

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

Councilors Present: Mayor Jones. Councilors Brownson, Herman, Rocka, and West attended via Zoom.

Councilors Excused: None

Staff Present: City Manager Estes, Planner Fryer, and Public Works Director Harrington. Finance Director Brooks attended via Zoom. The meeting is live streamed and recorded and will be transcribed by ABC Transcription Services, Inc.

REGULAR AGENDA ITEMS

Item 3(a): Presentation from Kevin Leahy on COVID-19 Economic Development Resources

Mayor Jones announced that the Paycheck Protection Program (PPP) had run out of funds before many businesses could apply and individuals were struggling to get unemployment because the State was using outdated software. He also announced that WTC Marine had received a \$572,000 grant for a small shipyard, which will expand their outdoor repair facility. He noted that Kevin Leahy, Executive Director of Clatsop Economic Development Resources (CEDR), the Small Business Development Center (SBDC), and David Reid, Director of the Astoria Warrenton Chamber of Commerce, were serving on the Northwest Economic Recovery Regional Response Team. He had asked Mr. Leahy to update the Council on the response team's work and how SBDC is helping the community.

Kevin Leahy introduced his team at the SBDC and gave a presentation on economic resources available in response to COVID-19. His presentation included an overview of the services provided by the SBDC, his weekly call with state leadership, and SBDC's funding sources. He noted that the SBDC was looking for additional funding since staff was now at capacity with 100 new callers and 50 new clients since COVID-19. He provided an overview of the Economic Injury Disaster Loan (EIDL), PPP Loan, State unemployment benefits, and the Pandemic Unemployment Assistance (PUA). Both loan programs had already run out of money. People were starting to get State unemployment, but no one had received PUA yet because the State was still waiting on direction from the federal government. So, the SBDC and State leaders were working to get more federal support for all of these programs. He explained why it was so important for individuals to contact their local representatives and request support from the federal government.

Mr. Leahy responded to questions and comments from the Councilors as follows:

- The SBDC serviced over 30 Hispanic businesses. It had been difficult for these businesses to get information about programs, so the SBDC was sharing information with the Lower Columbia Hispanic Council, the Oregon Community Foundation, and hosting information sessions with all of the Hispanic businesses.
- Some local businesses had received the PPP and EIDL, and local banks were doing a good job trying to work with businesses. However, the federal government was still working on re-funding the programs.
 - While these programs seemed geared towards businesses with employees, sole proprietors were eligible. The SBDC was helping sole proprietors with applications because the guidelines were not clear.
- Councilors and Mr. Leahy discussed in detail the importance of asking State leaders for more support. The programs were grossly underfunded, and funding had not reached the local community.
- The SBDC had been trying to find out whether a business became ineligible if they could not afford to pay employees because they had to wait so long for funding. The Small Business Administration had confirmed that the PPP would not help a certain segment of businesses but would help a larger segment of businesses. Additionally, businesses were being encouraged to keep people working even if they had to be assigned different jobs.

Mr. Leahy noted that the response team was talking with businesses and looking at recovery. They were also participating in weekly calls with local elected and State officials to talk about solutions to the issues. He listed online resources for all of the programs and services he mentioned in his presentation.

Sunday Market Discussion [not on agenda]

Mayor Jones announced that the Sunday Market has requested they be allowed to host a small farmer's market. Some communities have allowed farmer's markets with requirements to maintain physical distancing and prohibit customers from touching produce. The Sunday Market had developed a plan to set up an outdoor grocery that ensured a safe shopping environment. The Councilors had received a copy of this plan via email. He believed the outdoor shopping would be just as safe as a grocery store. He asked for Councilors' comments and feedback.

Cindy Mudge [1:17:42] Sunday Market, described the layout of the outdoor shopping area and provided details of safety procedures and requirements. She also noted the steps that vendors were taking to ensure social distancing and limiting the handling of food. This market would be a more traditional farmer's market for locals, not a tourist attraction like the Sunday Market. She had been learning from other farmers markets that were already open and her plan had been approved by the County Health Department. Details and contact information would be available on the Sunday Market website.

The Councilors discussed the farmer's market plan, and Ms. Mudge responded to questions and concerns with the following key comments:

- Community members had expressed concerns that the vendors were not local and that shoppers would not practice social distancing. There were no farmers in Astoria, so all of the vendors were from other communities but still local to the area. Additionally, the health department had approved of the proposed plan to ensure social distancing and safe practices.
- Some local business owners had indicated they were upset that the market would be allowed while their business were forced to close. However, the Governor had deemed farmer's markets and food sales as essential through an executive order. Cities did not have the ability to choose which businesses were allowed to remain open.
- Ms. Mudge provided details of the hand washing station that would be available at the market, which was required by and had been approved by the health department. She noted that the vendors sell at multiple markets and all markets had similar requirements right now. So, the vendors were familiar and prepared to comply with all of the new rules.
- It was crucial to advertise this market is not Sunday Market, but a local outdoor grocery.
- While the health department did not require people to wear masks, the vendors would be required to do so. Vendors would be provided with cloth masks for now because delivery of the standard masks had been delayed until June.

Mayor Jones confirmed the Council was satisfied to allow the market to open on Sunday.

Budget Discussion [not on agenda]

City Manager Estes explained that Staff needed direction on budget methods for the remainder of this fiscal year and next fiscal year since it is impossible to predict what will happen in the short and long term. The Governor had signed an executive order allowing budget committees to meet virtually, but no exceptions had been made to the deadlines required by State Statute.

Finance Director Brooks added that Staff did not have trends or historical data to draw on to forecast for the future, which is how budgets are usually developed. Additionally, short term and long-term impacts were unknown. Information being published changes daily and there are a wide variety of opinions about what the future would look like. Therefore, Staff's current strategy is to analyze short term impacts on the Starting Fund Balances for the next fiscal year and develop a reasonable annual budget. In order to accomplish this, Staff needed clear spending policies and criteria. For example, the Capital Improvement budget should have a policy regarding hiring or replacing employees. Policies would need to be adopted to spend resources after July 1, 2020. Staff would need to review the budget with the Council on an ongoing basis so that policies could be retracted or released at the appropriate time.

Staff explained that the City will have a healthy Ending Fund Balance, but Staff still wants to be conservative since future predictions are so difficult to make accurately. A reduction to Ending Fund Balances by end of fiscal year was anticipated due to loss of transient room tax revenues. The transient room taxes are deposited into the General Fund, Parks Facilities, and Promote Astoria, so all of those funds will be impacted.

Staff responded to questions and comments from the Council as follows:

- Revenue losses would vary between departments. Staff recommended sticking to current budgets and making adjustments they know they can achieve. With policies in place, those adjustments can be monitored. Staff anticipated having to propose revised budgets next fiscal year because there were too many unknowns to get the budget close to actual financial figures.
- It was still unknown how the State's funding crisis would impact City finances. The City participates in shared revenues, including cigarette taxes, liquor licenses, marijuana taxes, and fuel taxes. Updates from the State will be included in the budget information.
- The Council could discuss flexibility with Promote Astoria funds when developing spending policies, which Staff would recommend when budgets are presented for consideration.
- Cuts should be expected in the Parks and Community Development Departments. The Parks Department will be impacted by a reduction of transient lodging taxes and fees. While the department depends heavily on labor, many programs and services had been cancelled. The Community Development Department would cut consultants hired to work on Code amendments.
- Staff was unable to provide an update on the 17th Street Dock project. Procedures and requirements are being written as information comes out and Staff does not know the thresholds for requesting assistance, like Federal Emergency Management Administration (FEMA) funding. Staff is preparing in case assistance becomes available. The City did receive a \$5,400 Safe Insurance Relief Fund grant and Staff would continue to look for more grant opportunities.

Mayor Jones confirmed the Council was satisfied with the approach proposed by Staff for budget development.

Mayor Jones called for a recess at 2:32 pm. The work session reconvened at 2:37 pm.

Proclamation – National Public Safety Telecommunicators Week [not on agenda]

Mayor Jones read a proclamation declaring April 12 – 18, 2020 as National Public Safety Telecommunicators Week.

Item 3(b): Geologic Hazards Discussion

City Planner Fryer gave a Power Point presentation on geological hazards, types of landslides, lidar mapping, Astoria's risks, and ways to mitigate those risks. Her presentation focused on geologic hazard impacts to land use planning and policies. She also presented the details of Staff's recommended Code amendments, which Staff developed with the help of the Department of Land Conservation and Development (DLCD) and the Department of Geology and Mineral Industries (DOGAMI). The City had received a grant to gather public input and feedback, which Staff and consultants would start on tomorrow. Staff would present the public input and its influence on recommended Code amendments to the Council at a work session in July. The Code amendment process would begin in October if the limitations on public gatherings have been lifted.

Staff responded to Councilors questions, comments, and concerns as follows:

- In landslide zones, property owners would need to get an engineering geologic report to see if further investigation is needed before starting a project. The reports cost between \$2,000 and \$8,000, and the investigations costs about \$10,000. Smaller projects and local consultants have lower fees, but prescriptive codes make the process more straight forward. Guidelines and standards make it easier for consultants to do their job. However, the extra costs would likely discourage homeowners and developers from starting projects in Astoria.
- The State requires jurisdictions to review these codes now that lidar data is available. Staff listed landslides in Astoria that were created by new developments and noted that the City was included in the resulting lawsuits. These proposed Code amendments were meant to reduce the City's risks.
- DOGAMI has indicated that slide area footprints would have been reactivated during a large Cascadia event, but Astoria has had hundreds of landslides reactivated since the last Cascadia event. They were reactivated by high ground water, construction, and home renovation projects. Landslides will continue to happen regardless of inundation or geologic events.

- Making property owners sign off on risk puts them on notice, but the City still has some responsibility and insurance companies will continue to include the City in any lawsuits.
 - All Councilors agreed they still wanted property owners to sign a waiver when starting projects.
- Cities are prohibited from recording deed restrictions, so buyers would have to do their own due diligence when purchasing property to find out if it is located in a slide zone.
- Currently, there are times when the recommendations in the geologic reports are not followed. The City needs policies and follow through to make sure recommendations in studies are followed.
- These Code amendments would only require a small amount of Staff's time. Consultants would lead the public involvement process. Then, Staff would just need to understand the Council's risk tolerance to develop the final recommendations. The State's guide is extensive and recommends codes that minimize risk.

Mayor Jones confirmed that the Council wanted Staff to move forward on the Code amendments as proposed.

New business, Miscellaneous, and Public Comments [not on agenda]

Councilor Rocka noted that the trash bins at Tapiola, LaPlante, and Alderbrook parks were overflowing. City Manager Estes said trash pickup was continuing as scheduled, but there had been a recent increase in park usage. Staff was working with Recology to focus more attention on the parks being used more often now. Mayor Jones recommended people report full trash cans to Staff. City Manager Estes added that full cans in parks should be reported to the Parks Department and full cans in downtown or on a street should be reported to the Public Works Department. Director Harrington said he was also working with the Parks Department to put new trash cans in some areas.

Councilor West stated she had been hearing from business owners that public intoxication had increased downtown. Mayor Jones clarified that all of the Councilors had received emails from several businesses about one incident. He had contacted the Police Department and learned that the transient population had stayed the same or decreased since COVID-19. It appeared that the increased activity was due to the streets being empty. The Police actively approach people and get rid of the alcohol. However, the Sheriff's Department has reduced their follow up and number of arrests. City Manager Estes added that Clatsop Community Action recently began providing shower services, which may have brought a larger number of people into town.

ADJOURNMENT

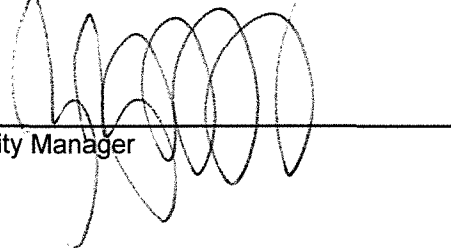
There being no further business, the meeting was adjourned at 3:39 pm.

ATTEST:



Finance Director

APPROVED:



City Manager