

A regular meeting of the Astoria Common Council was held at the above place at the hour of 7:00 pm.

Councilors Present: Nemlowill, Jones, Price, Brownson, and Mayor LaMear.

Councilors Excused: None

Staff Present: City Manager Estes, Community Development Director Cronin, Parks and Recreation Director Cosby, Finance Director Brooks, Fire Chief Ames, Police Chief Johnston, Public Works Director Cook, Library Director Pearson, and City Attorney Henningsgaard. The meeting is recorded and will be transcribed by ABC Transcription Services, Inc.

PROCLAMATIONS

Item 3(a): Bruce Berney Archives Proclamation

The Astoria Public Library is the repository of a special collection of items currently known as the Astoriana Collection. During the tenure of City Librarian Bruce Berney the collection grew to include first edition copies of the Lewis & Clark Expedition and Washington Irving's Astoria. Mayor Arline LaMear will proclaim the renaming of the Astoriana Collection to the Bruce Berney Archives in honor of his work in the preservation of all things Astoria.

Director Pearson gave a brief history of former Library Director Bruce Berney and the Astoria Library's special collection, the Astoriana Collection.

Mayor LaMear read the proclamation renaming the Astoriana Collection as the Bruce Berney Archives.

Item 3(b): Ebba Wicks Brown Day – July 21, 2017

Local Architect, Ebba Wicks Brown's contributions to Astoria should be celebrated for the pioneering contributions to the history of women in architecture, to the development of Northwest Regional style architecture, and for her thoughtful design of numerous buildings, which highlight that Astoria's architectural history. Mayor Arline LaMear will proclaim July 21, 2017 as Ebba Wicks Brown Day in Astoria.

Mayor LaMear read the proclamation declaring July 21, 2017 as Ebba Wicks Brown Day.

Item 3(c): Designation of July as Park and Recreation Month

Mayor LaMear read the proclamation declaring July as Park and Recreation Month.

Norma Hernandez, Astoria Parks Board President, said she was excited to see so many people present at the meeting and was proud of the community's involvement.

REPORTS OF COUNCILORS

Item 4(a): Councilor Nemlowill reported that she was impressed by the citizen's passion.

Item 4(b): Councilor Brownson reported that he was happy to see everyone who attended. He went to Craft3's open house and was impressed by their example of what could be done with an old building in Astoria. The offices were downstairs and condominiums were on the top floor of the old Fisher Brothers building. City Council recently met with the Friends of the Astoria Column. He was blown away by the Column grounds and facilities and believed the Friends were a great example of how a City partnership can work with people who are interested in preserving aspects of Astoria. His next Meet Your Councilor event would be on Saturday, July 22, 2017 at 9:00 am at Three Cups of Coffee.

Item 4(c): Councilor Price reported that she had spoken with many citizens over the last few weeks. The most important part of this meeting would be to hear from the community and for Council to restore an appropriate balance to the Parks and Recreation Department's budget.

Item 4(d): Councilor Jones had no reports.

Item 4(e): Mayor LaMear announced that she appointed Brookley Henry to the Planning Commission after Frank Spence was elected to the Port Commission. She noted Ms. Henry's professional background and experience relevant to the position. She reported that she attended the United States Coast Guard's Change of Command to the Cutter Fir at Tongue Point. The outgoing commander was the first woman to be in command of any vessel in Astoria and she was assigned command of an ice cutter in Alaska. It is rare for people to go from one command to another. Jason Haag is the new commander of the Cutter Fir.

CHANGES TO AGENDA

No changes.

CONSENT CALENDAR

The following items were presented on the Consent Calendar:

- 6(a) City Council Work Session Minutes of 6/14/16
- 6(b) Library Board Minutes of 5/23/2017
- 6(c) Human Resources Services Contract (Finance)
- 6(d) Contract for Tow Services (Police)
- 6(e) Lease Agreement with Astoria Regatta Association for use of East Portion of Heritage Square (City Manager)

City Council Action: Motion made by Councilor Nemlowill, seconded by Councilor Brownson, to approve the Consent Calendar. Motion carried unanimously. Ayes: Councilors Price, Jones, Nemlowill, Brownson, and Mayor LaMear; Nays: None.

REGULAR AGENDA ITEMS

Item 7(a): Salary Resolution Establishing Basic Compensation Plan Cost of Living Wage Adjustment Part-Time Employees Schedule F-2 (Finance)

The adjustment for Schedule F-2 was not appropriately reflected in the Salary Resolution presented at the July 3, 2017 Council Meeting. This resolution contains the updated F-2 Schedule, which reflects Oregon minimum wage change, which is effective July 1, 2017. The proposed resolution implements the following change retroactive to July 1, 2017:

Part-time Group	Adjustments to reflect (Schedule F-2) increase due to Oregon minimum wage, effective July 1, 2017
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City Council Action: Motion made by Councilor Brownson, seconded by Councilor Nemlowill, to adopt the Salary Resolution establishing basic compensation plan cost of living wage adjustments for part-time employees (Schedule F-2), retroactive to July 1, 2017. Motion carried unanimously. Ayes: Councilors Price, Jones, Nemlowill, Brownson, and Mayor LaMear; Nays: None.

☐ **Item 7(b): Liquor License Application by Samuel McDaniel, dba Astoria Downtown Market, located at 1020 Commercial Street, Suite A, for a Change of Ownership for an Off-Premises Sales License (Finance)**

A liquor license application has been filed by Samuel McDaniel for Astoria Downtown Market. This application is a Change of Ownership for an Off- Premises Sales License. The appropriate Departments have reviewed the application and it is recommended that Council consider approval of the application.

Councilor Nemlowill stated she would not vote because her husband's business, Fort George, does business with the Astoria Downtown Market.

City Council Action: Motion made by Councilor Jones, seconded by Councilor Price, to approve the liquor license application by Samuel McDaniel, dba Astoria Downtown Market. Motion carried 4 to 0 to 1. Ayes: Councilors Price, Jones, Brownson, and Mayor LaMear; Nays: None. Abstentions: Councilor Nemlowill.

Item 7(c): Implementing Parks and Recreation Department Funding Scenarios – Public Hearing:
Ordinance Amending Code Section 8.045.2 Increasing Transient Tax; Public Hearing:
Ordinance Adopting a Parks and Recreation Fee (Parks)

Cuts to the Parks and Recreation Department's budget combined with increases in services has left the Department imbalanced, and unable to continue providing for the 310 acres of park land, Aquatic Center, and numerous recreation programs the community has grown to enjoy. Over the past 6 months, City Council has been discussing how to create a more sustainable Parks and Recreation department by either reducing services, increasing revenue or a combination of both. One scenario discussed was the "Life Raft" scenario, which would provide just enough relief to stabilize services, while a longer-term solution is explored. Included in the memorandum are several options and recommendations to fund the "Life Raft" scenario and recommended service reductions if additional funding is not achieved.

City Manager Estes presented the Staff report and described historic events that led to the necessity to increase funding to the Parks Department.

Mayor LaMear asked Councilors to comment on increasing the transient tax.

Councilor Jones stated he preferred to discuss both ordinances together as a package instead of individually. He was excited to see that so many people were engaged on this issue. All Councilors have heard compelling arguments in favor of and against every aspect of the Parks budget issue. A full spectrum of opinions has been expressed. There is no correct answer, only trade-offs. Even though some people will leave the meeting disappointed, he would be satisfied that decisions were made via public processes that took place over several months. He thanked everyone for participating in the democratic process.

Councilor Price stated this conversation has been ongoing for more than several months. She was not surprised by the high attendance at this meeting because every public event held for the Parks Master Plan, which was only a one-year process, had many attendees. The Parks Master Plan shows how much the community values its Parks and Recreation facilities. She hoped Council would restore the Parks and Recreation budget by balancing resources with requirements in appropriate ways. She believed Staff had made very good recommendations. Council has heard insightful comments and for and against the recommendations, but the majority of people supported a \$3.00 fee and increasing the transient room tax.

Councilor Brownson stated the public involvement helped him do his job. Sustainability will require the City to reduce its inventory of park lands and encourage more cooperative efforts as exemplified by Friends of the Astoria Column and Friends of McClure Park. City Council must provide the Parks Department with the opportunity to become sustainable. He understood it cost a lot to live in Astoria, but the City provides a lot to its 10,000 residents. He was most impressed by the young families who called him to say they wanted the parks to remain open. Parks make Astoria special and liveable for young families.

Councilor Nemlowill stated her family uses parks and recreation daily and she knew many people who did the same. She has seen all walks of life use the pool and fitness area at the Aquatic Center. Children learn how to swim and play on the slide, Coast Guard rescue swimmers train, elderly participate in fitness and therapy classes, and the Aquatic Center is the only place people can take a shower some times. She believed it was one of the community's most important assets. As a Councilor, she would do everything in her power to keep the pool and Aquatic Center open. The City can give Parks what it needs without imposing a water fee. The cost to provide clean water in Astoria will always rise and the only reason residents should pay a higher bill is to offset those costs. Residents already pay \$130 per \$100,000 of assessed property value to support the Parks Department in addition to user fees and the new garbage collection fee for waste disposal in parks. She was considering supporting a two percent increase to the transient lodging tax, which she believed would allow

Astoria to create better attractions for visitors. She would like to see brochures in hotel rooms that state tax dollars support places like the Riverwalk, the Aquatic Center, and Tapiola Park.

Mayor LaMear stated she supported a two percent transient room tax, but did not support a mandatory \$3.00 fee on the water/sewer bill. She believed the fee would be too complicated and costly to implement. The Finance Department has already spent hours on this issue and adding the cost of figuring out how to assess the fee fairly would not be cost effective. The fee would be hard on fixed and low income people. Additionally, the fee could not be implemented until January 2018, which would leave the Parks Department severely understaffed and under maintained during the time when Parks and Recreation services are most needed. The City needs funds now. She supported a voluntary fund because she believed most citizens wanted a strong and vibrant park system. City Council could send a letter to all citizens informing them of the reasons for the funding shortfall and the need for immediate funds to tide the City over until January 2018. The letter should request a one-time voluntary contribution for this purpose. Instead of asking for a specific amount, the letter should ask for citizen's most generous contribution. She believed people would step forward. She also suggested the City establish a Go Fund Me account. Appeals could appear in the water/sewer bill, in an op-ed in the *Daily Astorian*, or on the radio. Establishing a fund to receive these resources would be much less complicated than establishing a system of collecting a \$3.00 fee from every unit in a multi-family complex. People could add any amount over their payment to their water/sewer bill, which would go into the Parks Fund. They could also donate directly to the Go Fund Me account.

Councilor Brownson said he would support a \$3.00 fee only if the rate payers could opt out after one year and suggested the water/sewer bills also include options to pay \$5.00 and \$10.00. He also supported a 1.5 percent increase to the transient tax, which would bring in \$300,000. City Council needs to determine what Parks and Recreation will look like in the long run. The Master Plan only gives a general idea, so Staff needs to do more work in that direction.

Councilor Price said she supported Staff's recommendations, a \$3.00 fee reviewed annually, a two percent increase to the transient room tax implemented in January 2018, and deficit funding to make funds available now. She was concerned about the micromanagement of the Parks Department. City Council has a role as policy makers to listen to Staff, but she was more interested in providing funding to the Parks Department, which is being very capably managed. City Council should fund the department and let Staff do its work.

Councilor Jones said he supported a two percent increase to the lodging tax and was considering supporting the fee as proposed. A voluntary fee is a good idea. However, it would be impossible to predict future revenues.

Mayor LaMear opened the public hearing on the ordinances amending Code Section 8.045.2 increasing the transient tax and adopting a Parks and Recreation Fee at 7:55 pm. She called for public testimony.

Margaret Chenoweth, 531 Grand Ave., Astoria, said she moved to this community after a lot of searching because she needed a community that provided for her during retirement. Astoria had everything, parks, a good pool, and a good library. She would do everything she could to keep the parks and Aquatic Center open. She did not believe any resident cared about charging tourists more money to visit Astoria. As a tenant, the water fee would be passed on to her by her landlord, but if that were what it will take, she would be willing to pay the fee.

Chuck Meyer, 555 Rivington, Astoria, said he ran swimming pools for 20 years, including Tapiola for two years. He has a monthly pass and uses the pool for physical therapy. He was in favor of a \$3.00 surcharge to support the Parks Department. This is similar to giving up one cup of coffee each month. He hoped the charge would be per living unit so that the fee is paid per family instead of per structure. He suggested that for three billing periods prior to implementing the fee, a stamped envelope be included in the bills so that senior citizens could opt out. There are a number of people who only receive a Social Security check once a month, some of which are not very large. They are probably not using recreation anyway. Seniors who want to opt out should have to prove their age. He moved to Astoria after he got out of the Army in 1971 so that his wife could work at the Job Corps and he could attend Clatsop Community College. They raised four sons and used Tapiola pool, Wise pool, the Aquatic Center, many playgrounds, and sports activities. The recreation program is a very important part of what makes Astoria such a nice place to live. Astoria has a nice collection of things that many cities do not have, including the first community college in the state, Astor Street Opry Company, KMUN, and stores that are sponsored by locals instead of tax money. Some people question why they should pay more for recreation facilities if they are not personally utilizing them. Everyone pays taxes for the road department, police, fire

department, schools, the community college, and the health district. Even though there is not a police man on your back porch every night, he will show up anytime you dial 911. While playing sports, it is impossible to be wired into an electronic device and forces participants to have personal interactions with others. Sports give people a chance to unwind and unwind. The recreation department is a major part of what makes small communities a fun place to be.

Josie Reeves, 3931 Franklin Ave., Astoria, said the City cannot close the pool.

Roger Lindsey, 631 33rd St., Astoria, said the \$3.00 per meter fee would raise \$153,400, and combined with a room tax increase would generate all of the funds required for the life boat scenario plus an additional \$138,506. The City would only use \$15,004 of the water meter fee for the life boat scenario that would keep the Aquatic Center open and operating. He asked if City Council had considered other resources to meet the \$15,000 gap. He had spoken to Lieutenant Matt Phillips of the Clatsop County Sheriff's Office Jail and Trustee Workcrew, who said that a workcrew of 12 trustees working for eight hours a day, 20 days a year, at the Ocean View Cemetery would provide the City with a savings of at least \$15,400. The workcrew could not provide a total solution to the cemetery, but they could be part of the solution. He wanted to know why Lieutenant Phillips had not been contacted about this option because he has heard people state that the City considered every possible option.

City Manager Estes said Staff has contacted the Sheriff's Department about Parks Department services numerous times over the years, most recently after the City of Warrenton raised some concerns about Ocean View Cemetery.

Mr. Lindsey asked if there was any value to the budget Staff had presented.

City Manager Estes explained that the workcrews were not able to work.

Mr. Lindsey stated Lieutenant Phillips told him people were available to work.

Director Cosby said in that case, Staff would appreciate a call back. Staff has been trying to contact the Sheriff's Department. In the past, it was far more expensive to hire inmate crews than it was to pay Astoria's part-time seasonal employees. The workcrews have not been cost effective in the past, and currently, Staff is not receiving any responses from the Sheriff's Department.

Mr. Lindsey said he would get Lieutenant Phillips to respond to Staff. The cost is \$225 a day for 12 people.

Dulcye Taylor, 856 11th St., Astoria, said she was not a big user of parks, but she does use the Riverwalk and walk through the Garden of Surging Waves almost every day. She was on the Citizen Advisory Committee that worked on the Master Plan. The committee knew a year ago when the Master Plan was adopted that properties might need to be sold and programs would need to be cut. Adult and children recreation programs are on the list of cuts. She believed those programs were critical to the community. Children need the programs to learn how to be good citizens, how to get along, and get exercise. She believed it would be crazy to cut the recreation programs. She read in some of the documentation that additional funding would provide the opportunity for the Chip-In program to be reinstated. Chip-In is a big program that takes care of parks. She asked City Council to consider reviewing the \$3.00 fee in one year. If the City had an additional funding source in a year, Council could get rid of the fee.

Kimberly Chaput, 3931 Franklin Ave., Astoria, said her daughter is in the North Coast Swim Club. The pool is incredibly important to the club and her daughter has been swimming since she was nine months old. There is nowhere else she can swim. The pool is critical to her and to the community. A \$3.00 monthly fee would not make much of difference to her family's budget. However, she grew up in a family for whom that was not the case, so asked her mother what she would have done. Her mother said she would have gladly paid the \$3.00 because the Parks Department offers below market rate day care and facilities. She believed the City should exempt people on public assistance or Social Security. She supported an increase to the transient tax. She thanked Councilor Nemlowill, Councilor Jones, and Director Cosby for responding to her communications. As a taxpayer of Astoria, she was concerned about paying more to use the pool. In addition to paying taxes, she pays the same admission fee as users from Warrenton and Knappa. She did not believe this was fair. She asked

Council to consider increasing the non-resident fees. Astoria used to have non-resident fees and she did not know why they were eliminated.

Rory Gerard, 1581 Niagara Ave., Astoria, said he would pay \$100 a year if the City gave the community a fenced dog park. He did not use the pool, but he would support it. He did not use the parks because they are not safe anymore for walking a dog on a leash. Too many people let their large dogs off their leashes. He and his dog have been attacked four times. He takes his dog to the parking lot at Shively, but does not dare go around the curb. It is frustrating that there is no safe place to exercise his pet. There is enough park property in the city that a fence could be put up somewhere. A dog park does not need to be a four-acre flat piece of land. A couple of small parks could be converted. The community really needs a dog park. There is a dog sitting in most of the tourists' recreational vehicles and a dog park would be a great way to welcome people to the community.

Chuck Albright, 1414 16th Street, Astoria, said he had lived in Astoria for 24 years and has always used Parks and Recreation. He and his children have participated in recreation and he has been a coach in the recreation program, which is vital to the community. He believed the parks are the face of Astoria for tourists and the City should value this. The room tax is essential and he doubted it would impact tourism. His children learned to swim at the pool and his daughter was on the swim team last year. She said the City cannot close the pool because it is the best facility in the Cowapa League. If the pool is closed, the swim team will have to ride busses to every corner of the state for their district swim meets. The \$3.00 fee is an investment and he believed the City should allow citizens to invest in the community.

Lynn Jackson, 90425 Gander, Astoria, said he understood City Council had many difficult decisions to make. He appreciated that his family, adolescents, and young adults had opportunities to participate in programs because they are an equalizer for young citizens in the community. Without the opportunity to participate in parks and recreation, people are left with for-profit organizations whose activities are at a great cost. Socioeconomically disadvantaged people are unable to participate in these activities. Parks programs have been wonderful for the enrichment and education of youth in the community. He appreciated that City Council and Staff have kept the programs functioning. He was excited to continue to partner with Parks and Recreation as a parent and in a professional capacity.

Alisha Bromelain, Astoria, said she supported both ordinances as proposed. Her family relocated to Astoria last year and a Parks program was the first place they felt welcomed. Her six-year-old daughter loves to swim and learned to swim at the Aquatic Center. Her daughter loves to play baseball and participates in after school programs and summer camps. Without the programming, the city would be unlivable for her family. There are no other services available for young families and extracurricular activities have allowed her family to become part of the community. The Kid Zone program and day camp provides safe, reliable, and engaging care for her daughter while she is at work. She did not know what would happen to her family if they lost those options because there are no substitute programs available. She has enjoyed living in Astoria so far. The programming provided by Parks and Recreation has been instrumental in incorporating her family into the community. She hoped Council would support the proposed increases to fully fund the Parks Department.

Ken Yuill, 58 Alt. Hwy. 101, Warrenton, said there were two articles about the cemetery in the news last week. One of the articles, published in the *Columbia Press*, states that 20 years ago, eight full-time employees took care of the cemetery. He asked if Director Cosby said this during the interview.

Director Cosby said she could check the City's records, but believed six full-time employees with seven to twelve seasonal employees was the largest crew the cemetery had. She was unsure of the year.

Mr. Yuill said 30 years ago, the City had a two-man crew who kept the cemetery beautiful. Over the years, it began to deteriorate. He was outraged when he saw the article because he has never seen eight full-time employees working at the cemetery. He worked for Public Works for 26 years. He was upset because of the article's impact to Staff's credibility. The irreducible fund is disappearing and maintenance is not being done. He is not a citizen of Astoria, but his family bought into the cemetery for the maintenance, which is not being done.

Mike Angeletta, 265 W. Grand, Astoria, said there was no doubt that everyone supported Parks and Recreation and valued their services. Government needs to be responsibly managed and the trust of the citizens needs to be respected. The means the City must do long-term planning that avoids surprises and the need for life raft funding in the future. A few days ago, the *Daily Astorian* reported that over the last 40 years, Parks and

Recreation has acquired more land, more responsibilities, and expanded services while cutting full-time staff by about 50 percent. This creates an impossible task for the hardworking people in the Parks Department. He wanted to know how and why this situation occurred. Better long-term planning would have avoided this emergency. Part of responsible government management means that when looking for a short-term fix, the government should learn from its mistakes and create a long-term plan that will avoid those mistakes in the future. He had not yet seen the analysis of what the City and the Parks Department has learned from this debacle to avoid ending up in the same place in the future. He believed the fee was a tax disguised as a fee. Adding this expense to water bills without due diligence violates the trust of Astoria residence. Residents pay a water fee for services directly related to water and sewer and he believed that violating this would open Pandora's Box. He appreciated the sincere efforts of Councilors Nemlowill and Price, who conducted surveys, created discussions, and tried to collect as much feedback as possible. However, this feedback does not represent any statistics or the citizens who would be forced to pay a tax on unrelated services. On the surface, the problem appears to be a simple department budget revenue shortfall. In reality, the City had some overly ambitious goals with lack of planning. It looked like Staff was asking for a lot more money than what was included in the life raft. He suggested Council create a life raft out of the General Fund and increase transient room tax if necessary. This would keep Parks and Recreation running with current Staff while working on a long-term plan to maintain services and avoid over commitments. The Parks Department can make a case to the voters and taxpayers on the next ballot. If the City has a compelling case, voters will support a tax.

Daryl Moore, 3377 Grand Ave., Astoria, said he had been vocal opponent of the park fee. He submitted 13 questions to Council last week and had not received any feedback or answers. He supported and used parks, but believed the fee was an inappropriate and inefficient method to raise money. The Staff report indicated that a census of multi-family units would cost \$10,000 to \$20,000. The Staff report did not state how much Staff time had already been put into this or how much Staff time would be required to administer the fee. Currently, lower income households get two chances each year to get help paying the water bill. This help would not include the fee, so an entirely new process would have to be implemented if low-income people are exempt from paying the fee. Staff works very hard and they do not have any extra time. He asked if new Staff would need to be hired to implement the fee. Many costs of implementing the fee have not been articulated or estimated. He did not want the City to spend \$60,000 a year to raise \$100,000. He was fine with the transient room tax increasing to fund parks, but the fee should not be implemented.

George McCartin, 490 Franklin Avenue, Astoria, said other cities who give money to their local chambers of commerce are experiencing finance problems, but most of them are not giving near the amount that Astoria does, \$300,000. Redondo Beach, California had been giving their chamber of commerce \$350,000, but quit giving any funding when priorities changed. Little Rock, Arkansas stopped giving \$200,000 to their chamber and Dalles reduced their contributions to the chamber by 20 percent. City Council has had opportunities during budget sessions to do something about this. He did not know how much of the Chamber's funding came from transient room taxes, but Council has pointed out that it could be used to hire permanent employees to work on parks related to tourism.

Mary Blake said she was Aquatic Director at the Portland Bureau of Parks and Recreation for ten years, where she managed 11 outdoor pools and three indoor pools. When the budget was cut, she began thinking about what to do. Community and neighborhood organizations began buy-back weeks and became engaged instead of allowing the government to do their job. The City needs to engage people because everyone will come up with a good solution. In 1984, she was a manager for Sunset Empire Parks and Recreation District, which was also having funding problems. She had to close the pool in 1987, but again, people became engaged to find solutions. In 1988, Astoria's YMCA closed. Swimmers will find a place to swim. For ten years, Astoria's swimmers came to Seaside. One pool cannot provide a quality experience for all. Communities should have a pool for every 10,000 people. The county would need three pools to service everybody. Learning how to swim saves lives and swimming is an activity that people participate in their entire lives. Swimming also provides health benefits. She has had joints replaced and could not have recovered as fast without the swimming pool. Research based statistics show that people are happy when they see water or are in water. Pools bring communities together and the City needs to work this issue out for the long haul. She has done regular bake sales to keep the most important asset in the community alive. Keep the pool open.

Ron Zilli, 1444 16th Street, Astoria, supported the Parks Department. He appreciated the dialogue to find a sustainable plan to support the parks. He preferred the transient lodging tax. He did not believe the water fee was the right mechanism, but he supported the proposal to ask for voluntary contributions. He believed that

people who were able would support bridge funding. The long-term problem would be solved if this issue was put before voters because parks are core to the culture of the community. The pool is particularly important in the winter because there is not much to do outside. Parks are essential to the quality of life in Astoria.

Dave Kroening, 1168 14th Street, Astoria, said everybody agrees the pool should be kept open and the transient room tax should be increased. Over the last ten year, spending decreased by \$400,000 and revenue increased by \$600,000. So, it is difficult to say the department is being mismanaged. When the department was being run efficiently, funding from the General Fund was cut from 12 percent to seven percent. Other departments needed the funding and there was not enough money to go around, but that put the City in the situation it is in now. He was concerned that the life raft funding would put the City in the same place a year from now and it would take a lot of time and money. A lot of parks are rated D or F in the Master Plan and he has never heard a local say they are comfortable being below average in anything. Current maintenance costs in Astoria are \$1,800 an acre while the state average is over \$4,000 per acre. The Parks Department needs funding. City Council has discusses several options over many months. The community is opposed to selling land, but it should be considered it Council is not willing to tell people to spend more. Allowing people to chose is one option. However, he must pay for roads even if he does not drive a car.

Norma Hernandez, 92335 Youngs River Road, Astoria, thanked City Council for considering both the options to fund the Parks Department. She understood that it was not the current Council's fault that 42 parks were added in the last 40 years. The City has to support all of those properties and make sure they thrive for the kids. People do not realize how much they use parks. One way or another, people enjoy living here because of parks. Every time you go to the tower on 6th Street, walk on the Riverwalk, go to the Maritime Museum, or go to 39th Street, you are always enjoying a part of the Parks Department if you live in this community. The department is the City's responsibility and the City cannot close the pool or suspend programs for families. She expected Council to consider how the community feels about parks. She understood Council supported parks, but the City must maintain the parks. People are here to be healthy, progressive, and to be one unit as a community. The City cannot simply say it cannot support parks anymore.

Glen Admire, 37209 Christians Lane, Astoria, said that even though he did not live in the City limits, he would be happy to write a check to the City for \$36.00. A few months ago, he spoke to City Council on behalf of the swim team, when he asked 23 eight to 14-year old swimmers to raise an extra \$1,500 so they could continue to swim and help the Parks and Recreation Department. The kids were happy to fundraise. He believed that if eight to 14-year olds could raise the funds, the entire city could as well. Fifty years ago, his parents were paying their taxes to get him through Parks programs and he believed the community should pay it forward to make sure their children are taken care of.

Brian Maastricht Lewis and Clark Rd., Astoria, said his family had been in Astoria for five generations. He has enjoyed all of the parks. He met his wife at a park. He would not have had a childhood were it not for parks. Peter Pan Park was amazing and he always had somewhere to go. It would devastate if his kids did not have anywhere to go. Most of the people that make up Astoria's tax base are retirees who say they are on a fixed income, but they can still go to an expensive restaurant and pay \$200 for drinks and dinner while complaining about a \$3 increase to their water bill. He works seven days a week at a family business and a side business. He would be more than happy to pay a fee because he wanted to see kids grow up enjoying the area. He wanted City Council to consider the people who have grown up in Astoria because parks are very important. He hoped City Council also considered all aspects of the issue and supported Staff, who work very hard to give the community what it has. Staff also serves the tourists, who potentially buy vacation homes in Astoria and become part of the tax base. Staff makes Astoria beautiful and gives tourists a reason to move here.

Jackie Baxter, 281 W. Irving, Astoria, said she moved to Astoria 13 years ago when her children were in elementary school. They had bounced around a lot while her husband was pursuing his education. They considered many communities when it was time for her husband to start his practice and for the family to set down roots. The pool was one of the major factors that led her family to choose Astoria. The pool is a great resource for recruiting professionals into the community. Her children are swimmers and she believed it was important to have swimming lessons available to the community because Astoria is surrounded by water. It is irresponsible for a community with large bodies of water as integral parts of the landscape to refrain from providing the opportunity and facilities for children to learn to swim. She commended the Parks Department for decreasing the deficit by such a large amount. She remembered when the pool was threatened in 2008 and the

department needs a dedicated funding source. The facility is extremely valuable, so she fully supported both proposals for funding.

Rebecca Greenway, 1140 Franklin Ave., Astoria, said she was born and raised in Astoria. She spends quite a bit of time at the pool. When she first started in business, Astoria's room tax was seven percent. Many years later, the tax was increased by two percent to build a new conference center. A few years later, it was decided that the conference center was not a necessity because many big buildings were being built in town, so other properties could accommodate the conference concept. Nothing was ever given back on that two percent and nothing was ever said about where that two percent went, but it kept being collected. Now, Astoria wants the tax to go from nine to 11 percent. Many people do not realize this means 12.8 percent will be charged because lodgings must also pay a State tax. She wanted a guarantee that the extra two percent would not disappear like that tax for the conference center. Hundreds of thousands of dollars were spent to hire architects to build a conference center by the Red Lion, but the center was never built and no one ever said what would be done with the rest of the two percent. If the money is going to be designated, people should have the right to say where the money should go. People come to town and support all of the businesses in addition to staying in a hotel. They eat out, rent cabs, ride the busses, and keep this city going.

Carissa Conklin, 90299 Kista Creek Road, Astoria, said she was born and raised in Astoria. She walks downtown and on the Riverwalk, plays basketball at Peter Pan Park, and goes to Tapiola. Parks and Recreation has been treated unfairly. The department has so much responsibility and Staff is never appreciated for all they do without much funding. The community loves the Parks Department and it is Council's job to keep the citizens happy. Citizens choose to pay a lot of money to live in Astoria and it is difficult for locals to have a comfortable living. The Parks Department needs to be heard and answers need to be given. She would be more than happy to tax tourists and pay her way so the Parks Department could have more money.

Barbara Linnet, Hwy. 202, Olney, said she was on Astoria's water, so assumed she would pay the fee.

City Manager Estes stated the fee would only be charged to water users inside Astoria city limits.

Ms. Linnet stated she would be glad to pay the fee. She uses the Recreation Center three times a week and often sees Staff in action. She also enjoys the parks in Astoria. One reason she retired here was livability. She developed a friends group for the Cannon Beach Trail and served three years on the Cannon Beach Parks Board. She was impressed with Astoria's Parks Staff. She took the bus tour of at least 50 parks and was blown away by the amount of work involved with such a limited budget. The condition of the parks is good for what the City has. Staff deserves support. If the City does not support Staff, they will move on to other jobs in other places. She knew Council had worked hard on this issue for a long time. She supported whatever it would take, including the idea of a volunteer fund. She would be glad to pay extra on her water bill and would like people who cannot afford \$3.00 to have the option to opt out or receive a reimbursement.

Kayla Warner, 1168 14th Street, Astoria, said she moved to Astoria from Pennsylvania in 2014 as an AmeriCorps Vista. She received a stipend every month and worked with the health department. She was introduced to the Parks Department and was told she was able to use certain facilities because she was low-income. This allowed her to become familiar with the community, develop relationships, and helped her understand what people in this community appreciate. She supported the tax and the fee and believed they should be higher. It is important to understand that people who cannot pay the fee will not be paying it. Parks allow children to learn about their community and how to play with friends instead of being stuck in front of their cell phones and computers.

Jennifer Rouda, 7 Skyline Place, Astoria, said she has only lived in Astoria for about two years. She has received amazing and innovative responses from Parks Staff about a movie night fundraiser at the middle school. Parks Staff put on the movie so the middle school could raise money for the kids. She called again to ask about installing little libraries at playgrounds, Director Cosby wanted to talk about the idea. They set up a contract and the first Little Library will be installed at McClure Park. The Parks Department does more than just spend all of their time managing activities; they are willing to listen to new ideas and she was excited to be part of a community.

Jennifer Keefe, 2 Auburn Ave., Astoria, said her kids had always gone to the pool, were on the swim team, and her son is now a lifeguard. Becoming a lifeguard has changed her son's attitude and he now has self-confidence. He no longer sits in the basement on his electronics. The job treats him like a teenager, so he is

able to say he cannot work when he has family commitments. He can put the job on his resume and go to college. Her foster son was able to take swim classes. Since he has been gone, he has written her a letter saying he was happy to learn how to swim at the pool.

Loretta Maxwell, Grandview Bed and Breakfast, 1574 Grand Ave., Astoria, said she supported Ms. Greenway's comments about the tax imposed on tourists. She believed everyone presented supported the Parks Department's programs. Everyone has a positive story about their children or their experience with Parks. She was confused about why the City was deciding to pick on the tourists again. Tourists do not live here. She never heard about the conference center that was promised and why it was never built. The money did not go back to seven percent and now the City is asking for another two percent. Last time she spoke about this, she compared Astoria's taxes to large cities like Los Angeles, California. The room tax increase will put Astoria up there with some of the larger cities. She referred to the chart comparing the fee and the room tax increase. The fee is fairly straight forward. The revenue from the \$3.00 will pay for Parks and Recreation. However, the transient room tax increase will go into the Promote Astoria Fund. She understood that 70 percent of that fund went to the Chamber of Commerce and 30 percent went to other uses. She asked what those other uses were.

City Manager Estes explained that Astoria's room tax structure is grandfathered with the State. Fifty-four percent of room taxes collected are deposited into the City's General Fund and 46 percent is deposited into the Promote Astoria Fund. The Promote Astoria Fund pays for the Chamber of Commerce's services, Riverwalk maintenance, and keeping the lights on at visitor related parks. If the room tax is increased, State law requires 30 percent to be deposited into the General Fund and 70 percent be deposited into the Promote Astoria Fund. The City Attorney has determined that City Council could approve findings to support spending the additional Promote Astoria funds on parks services. This would allow the full amount of the increase to be put towards parks services.

Chris Farrar, 3023 Harrison Avenue, Astoria, said he uses Shively Park most often and walks his dog on the Riverwalk. He was disturbed about how to pay for parks. He believed that anyone who earned less than Oregon's median income should be exempt from any additional charges imposed by the City because these are people who are down-trodden. Several people spoke about the poor tourists who would be charged an extra two percent and Astoria would have a room tax like Los Angeles. People who come to Astoria do not want to go to Los Angeles for vacation, so they will pay the room tax. He had never looked at the room tax while on vacation and believed tourists would not know what the increase was. It would be nonsense to impose fees on people who do not have money. The housing problem in the county is an income problem. There are not enough people in the county that make enough income to pay a decent rent or buy a decent home. The community needs to work on this and bring people from the bottom up. Let people at the top pay for parks. He offered to give the City \$1,000 if Council would agree not to charge the \$3.00 monthly fee on water meters. The fee would not bring in enough money anyway, so just increase the room taxes enough to cover the deficit.

Deb, 64 14th Street, Astoria, said there are 164 Astoria properties listed on Airbnb. On average, Airbnb properties rent for \$80 a night for about 150 nights out of the year.

Councilor Price stated there were only 47 Astoria properties listed on Airbnb.

Deb added that transient room taxes do not just come from tourists, they also come from the residents.

Mayor LaMear closed the public hearing at 9:04 pm and called for Council deliberation. Upon hearing that there was more testimony, Mayor LaMear reopened the public hearing at 9:05 pm.

Roger Lindsey, 631 33rd Street, Astoria, said the City was only \$15,004 away from meeting the life raft budget. He confirmed that this shortfall would not result in closing the Aquatic Center. He submitted a proposal for a ballot measure and said he had started the paperwork with the County Clerk. He would need 1,000 signatures within the next two years to get his proposal on a ballot. His proposal was to rescind the parks fee on the water/sewer bill, refund the parks fees previously collected on the water/sewer bill, and require any proposed fees to the water/sewer bill not related to the funding and operation of the Public Works Department be put to popular vote for approval before the fees are implemented. He planned to go door to door and put his proposal on a ballot. If his ballot measure is approved and the City is required to refund the fees, the City will have a huge deficit. He recommended the City set up a contingency fund.

Mayor LaMear closed the public hearing at 9:07 pm and called for Council discussion on the transient room tax.

Councilor Nemlowill stated she was surprised by Staff's proposal to collect \$138,000 more than their original request. Increasing the transient room tax by two percent would bring in about \$410,000, but the City has been trying to get to \$425,000. Previously, Council thought that only a portion of the tax increase could be used for parks, which could have led to the belief that an additional fee was necessary. However, the fee would not be necessary if the entire tax increase could be used for parks. She did not understand why Council would implement a fee that has been extremely controversial. She found it interesting to have heard so much testimony in support of the fee, but she had heard a lot of opposition to the fee through emails, phone calls, and conversations. She believed the fee was unfair. The City Manager has told her the life raft would keep the pool open and provide the Parks Department with the additional funds it needs. She supported a two percent increase in transient room taxes.

Councilor Brownson said he heard negative feedback about the \$3.00 fee, but proportionally less than support for the fee. There is no good statistical sample of who is for and who is against the fee, which is challenging. He supported a 1.5 percent increase to the transient room tax because he believed it would be a good compromise. When he spoke to hoteliers, he felt there was a grudging even split about the tax. He could support a two percent increase. He believed the City could find that difference of \$15,000, possibly in the existing Promote Astoria Fund. He believed Staff increased the amount so the Parks Department could have some extra funds to work with. Extra money might allow some of the cut programs to be reinstated. He was still undecided on the \$3.00 fee.

Councilor Price stated that emails, Facebook posts, and phone calls received in the last few days showed that 18 people supported the fee, while 11 opposed it. Today, there were 15 residents in favor of and four opposed to the fee, and five non-resident park users in favor of and one opposed to the fee. The poll from the Astoria Senior Center stated 75 were in favor of and 35 were opposed to the fee. While this is not scientific, the numbers are indicative of what the community wants. The community supports the fee and wants the City to fully support the Parks Department. Extra funding would simply keep the Parks Department out of a straight jacket. The Parks Department needs about \$500,000 a year extra in order to implement the Parks Master Plan, which was wholeheartedly adopted by this Council and has won awards. Council has indicated over and over again that it expects the Parks Department to implement the plan. The plan calls for a robust department, moving maintenance levels up to at least C and B-, and making continuous adjustments to the department. This is a democracy and this issue has been evaluated as closely as anything that has been evaluated in the city. She does not always agree with Staff's recommendations, but three Staff member have presented a well vetted proposal. The resolution for the \$3.00 fee states over and over again that the fee will be directed to Parks and Recreation only and reviewed annually. The City does not know what other sources of revenue might come in or what efficiencies could be found over the next year or two. Bureaucracy moves slowly, so the City might need the fee for a little bit more than a year. The fee will not even be implemented until the first of January 2018. She believed Council had heard from a great diversity of residents and non-residents who want a full Parks Department. Parks are the allure and livability that bring residents, doctors, tourists, and artists to Astoria. She supported Staff's proposal.

Councilor Jones supported the transient tax increase. Regardless of how Council votes on the fee, the City still has to continue moving forward to prevent this situation from occurring again in the future. Even as additional revenues are considered, the City needs to continue looking at efficiencies to implement because future costs will continue to rise. Council needs to closely consider selling underutilized park properties. The Chip-In program needs to be reinstated. Council members cannot solicit donations, but can make it clear that they support new non-profit friends groups. The City is blessed that private citizens, many of whom are from Portland, take responsibility for keeping the Column maintained and raising funds. Many people in the community have family members at Ocean View Cemetery and he would love to see a Friends of Ocean View Cemetery formed. He believed about \$100,000 would pay for cemetery maintenance and challenged the community to take that on. Lodging tax revenue projections are based on 11 percent of last year's occupancy. The City cannot predict the next year's occupancy. He believed it was critical to develop an action plan for collecting short-term rental lodging taxes. He wanted to know how many people in the audience would contribute more than \$3.00 a month to a voluntary parks donation and called for a show of hands. He originally supported a mandatory fee, but was intrigued by the Mayor's proposal and inspired by Mr. Farrar. He would rather see citizens volunteer to give permanently, rather than a 12-month mandatory fee. Councilor Price reminded this could be considered after one year.

Mayor LaMear recognized the Parks Department Staff, Parks Board, Parks Foundation, Council and Staff for working for so many months on these issues. Councilors do not mind being criticized for what they do because it is part of the job. However, Council does feel bad when Staff and Councilors are criticized for failing to pay attention or doing their homework. The City has spent so many hours on this issue and are trying to do the best for the community. She thanked the Parks Department for everything Staff has done. Parks Staff work 70 to 80 hours a week and they are not being paid very much.

City Council Action: Motion made by Councilor Price, seconded by Councilor Nemlowill to conduct the first reading of the Ordinance Amending Code Section 8.045.2 increasing the Transient Tax to 11 percent, effective January 1, 2018. Motion carried unanimously. Ayes: Councilors Price, Jones, Nemlowill, Brownson, and Mayor LaMear; Nays: None.

Director Brooks conducted the first reading of the ordinance.

Councilor Jones recommended the City ask for voluntary gifts to the Parks Department. He did not support a mandatory fee.

City Attorney Henningsgaard confirmed that Council could set up a fund to collect voluntary gifts. He suggested further action on the ordinance be tabled and direct Staff to draft a proposal for a volunteer fee.

Councilor Price said a volunteer fee could be a good idea, but would make budgeting difficult. Generally, voluntary fees result in a lot of donations at the beginning and then they taper off. If the City does not collect enough, Staff is back at square one. She recommended a friendly amendment be made to implement the \$3.00 fee for one year with the option to pay more and consider a voluntary fee after one year. This will give the Parks Department 18 months to plan and discuss the future with Council. It might be possible to completely eliminate the fee after one year.

Mayor LaMear stated she was not convinced the \$3.00 fee would raise that much money. There are so many unknowns about how to bill people, who would pay the fee, and how to manage it. It would be easier to implement a voluntary fund.

Councilor Brownson asked if all of the costs associated with implementing the fee were known.

City Manager Estes confirmed that collecting the fee would impact the Finance Department, but implementation costs have been identified. A voluntary fee would be less onerous for Staff.

Councilor Jones said he liked the idea of a voluntary fee because of the warm reception the City has received from the community of people willing to pay the mandatory fee. Many people opposed to a mandatory fee claimed they would be willing to contribute voluntarily. It would generate good will towards parks, would be easy to collect, and could be collected immediately.

Mayor LaMear asked if the voluntary fee could be approved now.

City Attorney Henningsgaard said a voluntary fee on water bills could be approved through a simple motion as no ordinance was necessary.

Councilor Jones thanked Councilor Price for proposing the fee and generating the conversation.

City Council Action: Motion made by Councilor Jones, seconded by Councilor Nemlowill to implement a voluntary Parks and Recreation Fee as an ongoing program allowing citizens to opt out at any time. Motion carried unanimously. Ayes: Councilors Price, Jones, Nemlowill, Brownson, and Mayor LaMear; Nays: None.

Councilor Jones noted that it would be up to Staff to figure out whether administering the fee through the water/sewer bills would be the most practical.

City Manager Estes stated the transient room tax increase would generate approximately \$410,000, which would almost fund the life raft scenario without reinstating the programs and services that have been cut. Council will have to decide how to allocate any funds collected in excess of the life raft minimum.

Councilor Price confirmed the free community programs would not be reinstated.

Mayor LaMear explained that the City wanted to raise more than \$15,000 because \$25,000 in programs were cut, including the Chip-In program, the Easter egg hunt, and Monster Bash. While these programs are good for the community, the City did not have the funds to keep them going. The City would like to restore those programs and \$15,000 would only get the City to a bare bones level of service.

Councilor Price stated voluntary donations would not bring in enough funds to reinstate programs this year.

City Attorney Henningsgaard reminded that Council still needed to take action on the transient room tax ordinance. Tabling the motion would allow Council to consider the ordinance in the future if the voluntary fee did not work.

City Council Action: Motion made by Councilor Jones, seconded by Councilor Brownson, to table the Ordinance adopting a Parks and Recreation Fee. Motion passed unanimously. Ayes: Councilors Price, Jones, Brownson, Nemlowill and Mayor LaMear. Nays: None.

Councilor Price confirmed that a mandatory \$3.00 fee would have provided enough funds to reinstate the programs that have been cut. Council and citizens seem confident that more money would be generated by a voluntary fee. She asked why those programs could not be reinstated.

City Manager Estes stated programs have already been cut for this fiscal year. Staff can have a follow up conversation about this issue, but recommended the City first determine how much money would be generated by the voluntary contributions to avoid future shortfalls. The City will have to make a year-end transfer to make up the shortfall for this fiscal year and adding programs will increase the amount of the transfer.

Mayor LaMear confirmed that the voluntary fee could be implemented sooner than January 1st.

Councilor Price stated that adding the fee to all bills created an inequity issue. The City bills water meters, not households. Council voted four to one for a \$3.00 fee before the inequity issue came up.

Mayor LaMear suggested an op-ed be published in the *Daily Astorian* and that this voluntary fee be advertised so that people understand they do not have to pay. She wanted to ensure that everybody knew of the opportunity to contribute, even those who did not pay a water bill.

City Manager Estes confirmed Staff would propose a way to launch the fund. Staff was pleased that their needs had been addressed by City Council.

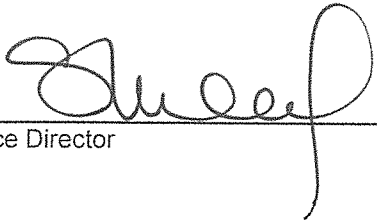
NEW BUSINESS & MISCELLANEOUS, PUBLIC COMMENTS (NON-AGENDA)

Judy Lampi, 605 Alt. Hwy. 101, Warrenton, stated she was the new publicist for the Astoria Scandinavian Midsummer Festival. She thanked the City of Astoria for the Arts and Cultural Grant to promote tourism. The 2017 festival was also the 50th anniversary. Three thousand five hundred and twenty seven people attended and approximately 750 enjoyed the Alba concert. The grant helped fund the advertising campaign, which reached 2.5 million people. Four hundred and fifty people completed a survey at the festival, which indicated 43 percent of those people stayed in Astoria for one to 11 nights. The average length of stay was 2.3 nights. One hundred and ninety four visitors spent 463 nights in Clatsop County, bringing boat loads of tourism dollars to the city. The association has worked hard for decades to promote their heritage and traditions. They used the grant wisely. She thanked Mayor LaMear and Councilor Price for introducing the featured entertainers and making announcements at the festival.

ADJOURNMENT

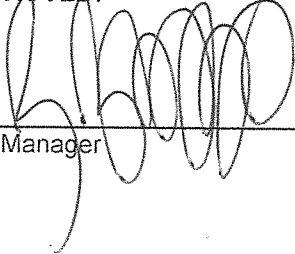
There being no further business, the meeting was adjourned at 9:46 pm.

ATTEST:



Finance Director

APPROVED:



City Manager