

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 and Finance Director Brooks. The meeting is recorded and will be transcribed by ABC Transcription Services, Inc.

CITY COUNCIL GOALS AND VISION DISCUSSION

Mayor Jones provided Councilors with the list of draft goals and a list containing changes recommended by him and Staff. City Manager Estes gave a brief overview of the previous work sessions on City Council goals for FY2019-2020. The Council and Staff discussed the goals as follows:

Community Development Department Budget for Staffing

City Manager Estes reviewed in detail the projects and permit applications that the Community Development Department was currently working on and the projects that the department would begin working on in the near future. He explained how Staff's limited capacity led to hiring consultants, which had budget implications.

- Staff would be working on Code amendments through October and they anticipated a rush of homestay lodging permits in April because all homestay lodging operators had to get the new permit to be compliant. Additionally, there were several permit applications which required public hearings. He described Staff's efforts to process applications, enforce permitting processes, prepare for public hearings, do Code enforcement, and complete Code amendment processes. He also reviewed Urban Renewal projects and historic preservation grant applications.
- Some projects, like the Uniontown Reborn project, could not be put on hold because grants required specific project timelines. However, the Code amendments could be done as time allowed. Staff was worried about bogging down the Planning Commission and City Council with Code amendments particularly since most were controversial and the City anticipated a lot of public involvement.
- The application period for the vacant Director position closes on March 29th. After the recruiter provides Staff with a shortlist of qualified applicants, Staff will proceed with public meetings to meet the candidates and a round robin of interviews. The vacant Planner position has also been posted and a few applications have already been received.
- He provided details about the sources of revenue that Staff expected to increase over the next fiscal year but noted that the Public Employee Retirement System (PERS) expenses would be increasing as well, which would impact all City departments and eliminate the capacity to add any full-time employees. He also explained how compression impacted the City's budget. More detailed financial projections would be presented to Council during the budgeting process. If expenditures were lower than expected in the next fiscal year, funds could be allocated to staffing expenses. However, the City would still need to find a sustainable way to afford staffing expenses into the future.

Councilors discussed the importance of preventing Staff burnout and agreed that Staff should extend project timelines as needed to alleviate workloads. They also recognized that while all departments needed more staff, the Community Development Department had the greatest need. In addition to the projects listed by City Manager Estes, the department would also be working on Heritage Square and housing in the near future.

Councilor Rocka recommended a temporary moratorium on development to alleviate Staff's workload.

City Manager Estes explained that while Staff is working on some large projects, the permits for homeowners take up most of Staff's time. Larger projects usually involve professional architects and engineers, so do not require as much from Staff. There are two City employees and two contract employees in the Building Codes Division. Currently, the revenues do not cover their day to day activities. Contract Planner Johnson has agreed to continue working for the City for now, but he was waiting to hear back from Contract Planner Morgan on whether

he would like to continue working for the City. He is looking for ways to add resources to all departments. Most of the Staff is fairly new, so employees are still learning, which does create some capacity. However, there has also been a lot of change over the last few years, so Staff is working on developing more stable and efficient processes, like implementing new software. The budget is not dire, but it is tight.

Director Brooks said Staff needed to create additional capacity in sustainable ways. However, short-term fixes, like using contractors, could get Staff by until they find more sustainable resources. Staff shared details about how other departments are working to increase Staff's capacity.

Mayor Jones called for a recess at 2:16 pm. The meeting reconvened at 2:20 pm

City Council Goals

The Council and Staff discussed the list of draft goals with the following key comments:

- This set of goals would be two-year goals for fiscal years 2019 through 2021.
- Goal on Housing – The City of Warrenton plans to ask the County to postpone adoption of their housing study until after they have completed a Buildable Lands Inventory. However, this will not preclude the City of Astoria from using relevant information in the study. The Council discussed whether the housing study should be mentioned in its goal. The consensus was to use the following language, "Support efforts to increase the housing supply (both market rate and affordable) using the County Housing Study as a guide."
- Goal on the financial sustainability of the Parks Department - Urgent repairs are needed at the Aquatic Center so Staff recommended the funding for the Cemetery Master Plan be reallocated for the repairs and that work on the master plan be postponed by a few months.
- Goal on Heritage Square – City Manager Estes explained how the new Director would work with City Council and developers to achieve this goal.
 - Developers have expressed interest in the site and have asked to be notified when RFPs go out.
 - The Council and Staff discussed rumors of potential redevelopment of the American Legion building. City Manager Estes shared the history of a proposal by the American Legion to take ownership of the library, which led to protesting during the construction of the Garden of Surging Waves. The relationship between the City and Legion has since improved.
- Goal on disaster resilience – The draft goal did not mention pursuing a public safety building outside of the tsunami inundation zone. City Manager Estes explained that budget items would be recommended by Staff this or next fiscal year to move forward on that. After some discussion, the Council agreed to approve the goal as written.
 - City Manager Estes provided details of Staff's work with other jurisdictions to increase public safety, awareness and preparedness.
- Goal on streamlining efficiencies, revenue generation and expense reduction – Mayor Jones noted this goal was helpful to Staff because it encourages efficiencies.
- Goal on economic development and zoning – Mayor Jones read several versions of the goal and Councilors agreed to "Maintain Astoria's unique character in Council decisions including those involving zoning, growth, and economic development."
- Goal on the library renovation – The Library Foundation has asked Council to specifically mention a bond measure in the goal. After some discussion, all Councilors agreed that the City was not ready to move forward with a bond measure yet, as the City would need to hire consultant first to do some due diligence before the Council could consider a bond measure.
 - David Oser said the Foundation was moving quickly on grants and finding people likely to make substantial contributions. The Foundation would be prepared to give a comprehensive report to the Council in 90 days.
 - The Council agreed to the following language, "Vigorously support the renovation of the Astor Library and the Foundation's fundraising work."
- Goal on Advance Astoria - City Manager Estes noted that Councilors had wanted to review the Advance Astoria document before finalizing this goal.

City Manager Estes confirmed that the final draft list of goals would be formally presented to Council for adoption at the April 15th City Council meeting.

City Council Vision Statement

Councilors each recommended specific words, formatting, and language for the vision statement. After some discussion, the Council decided on the following:

“The Astoria City Council actions and decisions value:

- Preservation of Astoria’s unique character
- Livability and quality of life for residents
- Thriving local economy
- Resilience as a community

City government will provide high quality services, and be responsive and transparent.”

Mayor Jones suggested the vision statement and goals be listed together in one document titled “Astoria City Council Vision and Goals Fiscal Year 2019 – 2021” with the vision statement listed first.

Mayor Jones noted references to preserving Astoria’s unique character appeared in both the vision statement and goals. After a short discussion, the Council decided to keep the redundancy.

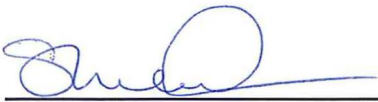
Councilor Brownson provided the City Council with an update on the legislation on transient lodging taxes. He had sent a letter of support to Senator Mitchell and recommended the Council send a letter of support as well. He provided Councilors with a copy of his letter as well as information from the League of Oregon Cities (LOC) about their process of responding to proposed legislation.

The Council briefly discussed the proposed changes, which would allow cities to broaden the use of transient lodging tax revenues. The Council and Staff also discussed other legislation that the City had been asked to take a position on in the past.

ADJOURNMENT

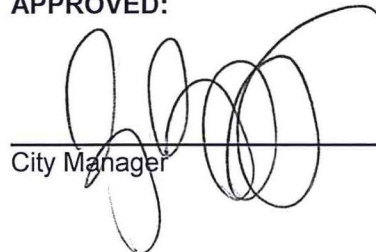
There being no further business, the meeting was adjourned at 3:09 pm.

ATTEST:



Finance Director

APPROVED:



City Manager

