

A work session of the Astoria Common Council was held at the above place at the hour of 1:00 pm.

Councilors Present: Brownson, Herman (via telephone), Rocka, West, and Mayor Jones.

Councilors Excused: None

Staff Present: City Manager Estes, Executive Assistant Benoit, Planner Fryer (via telephone), Public Works Director Harrington, City Engineer Crater, Assistant City Engineer Moore. The meeting is recorded and will be transcribed by ABC Transcription Services, Inc.

Executive Assistant Jennifer Benoit gave a brief overview of the City's new live streaming service available through the City's website.

City Engineer Nathan Crater provided details and answered questions about issues related to recent increases in flushing inappropriate items down the toilet. The Public Works Department sent out a press release on the issues, which Assistant Engineer Cindy Moore read aloud. An educational video was also shown. Staff asked Councilors to share the video on their Facebook pages.

REGULAR AGENDA ITEMS

Item 3(a): System Development Charges

City Engineer Crater gave a Power Point presentation on system development charges (SDCs), the types of SDCs in Oregon, State regulations and oversight, potential benefits to Astoria's projects, and options for next steps. He did not feel comfortable trying to provide an estimate of how much SDCs the City could collect because projects vary so widely between jurisdictions and each project is unique. However, larger projects could be assessed higher fees. During the presentation, Staff answered clarifying questions from Councilors, explaining in detail how SDCs are implemented.

Mayor Jones said infrastructure improvements cost money and they must be paid for one way or another. He questioned whether it would be more effective in the long-term to assess those charges directly to new construction, which then get passed on to the tenants. Otherwise, the City would pay for the infrastructure up front through a bond, which all of the taxpayers in the City would pay. Implementing SDCs could drive development away.

Councilor Brownson noted that Warrenton has SDCs and they have had a lot of new development, but the infrastructure is unable to keep up with that development. Even with SDCs, development will still cost the City money. City Manager Estes said Astoria is one of the largest cities in the state without SDCs. He explained that residential development does not typically pay for itself, but people need places to live. Industrial and commercial development usually generate more property tax revenue.

Councilor Brownson expressed concerns about SDCs being equitably assessed. Some development would involve the use of older existing infrastructure while other projects would require all new infrastructure. Staff explained a variety of impacts on the City's infrastructure that could occur, regardless of whether infrastructure already existed at a project site.

Councilor West asked if SDCs could be waived or reduced as an incentive to develop affordable housing. Staff replied the Council could make that policy decision.

Mayor Jones called for public comments.

Unidentified Speaker asked if any studies had been done on the possible downward pressure of SDCs on development.

Councilors and Staff responded. Any increase to the cost of a project could put downward pressure on the eagerness of a developer to pursue that project. There is information indicating SDCs did not seem to halt or reduce development, but did result in higher costs charged to the tenants. Projects have to pencil out for the developer. Currently Astoria does not have any incentives to offer other than City-owned property. If the City had SDCs, those charges could be waived as an incentive. So many other jurisdictions already charge SDCs that developers regularly factor them into the project costs and are surprised to learn that Astoria does not charge them.

The Council and Staff discussed the impact of SDC revenue on grant match requirements. SDCs can leverage more grant funding and grants benefit the taxpayers.

Councilors discussed the pros and cons of implementing SDCs and all agreed the charges would be a good option for Astoria. Mayor Jones directed Staff to continue working on their analysis of SDCs. Staff provided the Council with details of their next steps and confirmed the public would be included in the process.

Item 3(b): Parklets

City Manager Estes provided a brief history of Staff's work on parklets in downtown. He and Planner Fryer gave an overview via Power Point on parklet trends, the City's parklet pilot project, issues with an existing parklet, recommended Code updates, and options for the Council to consider. They also answered questions from Councilors about parklet usage and interest in new parklets.

Councilors briefly discussed amending the Development Code to accommodate parklets. All agreed that the existing parklet should be allowed to remain, but Councilors were divided on whether to amend the Code. Demand for parklets is low, so the current policy could be adequate. They shared concerns about the issues with the existing parklet and Staff's capacity to deal with those issues. Staff recommended that a temporary policy be kept in place to ensure that adequate parklet conditions are met. All of the Councilors agreed. Staff confirmed they would reach out to the existing parklet owner to resolve the issues.

Item 3(a): Lights Over Streets

City Manager Estes stated Staff has received Code enforcement complaints from citizens about lights over the streets, which are prohibited. Certain situations do permit lights across rights-of-way. Staff needs direction from Council on how to move forward.

Planner Fryer and City Manager Estes gave a Power Point presentation on issues and concerns with lights over street, types of overhead lighting, where the overhead lighting currently exists in Astoria, how those locations differ, and recommended next steps.

Mayor Jones called for a recess at 2:42 pm. The meeting reconvened at 2:47 pm

The Councilors and Staff discussed lighting issues and the proposed Code amendments with the following key comments:

- The major concerns were light pollution and safety issues related to installation and maintenance. However, overhead lighting does increase safety at night. Councilors Brownson and Rocka believed the lights downtown did not look good. They gave downtown a carnival feel, caused light pollution, and were hung too low for emergency vehicles to drive under. The Astoria Downtown Historic District Association (ADHDA) should do a study on pedestrian and ambient light that could be attached to buildings.
- Staff answered questions about lighting in downtown, at Buoy Beer, on 11th Street, and holiday lighting over Oregon Department of Transportation (ODOT) streets. Staff noted that as the Street End Project is completed, Staff planned to approach the owners to address maintenance with a license to occupy that would address overhead lights.
- Councilors agreed that lighting should be allowed, but that the existing requirements be stricter. Staff noted that in order to allow lighting and tighten the restrictions, Code amendments would be necessary. Councilors agreed that Code amendments would address their concerns.

Mayor Jones called for public comments.

Todd Robinette said he and his wife own the Maritime Bar and Grill and the Labor Temple. A year ago, he and the owners of the building across the street on 10th Street began talking about stringing lights across the street. He had spoken to Staff about the Code and felt like he needed to know someone in town to get things done because someone had lights on 11th Street. Councilors addressed all of the negative aspects of lightings, but he believed there were benefits to having cross street lights. Since the downtown already has some lights, more in other places would unify the area. Lights deter nefarious activity. People do not act in respectful ways on the street, nor do they respect the businesses by leaving trash and sleeping on the street. Lights make people feel safer and help pedestrian traffic feel safer at night when cars can see people better. Lighting will increase traffic and bring people down his street more that if it was not well lit. This will help businesses succeed more. All of the storefronts on the street recently filled up and he wanted it to stay that way. Along the 10th Street corridor, the building facades and parapets are 21 feet high. The existing lights on 11th Street are substantially lower than that. He wanted to string lights across on a steel cable with brackets on the parapets. The lights would only sag about one foot, which would be about 20 feet above the street. He provided samples of commercial lights for the Councilors to look at. The lights had LED bulbs and plastic shatterproof globes. He had drawn a sketch of how the lights would be strung across the street in a zig-zag pattern in a 10-foot space. However, the lights could be hung in any manner and with fewer fixtures. He did not want the intensity of light to be too strong. He supported the Code amendments.

Mayor Jones believed the existing Code should be enforced and amendments should be considered in partnership with the ADHDA.

Councilor Brownson agreed that lighting could increase activity on 10th Street. He was interested in pursuing Code amendments to address light pollution and safety.

Planner Fryer confirmed she had received good guidance from the discussion and said she would speak to the ADHDA.

Councilors and Staff briefly discussed the possibility of upcoming protocols dealing with COVID-19, policies that had recently been implemented in other jurisdictions, and social distancing.

ADJOURNMENT

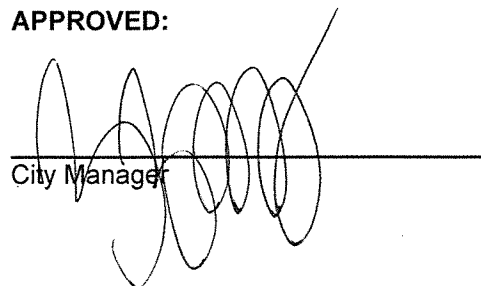
There being no further business, the meeting was adjourned at 3:19 pm.

ATTEST:



Finance Director

APPROVED:



City Manager