

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, Hilton, and Mayor Jones.

Councilors Excused: None

Staff Present: City Manager Estes, Parks and Recreation Director Dart-McLean, Recreation Coordinator Terra Patterson, Community Development Director Leatherman, Finance Director Brooks, Fire Chief Crutchfield, Police Chief Spalding, Public Works Director Harrington, City Engineer Crater, Assistant City Engineer Moore, Library Director Pearson, and City Attorney Henningsgaard. The meeting is recorded and will be transcribed by ABC Transcription Services, Inc.

REGULAR AGENDA ITEMS

Item 3(a): Alameda Slide Update

Director Harrington, Director Leatherman and Public Works Staff gave a PowerPoint presentation, updating the Council on the recent landslide on Alameda. The presentation included background information on the slide area, details of the geotechnical assessment done on homes and the area, the City's sanitary sewer repair response, and issues related to buildings, permits, and Codes. During the presentation, Staff responded to questions and comments from Councilors as follows:

- Staff confirmed there were no manmade triggers that resulted in this slide and landslides would continue to occur in this area.
- Before building in slide zones, property owners are required by the City to have geotechnical analyses done to determine what would be necessary to safely build on the site.
- As part of the Combined Sewer Overflow project, roof drains were being disconnected from the City's sewer system. However, the City will allow roof drains to remain connected when there is no other safe place to discharge the runoff. New construction is required to connect roof drains to an approved location. However, there is no requirement for existing structures.
- Landslide insurance is prohibitively expensive and requires certain renovations be made on homes. However, property owners must disclose that their property is located in a landslide area when selling their property. If the seller fails to disclose known landslide hazards, they could be held responsible in court.
- Property owners affected by this landslide would have their homes analyzed to determine what repairs are needed. The City has been assisting these property owners and would continue to monitor the site. Sewer repairs would be done during dryer weather.

Staff and Councilors briefly discussed the impact the landslide had on homeowners and the need for the City and community to continue supporting them. Staff has been unable to find any government assistance for the homeowners, but a GoFundMe account had been created. Staff also described the City's efforts to draft a geologic mitigation ordinance, which would address future manmade impacts to landslide zones. Director Harrington provided details of the City's landslide monitoring, prevention, and disaster responses. He noted that a landslide guide for homeowners was available on the City's website.

Item 3(b): Mid Fiscal Year Budget Review

City Manager Estes said that this budget was initially being prepared during the first stages of the pandemic when there were a lot of unknowns about the financial impacts to the City. Therefore, cost savings measures were implemented and have continued throughout this fiscal year. The General Fund was of big concern because there was no way to predict how property tax and transient room tax revenues would be impacted by the pandemic.

Director Brooks provided a mid-year budget update, highlighting the General Fund, the Capital Improvement Fund, and the Public Works Improvement Funds. Overall, the City's budget was in good shape, and Staff

continued to assess expenditure requests, look for opportunities, and reprioritize as needed to fill critical needs. She presented a cash flow analysis and explained factors that impacted the City's cash flow. She also noted that labor negotiations were ongoing and would result in some budget changes over the next month.

During the presentation, Staff confirmed for the Council that they generally had good response when contacting water/sewer users about past due payments. Over the last three months, eight to ten accounts were past due and the accounts in arrears were evenly split between owner-occupied and tenant-occupied homes.

Mayor Jones called for a recess at 2:40 pm. [1:40:42] The work session reconvened at 2:48 pm. [1:48:31]

Director Brooks continued with her presentation, updating the Council on the Promote Astoria Fund and the Parks Operation Fund. She said she anticipated an increase in transient room tax revenue and believed the City could meet the budget levels that were in place.

Director Dart-McLean and Recreation Coordinator Patterson gave a PowerPoint presentation on Parks Department staffing levels, current and anticipated revenue and expenses, the Li'l Sprouts program, and the feasibility of re-opening and operating the Aquatic Center. Staff answered clarifying questions from Councilors about operating the Aquatic Center while adhering to COVID-19 prevention requirements. Staff also answered questions about Aquatic Center programs, staffing levels, and pre-COVID expenses.

City Manager Estes thanked Staff for doing months of analysis and research preparing for this work session. He noted that the City would continue to need funds after the pandemic to scale up operations. However, he believed the proposed plan to re-open the Aquatic Center was achievable.

Staff responded to Council questions and comments about the Aquatic Center as follows:

- All of the lifeguards would need to be recertified and equipment needed to be purchased before the Aquatic Center could re-open. Additionally, more Staff might need to be hired. All of those things take time.
- The only City employees currently eligible for the vaccine under Phase 1(a) are those in public safety. The instructors at Li'l Sprouts will qualify as educators once more vaccines become available.
- Filling the administrative assistant and other positions were put on hold during the pandemic. If the Council directs Staff to re-open the pool, Staff will begin recruiting an administrative assistant.
- There are costs associated with keeping the Aquatic Center closed, as it still needed to be maintained.

Mayor Jones confirmed for Staff that there was a consensus among the Council to move forward with Staff's plan for re-opening the Aquatic Center.


City Manager Estes said during the pandemic, all departments had been fiscally astute, requiring projects to be postponed in order to continue operations. He appreciated City Council's support and thanked Staff for their hard work.

Mayor Jones noted that the next regular City Council meeting would be on January 21, 2021 at 7:00 pm.

ADJOURNMENT


There being no further business, the meeting was adjourned at 4:11 pm.

ATTEST:



Finance Director

APPROVED:



City Manager