

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, Rocka, West, and Mayor Jones.

Councilors Excused: None

Staff Present: City Manager Estes, Fire Chief Crutchfield, Police Chief Spalding, Public Works Director Harrington, City Engineer Crater, Assistant City Engineer Moore. The meeting was livestreamed and recorded, and will be transcribed by ABC Transcription Services, Inc.

PROCLAMATION

Item 3(a): Home Inventory Week as part of National Preparedness Month

Mayor Jones read the proclamation declaring the first week of September 2020 as Home Inventory Week in Astoria.

Mayor Jones said he was concerned that the vitriol on display just outside of the local area could infect the community. He had seen several disturbing social media posts, some of which named local businesses and threatened violence. Astoria does not need such anger in the community. He asked that everyone ignore notices of a demonstration and stay home. Nationally, the environment is hyper-inflamed and counter protests do not serve any purpose. No one's mind has ever been changed by a counter protest and in this environment, a counter protest could lead to something regrettable. He asked that everyone refrain from engaging with those who seek to antagonize others. He asked if the Police Department had been able to take any action on the social media posts.

Chief Spalding said this small community was experiencing some of the overflow from Portland, which was unprecedented. He appreciated the relationship the Police Department has with the community. The Department does not always have a lock on intelligence sources, but the community provides them with invaluable information, which make it easier for the Department to do it's job. Staff is monitoring all of the social media posts they have received and he had personally contacted some of the individuals who made the posts. When posts encourage people to bring firearms and weapons to events, the Police have a heightened level of concern. He had reached out to other law enforcement leaders in the County, the District Attorney, and the City Attorney and they would all be meeting later in the afternoon to ensure they can support each other in case of an event that requires action.

Councilor Brownson noted he had seen some of the posts. Everyone needs to be respectful and keep at a distance. He appreciated that the Police Department was staying on top of the issue.

REGULAR AGENDA ITEMS

Item 4(a): Wastewater Treatment Plant Update and Industrial Pretreatment

City Manager Estes provided a brief overview of Staff's work on the wastewater treatment plant.

Assistant City Engineer Moore introduced the project team. She, Director Harrington, and consultant Dale Richwine of Richwine Environmental gave a detailed PowerPoint presentation that included background information on the wastewater treatment plant (WWTP), the Wastewater Treatment Facilities Plan, an update on the current status of the plant, and next steps necessary to implement updates to the sewer ordinance, a permit for certain industries, and an industrial pretreatment program.

During the presentation, Director Harrington, Engineer Moore and Mr. Richwine answered clarifying questions about the WWTP Facility Plan, collection system operations, the Combined Sewer Overflow (CSO) system, and

water quality standards. Public Works Staff and the project team also responded to questions and comments from Staff and Councilors with the following key comments:

- Staff has considered sludge removal from the lagoons several times and always found that the cost was high. Today, sludge removal would cost about \$10 million, which is cost prohibitive. Additionally, sludge removal would result in a lot of heavy truck traffic through neighborhoods with small streets. And lastly, there is no local landfill to take the material to. Therefore, the sludge has never been removed from the lagoons.
- There is limited power at the lagoons, but Staff is aerating the lagoons as much as possible without having to bring in more power. The aerators are being rotated among the lagoons for optimal treatment. Also, a curtain is used with the aerators to create a serpentine flow pattern that generates additional capacity.
- Ultraviolet (UV) disinfection does not work with a lagoon system because bacteria hides inside the algae where the UV light cannot penetrate it.
- Industries with varying levels of waste are billed for an excess waste strength charge based on the amount of their actual discharge. If discharges exceed the permitted levels, fines are imposed. Hotels are in a different user class as their discharge strengths tend to remain constant.
- The new hotel on the south slope will not add any significant stress to the City's WWTP. The strength of the waste will be similar to residential use, so the concentration will be low and will be equivalent to adding a number of homes. The Plan did account for growth in the system and the hotel would take up a portion of that growth.
- Seafood processing waste is discharged directly into the river and not into the City's collection system or treatment plant. The City has denied several requests to allow seafood processors to dispose of their waste into the City's system because of the strength and variability of their waste. Seafood processors have their own onsite treatment systems and must get their permits directly from DEQ.
- Staff has been talking to other municipalities about their process for implementing industrial pretreatment programs. The City will use their successes to design a program for Astoria.

City Manager Estes said Staff, Buoy Beer, and Fort George Brewery had all been working together to learn from each other and move forward together. The two breweries have hired a shared consultant who has also been working with Staff. The fermentation cluster is an essential part of the City's economic development strategy, but the sewer needs of the City must be considered. A lot of balancing is necessary and Staff will be looking for direction from the City Council on how to move forward.

Mayor Jones called for a recess at 2:34 pm. The meeting reconvened at 2:40 pm.

Mayor Jones called for public comments.

Chris Nemlowill, Fort George Brewery, said he felt really fortunate because some cities have gotten into a battle with the fermentation industry. The City and the breweries have been working great together and learning more about each other's systems. Before the fermentation cluster came to Astoria, there were more empty buildings downtown and fewer things to do. It has been exciting to see the flourish of beverage producers grow in Astoria. He did not want to create a situation where craft producers do not want to come to Astoria. He was concerned about how the costs of an industrial pretreatment program could impact the breweries business plans. As long as the program allows breweries and distilleries to flourish, it will be great for the town. COVID-19 has already led to much less revenue for the year and the fermentation sector is just trying to survive right now.

Mayor Jones noted that the fermentation industry was listed in the City's economic development plan as one of the five cornerstones. He looked forward to hearing about the creative solutions that might help the necessary improvements move forward.

David Kroening, Buoy Beer, said sharing information with Staff and consultants has been a good process so far. He wanted to continue moving forward in a collaborative way. There are challenges ahead, but the program is a big deal for breweries. Some of the potential solutions that have been proposed are not small impacts to the businesses. The breweries have gone through several years of planning the next stages of their businesses and there were no line items in the planning for some of things that will be coming up. Astoria's breweries do have some impact on the City's system, but not unlimited resources to handle all of the City's needs. They were trying to come up with some creative solutions that would allow them to continue to grow and have a positive impact on the community. They also need the resource and support to compete for shelf space in Portland so those dollars can be brought back into Astoria.

Melanie Olson, Business Oregon, said Staff has included her in the conversations. The City's economic development strategy does support the fermentation cluster and these growing pains on the infrastructure are a reflection of that success. This is a volatile time for businesses and any new taxes or fees will stymie business investment and expansion. She encouraged the Councilors to consider what the City could do to fulfill it's own strategic plan. Business Oregon looks for opportunities to help stabilize businesses and mitigate the impacts of COVID-19, but they do not have the financial resources they did six months ago. So, businesses continue to struggle. Congress has predicted the economy will see a full recover until 2024. She asked if the City would consider a phased approach to the industrial pretreatment program or an alternative methodology, and a realistic and equitable fee structure. If Astoria's economy and downtown are going to survive, it is in the City's best interest to be creative and flexible. And Business Oregon is here to support Astoria in any way that makes sense.

Mayor Jones asked if it was possible for DEQ to be flexible.

City Manager Estes said DEQ has been a partner and Staff would be more specific at the next work session when they share various options for the Council to provide feedback on.

Kevin Leahy, Small Business Development Center (SBDC), stated that Fort George and Buoy Beer are two of the fastest growing breweries in the State. This fermentation cluster has positively impacted employment ratios, average wages paid, and new business development in Astoria and in the region.

Councilor Brownson said he believed the City had a couple of years to sort out the issues and move forward. He was a big supporter of the brewing industry and he understood how it has contributed to the community. He wanted the City to continue collaborating to find a good solution, which will be a real challenge.


Tiffany Yelton-Bram, Water Quality Permit Manager, DEQ, stated that DEQ appreciated the open communication they have had with Staff, the breweries, and the consultants. DEQ is holding space in the permit for balancing a number of things the City is doing, including the CSO. DEQ will continue to support the City to balance work on the CSO and the WWTP.

City Manager Estes noted that Staff, consultants, the breweries, and State representatives will continue to meet. He believed Staff could provide another update to the City Council by the end of September or the first of October.

ADJOURNMENT

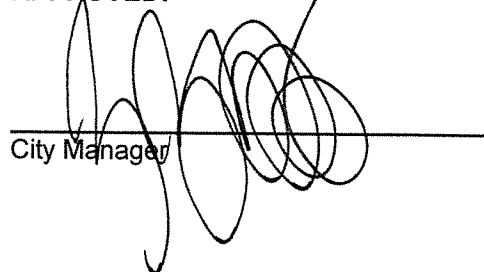
There being no further business, the meeting was adjourned at 3:00 pm.

ATTEST:



Finance Director

APPROVED:



City Manager



11-11-11