed and breakfast. Her business is in its 30th year of operation and over the last three years, her business has decreased. She only rented one room during the month of January. This situation is very distressing for her mother, who has tried to determine the problem. She makes a reservation from almost every call she receives, so she is not saying anything that turns people away. After reading Councilor Price’s post, she found at least 67 locations being rented on Airbnb. People may think she has one bedroom or an apartment over her garage, but each Airbnb has the same effect that a Wal-Mart has on small businesses. She does not have a mortgage on her house, but she tried to get an equity loan and was denied because the property is zoned commercial. She is trying to generate more income in other ways. One Facebook post objected because people who rent on Airbnb do not want to rent to monthly renters. Astoria needs places for employees to work. Her summer employee lives in Knappa and is not always able to get to work. Right now, she is unable to give him work. She is now renting some of her rooms on a monthly basis and someone had said this was dangerous because she would be unable to get the renters out of her house. When she rents to people on a monthly basis, the renters must sign a contract with specific rules. She has not had any problems because the tenants abide by the rules. One of her regular guests stays for several months each year over the winter.

Councilor Price reminded Ms. Maxwell that her speaking time had expired. She stated she had been very outspoken on Facebook advocating for restrictions on home stay lodgings. However, she has not and would not single out any one permit because that would be unethical. It is her job to consider the City Codes and home stay lodgings in general.

Matt Stanley, 664 Kensington Avenue, Astoria, said he was General Manager of the Astoria Co-op Grocery. He wanted to make sure City Council heard from enough local business people about housing, which is at a crisis stage right now. Apartment broker has become part of his job description now and it is very difficult for working people to find a decent place to live. He has had people living in recreational vehicles and vans. Sometimes, people just have to leave town because they are unable to find an affordable place. He asked City Council to take time to think through what is best for the longevity of Astoria. If we want nice cafes, restaurants, and grocery stores, we need people to work in those places and we want people that offer good service. So, we need places for those people to live. Over the last 12 to 18 months, it has become very difficult to find a place to live in Astoria. He plans to expand his operation and will need to hire more people. It makes him nervous to think they will not have a place to live.

Dwight Caswell, 457 Alameda, Astoria, said his small business is an Airbnb rental. Councilor Price has said many things on Facebook and to the newspaper, including comments that Airbnb threatens long-term housing in the city and that not many people qualify for an Airbnb rental on their property. These two statements seem contradictory. If there are not many people who can have Airbnbs then long-term housing would not be threatened. Airbnb offers two types of rentals, an entire dwelling or a private room. There are about 40 whole house rentals in Astoria listed on Airbnb, which makes up about half of the properties in Astoria listed on the site. He recommended the City find out which of those properties used to be long-term housing or could be in the future. Twenty percent of these whole house rentals are suites on Pier39 and another one is a bus; these are not long-term housing. He rents a spare bedroom and would never consider renting it for long-term housing. He rents the room when it is convenient because his wife uses the room occasionally. He has written over 300 stories on this area and one of his selling points is that he can tell guests where to go and make recommendations. He brings people who cannot afford a hotel to Astoria. If his guests had to spend two or three times more than what he charges, they would stay somewhere else, camp, or just make a day trip to Astoria. He is not competing with long-term housing or hotels; he is competing with campgrounds. He has sent so many people to Buoy Beer that he should get a commission. He brings people to Astoria who might not otherwise spend the night or the money. He did not know what was bad about that. He provides a valuable service for the town.

Fred Bohne, 824 35th Street, Astoria, said he also owns a home in Louisiana. New Orleans just passed an Airbnb ordinance, which he has been following very closely because the town fills up this time of year. There are

no empty hotel rooms because of Mardi Gras. Hundreds of thousands of people come for the event. If Astoria had some event that filled up every hotel, he would accept Airbnbs. However, Astoria has plenty of vacancies. He is opposed to short-term housing.

Diana Bartolotta, 3658 Franklin, Astoria, said she has run a shared house for five years. She has hosted on Airbnb in the past and has long-term housemates. Her mother also hosts on Airbnb in Florida. She believed several issues were being convoluted and she hoped Councilors were looking into this issue and asking the right questions. Mr. Caswell made excellent points and Airbnb rentals are not in conflict. Right now, she did not have any rooms on Airbnb because the house is full with a college student and a Coast Guard employee. When she decides how to rent a particular room, she considers the entire house, the people currently living there, and the type of room that is available. She is always looking at whether it makes more sense to have a local person, college student, or Airbnb guest in the house. The issue should not be long-term landlords versus bed and breakfasts versus Airbnb rentals because they all serve a different function. She sends a ton of business to town. People stay with her because she gives them a map from the Chamber of Commerce and she asks them about what they want to do so she can recommend local businesses. Airbnb hosts might not speak up, but she believed they were being vilified. As a community, we can find some solutions that meet everyone's needs without pitting people against each other.

Mayor LaMear said she wanted to speak with Ms. Bartolotta after the meeting.

Alexander Thompson, 822 35th Street, Astoria, said Astorians are being charged Portland rent prices, but do not make Portland wages. Landlords in Astoria have become incredibly greedy because it is so difficult to find a house in the area right now. We really need to get constructive and figure something out. He did not want to see Astoria whitewashed into Monterey, California. He wanted to keep the culture of the town as a working man's town. He works at the Commodore Hotel and does everything the Airbnb owners do. The rents have to be controlled because the situation is getting ridiculous. The average income in Clatsop County is about \$46,000 per year and the average one-bedroom rents for between \$1,000 and \$1,400 a month. It is not economically feasible to live in Astoria. He loves Astoria, but the city is becoming poverty with a view. Service industry employees like him are lucky to make half of the average income. He sees all of the people who make this community great getting priced out on a regular basis. He does not believe he will ever be able to buy a home while being robbed by his landlord every month.

Brenda Harper, 1423 Commercial St, Astoria, said she has friends who she believed were getting extra income from Airbnb rentals. She agreed that Airbnb owners were bringing business to town, but she would choose to rent to someone who needed a place to live. Airbnb rent is not equal to the rent a homeowner would make if they rented to someone who lived in town. People who live here year-round deserve to have affordable places to live. Airbnb tenants say there is a balance, but she disagreed because they are making so much more than they could make on renting to someone who lives in Astoria.

Jess Inman, 285 Melbourne Ave., Apt. 1, Astoria, stated that as a renter, she did not know what the right solution was, but recommended the City ask the people who are unable to find affordable housing. She has been looking to buy her first home since March 2015. Every home she has been outbid on, including those she bid over the asking price, has been on Airbnb. Over the last couple of years, home prices have been at a premium and that money has to come from somewhere. Airbnb does serve a purpose, but she encouraged City Council to consider the perspective of those at the bottom of the economic status quo.

Councilor Nemlowill confirmed for Ms. Inman that any changes made would not affect the existing Airbnb rentals. Currently, conditional use permits for home stays are issued in R-1 zones and business licenses to operate home stays are issued in R-2 and R-3 zones. She asked how the licensed properties in the R-2 and R-3 zones would be affected by changes to the Development Code and wanted to know if the permits and licenses would be treated the same way.

City Attorney Henningsgaard stated home stays were a permitted use in the R-2 and R-3 zones and land use permits are issued through a different process than licenses. This needs to be considered when deciding whether an existing home stay would be allowed to remain.

Ms. Inman said she did not want to alienate the people who are running legitimate Airbnbs. However, her friend who has an Airbnb rental owns two houses while there are a lot of people just looking for a place to rent.

Chris Haefker, 687 12th Street, Astoria, said he works as a general contractor, historical preservationist, and real estate investor. He also owns an old house he is working to maintain. It goes without saying that there are many homeowners who are strapped by their costs, especially with historic homes in a historic town. These homeowners find ways to try to offset their costs. He quoted Jason Brandt, Oregon Restaurant and Lodging Association, who said, "Home stays are a great way for families and people to make ends meet." He sympathized and related with renters, but homeowners have costs and historic buildings are expensive. He believed City Council needed to look at how to provide more housing because the issue is that Astoria does not have enough housing on all levels. He is currently fixing up two derelict buildings, one of which used to be a duplex. However, the zoning currently requires the house to be a single-family home. He believed it was important to consider nonconditional uses and try to find a way to keep some of the older homes that were used for housing when Astoria had twice the population with fewer buildings. He suggested the City relax some of the restrictions on things like boarding houses, which are not possible because of parking issues. His house used to be ten apartments, but it has had to be a single-family house since the 1980s. Housing options in old buildings that used to be housing are eroding in Astoria because of the nonconditional use permits. Maybe the City can find a way to make it easier for people to provide housing. He strongly believed that buildings with apartments in them should be used for housing, apartments, and monthly rentals. However, the City should not take options away from homeowners trying to make ends meet.

Mayor LaMear said housing was a tough topic and she sympathized with people on both sides of the issue. She asked Staff for an update on next steps.

City Manager Estes stated the City has discussed affordable housing, but at this time, there has been no direction from Council to amend the Codes that relate to transient lodging. Staff is working on code enforcement opportunities so that concerns are addressed. Staff is also considering a potential permitting process for short-term rental units in the R-2 and R-3 zones.

Councilor Price clarified that her supposed contradictory statements on social media were actually about two different topics. She had stated that a limited number of homes in Astoria have the ability to add an accessory dwelling unit, which is different from a home stay lodging. The issue is about making policy that will have long-term effects on the city's livability, character, and economy based on anecdote and lobbying, which is not sensible. The City does not have very much data about home stays at this time and she believed many questions should be answered before more home stays are allowed. This is not a matter of pitting people against each other. People who have permits get to keep them until they sell their homes and business permits should be grandfathered in. City Council is trying to advocate policies for residents. Cities with policies that work well for the majority of their residents attract visitors. This is exactly what has happened to Astoria and why the current issue exists. She believed the following questions should be answered before moving forward:

- How many home stays are currently in Astoria?
- What kind of amenities and facilities do they offer?
- Where are they located and what zone are they in?
- When were they permitted?
- Is there a rise in the number of home stays?
- How are they inspected and monitored?
- How much do they generate in transient taxes for the City?
- Are there effects on hotels, motels, and bed and breakfasts? If so, can those effects be quantified?

When she first came to Astoria in 1995, she stayed in a bed and breakfast because there was not a great hotel to stay in. Over the past ten years, many hotels opened, which hurt the bed and breakfasts. Now the bed and breakfasts are taking hits from home stays. Answers to her questions and more data can lead to larger questions, like how many home stays does Astoria want. Cannon Beach, Seaside, and Gearhart had visitor populations for a long time, but Astoria is new to this. Those cities are now doing everything they can to regain their year round communities. If Astoria loses its year round community, it will lose everything that makes it a working city. If Astoria decides it wants home stays, the City should consider why they are wanted and where they should be located. There are a lot of old homes on the north slope with older people living in them. Is City Council looking at a housing situation or a social services situation? This cannot be done on an anecdotal basis. It is City Council's job to look ahead 20 or 30 years and try to do what will keep Astoria on a good path for the future. She hoped there would be a lot more discussion and City Council would get a lot more data. Over the last

few days, she spent many hours looking at Airbnb and found that there are 29 properties in the city limits. Four of the properties are at Pier 39, 11 can accommodate more than four people, three have a shared bathroom, 16 offer a full kitchen, 17 have a private entrance, and 15 are not owner occupied. These are not people who are just renting out a room in their house and sharing everything. One cannot assume that if home stays were no longer allowed, property owners would rent their rooms to a brewery worker or a doctor.

Councilor Nemlowill thanked Councilor Price for doing the research on Airbnb. She was concerned about the ability of the Community Development Department to enforce a limit on the number of properties. She believed the number of houses currently being marketed was evidence that Staff would not be able to adequately enforce the Codes. The City does not allow full houses that are not owner occupied to be rented to short-term renters, so there are already illegal properties. The Community Development Department does many things, like looking at sites for the new library, giving out grants for historic preservation, and granting building permits. There are only a handful of people doing all of this work. She agreed with many of the statements people made and she hoped people would continue speaking out. Renters do need to be considered. Right now, the problem is working Astorians that do not have a place to live, not people who already have houses with so much space that they can rent it out. She wants Astoria to be a place where people who work in Astoria can live in Astoria. She did not want Astorians to compete for rent with a tourist. She thanked the Airbnb renters for telling guests to go to Fort George, but said she did not believe it was worth it. The city needs places for workers to live. City Council cares about the people that work for the city and does not want them to have to live outside of town. She wanted Astoria to be a year round community. She is from this town and cares deeply about the future of Astoria. Her nine-year experience on the Planning Commission and two years on City Council led her to believe that this reform could be the best way to protect the character of Astoria into the future.

Councilor Brownson said this was all new to him, which was great because he was not coming into the discussion with any preordained ideas about what works and what does not. He encouraged people to continue talking about these issues. He believed the community needed a good civil robust discussion about all of this. He was not sure that equating Airbnbs with affordable housing was correct. Affordable housing is a bigger issue and has to do with having places to live, not rooms. Rooms are nice for a little while and can be transitory, which is good. However, many people with Airbnbs simply enjoy what they do and only rent out basic rooms. There are a lot of issues the City needs to address. If Airbnbs are going to be allowed, the City needs a level playing field with hotels and motels. A property owner cannot get away with having an unsafe residence while allowing guests. One cannot have a room without an egress or good fire protection. He has issues with the way Airbnb is currently set up, but finding affordable housing and rentals for people who work in Astoria is very important. City Council has to be sure the discussion is about all of the options, not just Airbnb. How can we encourage people with derelict buildings to renovate them or create apartments? Astoria has a very limited footprint so people have to be encouraged. This is all a result of success that Astoria is experiencing right now and he hoped the problems were handled right. He encouraged people to join this discussion.

Councilor Nemlowill thanked Councilor Brownson for coming into his role with objectivity and realizing that this is an important issue. She asked what good would it do to add more units of housing, restore downtown buildings, and add apartments if they are rented out on Airbnb?

Councilor Brownson said he has used Airbnb and it provides a great experience. Someone greets him and the experience is very personalized. He gets local tours of places he does not know anything about. Airbnbs are only rented by people with a spare bedroom and maybe an extra bathroom. It is also nice to have an extra entrance, but he does not expect anything else as a guest. City Council will be talking about ADUs in a month and home stays have been brought up as part of that discussion. Currently, City Council is asking for no home stays. There is a distinction between Airbnbs and building a tiny home on a lot or fixing up a garage into a full service apartment, which are rental units, not Airbnb rentals. Someone with space in their basement can make a little extra money to help offset the costs of taking care of their historic building. The City should also find ways to get rid of the abuses. He believed vacation home rentals should be removed from the discussion as well because they are a different issue. He did not like the idea of Astoria's housing stock being bought up for vacation rentals. Entire houses should not be rented on Airbnb. He recognized the problems and believed the City needed to work towards good solutions for the community.

Councilor Jones said he agreed with Councilors Price and Nemlowill on the desired outcome. However, he had a different opinion on how to achieve that outcome. Astoria needs more housing for permanent residents and City Council does not want to destroy the character of the community. He saw no evidence that home stays were the


primary culprit to be attacked. An outright ban on home stays is like taking a chainsaw to a problem that can be addressed with pruning saws. He proposed consideration of a cap on the number of home stays allowed in the city, permits in zones that currently only require a business license, and imposing conditions on existing home stays. The City could make home stay permits expensive to discourage home stays, but there is not enough money in the budget to incentivize people with a four-bedroom home to suddenly rent out their room to permanent residents. City Council could address policy issues instead of implementing an outright ban. He respected his colleagues opinions and looked forward to discussing this further.

Mayor LaMear believed this had been a very fruitful discussion. She wished someone would buy Clatsop Care and turn it into affordable housing because she believed it would be a great use of the building.

ADJOURNMENT


There being no further business, the meeting was adjourned at 8:50 pm.

ATTEST:



Finance Director

APPROVED:



City Manager