

A work session of the Astoria Common Council was held at the above place at the hour of 12:03 pm.

Councilors Present: Brownson, Herman, Rocka, Hilton, and Mayor Jones.

Councilors Excused: None

Staff Present: City Manager Estes, Parks and Recreation Director Dart-McLean, Community Development Director Leatherman, Deputy Chief Halverson, City Engineer Crater. The meeting is recorded and will be transcribed by ABC Transcription Services, LLC.

## REGULAR AGENDA ITEMS

### Item 3(a): Presentation from Bird Scooters on a Proposed Program for Astoria

A representative from Bird Scooters has met with City staff on a proposal to start an electric scooter program in Astoria. These types of programs have been operating in larger cities and they now want to roll out programs in smaller communities. While the scooters would need to be operated on streets, they are usually stored and presented for rental on public sidewalks. An agreement with the City would be needed to operate. Mike Butler from Bird will make a presentation to the City Council on their business and operations. Staff will be asking for City Council direction if they would be interested in an Astoria electric scooter program. If there was Council interest, staff would negotiate an agreement with Bird and it would be brought to a regular Council meeting for consideration.

Mike Butler, Bird City Partnerships, gave a PowerPoint presentation on Bird and their electric scooter program. After the presentation, he and Staff answered questions from Councilors about how the scooters were made and operated; features and functionality of the scooters, including safety features, training and other requirements for riders; and how the City would benefit from and be involved in the scooter program. Mr. Butler provided details about Bird's suite of educational videos and tutorials, which were each between two and four minutes long and were required before a rider could take their first ride on a scooter. Additionally, much of Bird's marketing included rider education about laws and safety. Bird also provided riders with incentives to follow rules and laws. He also noted that Bird had already done a lot of work to identify locations in Astoria where the scooters might be appropriately placed so as not to cause any nuisance to pedestrians. Scooters would be placed every morning, but then repositioned throughout the day. However, it was important to understand that the most appropriate locations for deploying scooters would evolve over the first weeks and months as use demonstrated the movement patterns of riders.

Deputy Chief Halverson stated other cities had the same questions and concerns. He was concerned that people would ride the scooters without a helmet. If Astoria did a pilot project, the City would track calls, complaints, and issues related to the scooters.

David Reid, Astoria-Warrenton Chamber of Commerce, said he was concerned about the scooters becoming a hazard or an enforcement problem. However, car-free travel is definitely something that Astoria has to work on because vehicle traffic continues to add stress to the community. He wanted the area to have a robust transportation system that included a way for people to get from hotels to attractions without needing a car.

Kathy, Sunset Empire Transportation District, explained that part of her job was encouraging people to get out of their cars, and the scooters would give people more options. Sunset's Tourism Management Group also focuses on making people aware of car-free travel options. She believed a partnership between the City and Bird would address concerns and reap a lot of benefits for the region.

City Engineer Crater agreed that the last mile was a challenge in the area. He explained that Public Works would consider use of the sidewalks. The City allows parklets, tables, chairs, trash cans and planters on some sidewalks. Additionally, the City has a number of policies and pilot programs in place that manage these items, but not comprehensive sidewalk management. Staff is already dealing with a number of complaints about items

on sidewalks. The use of the streets would also be a consideration. There are some dedicated bike lanes in downtown Astoria, but not many other areas have dedicated bike lanes. The one-way grid does provide opportunities to avoid cars and traffic volumes are lower off of the State network. As a cyclist, he's been able to get around even during busy times. However, he also signals and follows all of the rules of the road. Scooter users will need to be very clear about their movements when riding on streets that do not have bike lanes.

City Manager Estes explained that if the City decided to try a pilot program, Staff would negotiate an agreement with Bird for the Council to consider. The Public Works Department would determine appropriate locations for the scooters. The City Attorney has already reviewed Bird's draft agreement and is researching how other jurisdictions have implemented a similar program.

The Council discussed at length the pros and cons of electric scooters. Pros included environmental benefits, additionally mobility/transportation, the safety features of the scooters, and rider education provided by Bird. Cons included riders not following rules and laws, a potential negative impact on the City's finances and Staff capacity, traffic safety and liability.

City Manager Estes clarified that electric scooters were already permitted in Astoria, so the Council was not being asked whether the scooters should be allowed. The Council was being asked to make a policy decision about uses in the City's rights-of-way, explaining that Bird's scooters would be stored and stationed on sidewalks. He provided the Council with information about other uses that are currently allowed in rights-of-way, like parklets, dining, furniture and planters.

Mayor Jones and Councilor Brownson were in favor of a pilot program that would allow the scooters to remain in rights-of-way. Councilors Rocka and Herman were opposed. Councilor Hilton was undecided, as he wanted to hear from his constituents and get more information from Staff. The consensus was to table the discussion, allow Councilor Hilton to gather additional information and feedback, and then continue the discussion at a regular City Council meeting where the Council could make a formal decision about whether to allow a pilot program.

**ADJOURNMENT**

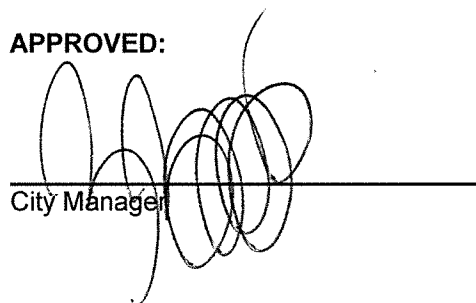
There being no further business, the work session was adjourned at 1:26 pm.

**ATTEST:**



\_\_\_\_\_  
Finance Director

**APPROVED:**



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City Manager