

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, Public Works Director Harrington, City Support Engineer Moore. The meeting is recorded and will be transcribed by ABC Transcription Services, LLC.

REGULAR AGENDA ITEMS

Item 3(a): Astoria Bypass Discussion with ODOT and Clatsop County

City Manager Estes and Director Harrington provided details via PowerPoint about the history of Astoria's efforts to get a bypass built around the city. His presentation included an overview of various routes that had been proposed, controversy surrounding those routes, impacts of building a bypass, and the City's various statements and plans that support a bypass.

Ken Shonkwiler, ODOT Senior Region Planner, noted that funding in the new infrastructure package was being allocated to rehabilitation of existing facilities, as required by the federal government. A small amount of the funding will be allocated to other programs and the Northwest Area Commission on Transportation (NW-ACT) will be taking public comments on which programs should be funded until December 31, 2021. Funding for a bypass would require the support of multiple jurisdictions in the region and the NW-ACT, as well as legislation that allocated the funding. Expansion of a state highway is the last option that ODOT would consider due to the disrepair of existing infrastructure. Therefore, it was not likely that ODOT would pursue building a bypass.

Staff and Mr. Shonkwiler confirmed for Mayor Jones that a bypass project in the next 20 years could cost between \$120 million and \$180 million. The largest portion of the expense would be due to wetland impacts, the need to build two bridges on the route, and private properties that would need to be acquired.

Councilor Hilton:

"I don't know if this is a good time to bring this up, but I'll just start. By saying the amount of money that was spent between Cornelius Pass Road and the 217 improvements within that infrastructure and the repaving of Highway 26, it just seems to me that the funding is going elsewhere as opposed to the rural areas. So, that's just what I recognize. When I looked at this funding for background, that's exactly what I think about. I think about how much money is being sent to the valley and how much is being sent to us. So, that's just my comment for now.

Ted McLain, Clatsop County Public Works Director, gave a presentation on a two-lane alternate route and evacuation routes recommended in the County's Transportation System Plan (TSP). He provided details of the routes and described the County's work to identify these routes. Currently, the Board of Commissioners has directed staff to hold off on studying the feasibility of the alternate routes. However, the Board of Commissioners plans to incorporate this work into the County's Strategic Plan update process beginning January 2022.

Staff, Mr. Shonkwiler, and Mr. McLain answered questions and responded to comments from Councilors with the following key comments:

- ODOT has methods for limiting access to any highway and bypass which can hurt or help a community's economy depending on how they are built. Studies show that impacts to commercial activity correlate to the distance of the new highway from the old highway, zoning along the new highway, and access points along the new highway. Restaurants and retailers that cater to people passing through are usually impacted the most as commercial activity shifts. Additionally, new approaches to redevelopment will be necessary to address those changes in business activity.
- People traveling to the coast already have several routes to choose from and if it became easier or faster to go through Portland, there might be some relief to Highway 30. No statewide traffic study had been done, but ODOT traffic analyses done in the 1990s and in 2007 show that a bypass would be expensive and would not alleviate congestion. Therefore, ODOT prefers to invest in Highway 30.
- Highway 30 is a nationally designated freight route because the overhead clearance of the tunnel on Highway 26 prohibits many trucks. Additionally, studies show a lot of truck traffic stops in Astoria and Astoria has become a tourist destination. So, even with a bypass, Astoria would still have traffic problems.

Councilor Rocka said he wished ODOT would set aside a small portion of its budget for rural development. Every road project that ODOT does is expensive and complicated, and it should be Astoria's turn to get funding at some point

Councilor Hilton:

"I'd like to thank my fellow Councilor Rocka for his statement there. And as I'm sitting there looking at his picture, behind him is the Astoria Megler Bridge, the bridge to nowhere. And what that was was a vision for our community. It was a vision for the future and I don't think we have a vision for the future right now if we're going to sit here and constantly funnel traffic through our town. At one time, there was ferries that took people across the river. Now, there's a bridge. The millions of people that have moved to Seattle and to Portland, they're going to come here. They continue to come here. Nobody ever anticipated their home being half a million dollars in Astoria. It is now. People are going to come. They continue to come. Look at the growth on

the Long Beach Peninsula. They have a highway that leads from Longview through Cathlamet to the Long Beach Peninsula. Most of those people drive through our town. Most of those people with Washington license plates are either coming from Longview to go to Costco, to go to Home Depot, because they like coming to Astoria. They like coming to the beach. They're going to go clam digging. They're going to come to the beach. They're going to do those things. And I think what it took then in 1964 was vision. And I think what we need now is a vision for the future. We have to plan for the future development and prosperity and the future growth within our community. So, that's what I'm thinking. Thank you."

Councilor Herman commented that a bypass is cost prohibitive and would degrade the environment. The route would go over land that is rugged and steep and would not survive a landslide. Therefore, money should be used to shore up existing infrastructure.

Mayor Jones explained that the City could not mandate a new highway outside of city limits. He asked the County to consider the City's TSP comments on the bypass during the County's Strategic Plan update because the community wanted trucks to bypass town and have a better emergency evacuation route.

Mayor Jones called for a recess at 2:03 pm The work session reconvened at 2:09 pm.

Item 3(b): Wastewater Industrial Pre-treatment Rate Methodology Presentation

Engineer Moore provided background information and updates on the City's new industrial pre-treatment program imposed on breweries. She, Steve Donovan, Donovan Enterprises, Director Harrington, and City Manager Estes gave a PowerPoint presentation on rate methodology recommendations for industrial customers, with a focus on the fermentation beverage cluster. The presentation included anticipated implications to the rate payers of the new method compared to the rates that customers were currently paying. If the Council supported this methodology, a revised sewer resolution would be presented for approval in January 2022. The new billing would be implemented for Commercial 2 and Commercial 3 customers in January 2023 and for Industrial customers on July 1, 2022.

Mayor Jones called for public comments.

David Reid asked for the expected total revenue increase if the rates are implemented as outlined.

Mr. Donovan replied that was unknown.

Director Harrington added that the amount would depend on the actions of the dischargers and how they run their businesses. The sewer system budget is very deficient in adequate funds to run the system as is necessary. Rate increases over the years have been small because the City has been burdened with the combined sewer overflow (CSO) surcharge. There will be \$5 million in treatment plant upgrades, funded by grants. The additional revenue from the new rates would allow the City pay for bioaugmentation, additional Staff needed to manage the program, and new plant, monitoring equipment, and increased energy costs.

David Reid said Advance Astoria identified fermented beverages as a desirable industry for the area. The fermented beverage cluster has had a huge impact on the economy and property taxes. He wanted the City to make sure it was not unfairly burdening a small number of businesses, particularly if the increase in revenue is not enough for the City to do what it wants to do. Two of the businesses have made good faith efforts to mitigate their flow into the system and there should be some relief or reward for that effort.

Dave Kroening, Buoy Beer, stated that working with the City and Fort George had gone well so far. His brewery would get their system online and start monthly load reporting soon. He wanted to see how Staff's proposed rates compared to other municipalities. He also wanted a clear understanding of the impact of the high strength effluent so that the rates could be based on the costs associated with those impacts.

Councilor Brownson said the costs associated with maintaining Astoria's pond system is different from the costs associated with mechanical systems. Therefore, comparing rates with other communities would not be an apples-to-apples comparison. Maintenance to the pond system will increase the longevity of their operation. He asked if some of the revenue from the new rates could be set aside for future maintenance. He also wanted to know if the new rates would decrease the amount the City is asking the breweries to pay.

Mr. Donovan responded that all of the costs would have shifted to one class of customer and those charges would have been significantly higher.

Dale Richwine, Richwine Environmental, stated there was a misconception that the rates identified for biochemical oxygen demand (BOD) loads was consistent with other cities. However, Astoria's specific costs for treating BOD and total suspended solids (TSS) were considered when determining an appropriate rate.

Mr. Donovan added that the rates of other communities similar in size to Astoria are all over the place because each community has unique characteristics with different costs. The proposed rates are predicated on Astoria's cost of service and no one else's.

Mr. Richwine said the upgrades being designed now include a mechanical headworks that removes sand. No sand has been removed since the plant started in 1974. In the City's CSO system, sand that washes off the streets has been filling one of the lagoons. The lagoons have never been cleaned either, so facilities will be installed that will allow Staff to clean the solids from the lagoons. The mechanical headworks, disposing of the sand, and cleaning will be an additional cost.

Director Harrington noted that other cities have a lot more capacity than Astoria. The Water Master Plan that was just completed revealed that Astoria has \$70 million in deferred water maintenance. The Treatment Plant Facility Plan recommends \$5 million in upgrades. He believed the City had tens of millions of dollars in deferred sewer maintenance as well. The City does not have a sewer maintenance plan because the City has never been able to afford one. He hoped the additional revenue would help the City keep up with inflation and some operating costs. However, the revenue and associated expenses will be included in the City's budget.

Councilor Rocka said he appreciated all of the research. Tying the charges to the demand on the system is fair and it makes sense to put the money into maintaining the system.


Mayor Jones stated he would like Staff to move forward with their proposed formula. He confirmed that the consensus among the Council was that Staff should process with their proposal.

City Manager Estes said Staff would work with the Chamber of Commerce to start providing information to businesses.

ADJOURNMENT

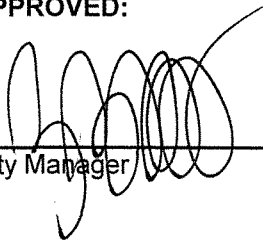
There being no further business, the meeting was adjourned at 3:10 pm.

ATTEST:



Finance Director

APPROVED:



City Manager