

A joint work session of the Astoria Common Council and the Astoria Library Board was held at the above place at the hour of 7:00 pm.

Councilors Present: Nemlowill, Herzig, Warr, Price, Mayor LaMear

Library Board Members Present: Kate Summers, David Oser, Susan Stein, and Chris Womack. Kimberley Chaput was excused.

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

UPDATE ON LIBRARY DIRECTOR POSITION

City Manager Estes announced a retirement reception for Director Tucker would be held on May 26th at 5:00 pm in the Library Flag Room. Anne Odom has been selected as the Library's Interim Manager until a new Library Director is hired. The City received over 30 applications for the Library Director position. He, Director Tucker, and Seaside Library Director Esther Moberg are reviewing the applications to narrow down the pool of candidates before interviews are scheduled.

LIBRARY OPTIONS

Director Cronin said 89 people signed in at the open house held just before the work session and Staff received some great information.

Laura Klinger, Hacker Architects, said Trish Drew, DCW Cost Consulting, developed the cost models in the presentation. She and Darren Doss, Chadbourn and Doss Architects, gave a PowerPoint presentation on the study of six potential library locations based on the 2013 Needs Assessment. The presentation reviewed existing building conditions, as well as plans, pros and cons, and the costs of each option. The options were:

- A. Renovate the existing library and expand into the basement
- B. Renovate the existing library and expand into the parking lot
- C. Renovate the existing library and expand into the first floor of the Merwyn building
- D. Renovate the existing library, demolish the Merwyn building, and build an addition on the Merwyn site
- E. Build a new one-story library building at Heritage Square
- F. Build a new library building at Heritage Square with housing on upper floors

During the presentation, Staff and consultants responded to Council and Board members questions, comments, and concerns as follows:

- The City would need to acquire or lease space on the Merwyn property from the owner if Council decided to move forward with Options C or D. The cost estimates in the presentation did not include acquisition of the property or demolition of the building.
The Flag Room does not meet the needs for meeting space in the library. Only one option retains the Flag Room, but also adds a larger community room.
- Relocation of the library during renovation was included in the costs and consultants estimated a temporary location would be needed for about 9 months to a year.
- Programs or floor space could be reduced in order to keep the library on one floor if it is expanded into the parking lot.
- Attempting to expand on to the Merwyn property would be challenging because a change in ownership would be necessary.
- Housing units above the library would be condominiums or rentals. Condominiums are difficult to finance and Staff did not believe Astoria's market was mature enough for condominiums. However, the rental market is very strong.

- The Merwyn would provide the potential for hotel rooms, just like the Norblad and the Commodore. This is a proven model in Astoria that is working very well. However, gap financing and some type of public subsidy would be needed to do something at the Merwyn, which would be a very costly project.
- The options need to be narrowed down before Staff can provide more details on financing. However, Councilor Price wanted more financial details on all of the options before making a decision.
- If the library were built at Heritage Square, parking would be directly adjacent to the building. However, the consultants did not consider underground parking.

Councilor Nemlowill confirmed that housing units in a mixed-use library building would generate property taxes. The consultants agreed to get more details on the ownership of the Hollywood Library, a mixed-use building they designed.

Councilor Price asked about the price, size, and type of housing above a mixed-use library. She also wanted to know if all of the rent would go to a private developer. Director Cronin explained this was not the focus of the work session. Generally, housing could be rentals or condominiums. Rents would be from \$900 to \$1100 if they were being rented today. Housing units would be privately owned and based on the average size, the building could accommodate between 54 and 108 units. The current trend is micro-units and most developers are not building two or three bedroom units.

Councilor Price asked how difficult it would be for the City to dictate the design of the housing units so they matched the design of the library. Staff confirmed this would be part of a development agreement with a developer, which the City would have to approve. The developer would build both the library and the housing units. The Astoria Development Commission and the Historic Landmarks Commission would also be involved in the development process. The recipient of the rents would be worked out later in the process. Mr. Doss added that a developer would be able to provide capital to get the project off the ground.

Councilor Price asked why the City would need to contribute about \$5 million to the housing portion of the project. Staff said when that information was presented to Council in November, Council was considering work force housing as a way of buying down the development costs associated with making the units more affordable. The current options assume market rate housing, which would not result in a funding gap or buy down. If Council wants the housing to be within a certain price point, developers would be looking for some type of incentive.

David Oser was concerned about adequate parking at Heritage Square for library users, residents, and the Sunday Market. Staff confirmed City Council chose not to consider underground parking, so existing off-street parking would be shared between the housing units and library patrons. While residents are away at work, their parking spaces would be available to library patrons. Mr. Oser said tenants who have a guaranteed parking space are willing to pay higher rent.

Councilor Nemlowill added that living spaces close to work and recreation reduces car use. The study done on Heritage Square a little over ten years ago indicated diagonal parking along 12th and Duane Streets would provide 107 parking spaces.

Councilor Herzig agreed that younger people are looking for places where they do not need to drive or have a vehicle and Heritage Square is a very walkable area.

Councilor Price said Option F would impact the Sunday Market. She asked what financial contribution the Sunday Market provides the City and how it would be affected by the development of a mixed-use library. City Manager Estes said the City would gain indirect financial contributions, as people would come to the community to spend money. Councilor Herzig said some consolidation or compression might benefit the market. Currently, the booths are spread out and sometimes several of the booths are empty, which makes the market look unraveled. Mr. Doss understood the empty space was used during set up and take down and if that space were reduced, the market would need to figure out another option.

Councilor Nemlowill said a library at Heritage Square could benefit the Sunday Market. If the library were open Sundays, the restrooms would be available to the market vendors and shoppers. Also, people could shop the market and use the library in one stop. Councilor Herzig added that the library's community room could be used by the market.

Director Cronin said 89 people signed in at the open house. Forty-two people indicated on survey cards that their first choice was a new library at Heritage Square. All of the information presented at the open house would be posted on the City's website and Staff would hold a 30-day comment period. Comment cards would be available at the library. The list of options would be narrowed down in July, and then the design phase would begin. Throughout the process, Staff would continue to refine funding strategies.

Mayor LaMear said she expected to find out how people felt about the options at this work session. Director Cronin said there was not enough time to share all of the comments submitted at the open house. Staff just did some quick math to determine the public's first choice option and a summary of all of the comments would be presented at future meeting. Mayor LaMear believed it was very important for the Library Board and City Council to get together again to discuss the library options.

City Manager Estes understood some Councilors wanted time to consider the options before making a decision. However, Staff would take feedback now as well.

Councilor Herzig agreed the Library Board and City Council should have another work session.

Councilor Nemlowill said no decision needed to be made now, but she wanted to discuss the options with the Library Board. She believed the scope of the consultants' work included identifying funding sources for each option. It would be difficult to make a decision without knowing how the City would pay for the library. However, she understood that once the options are narrowed down, funding would be refined. Director Cronin confirmed the scope of work did not include funding sources and Staff would have to discuss a funding strategy with City Council later in the process.

Councilor Nemlowill said Council had discussed the possibility of working internally with the Finance Department. She understood the City was going through the budget process, so maybe the timing was not good. Councilor Price added this work was not to be part of the contract with the consultants. City Council had discussed how constituents had been asking what this project would cost, directing Staff to consider costs, and the cost of bonds. She could not make a decision unless she knew more about the funding. City Manager Estes explained that any funding estimates would be a stab in the dark and the scenarios would be hypothetical at this point in the process.

Councilor Price believed information was available somewhere to say the City expects the foundation to raise a certain amount and the City has a certain amount it is willing to provide. Not all of the funds need to be raised all at once. She wanted to know up front if there would be a funding gap that would require the City to ask the citizens for a bond. Councilor Nemlowill agreed and reminded that for a mixed-use library, a developer could provide capital to get the project going.

Councilor Herzig believed Council and the Library Board should not insist that Staff provide funding streams for all six options. Some of the options are already more desirable than others, so the options could and should be narrowed down before directing Staff to do more work.

Director Cronin reminded that Staff had already presented Council with a sources and uses table. He could present the information again at a future meeting if it would help Council make a decision, but the sources are just guesses at this point.

Councilor Price said her main concern was the enduring cost to taxpayers that might have to come through a bond. It does not matter what option is chosen. She wanted to know how much a bond would cost the taxpayers and did not understand why that cost was dependent on choosing an option. Staff explained that each option would cost a different amount and confirmed that Councilor Price wanted to know the cost per unit. However, different funding sources would be available to different options, which would impact any funding gap. Councilor Price added that she also wanted to know the cost of the funding gap.

Councilor Nemlowill said understanding how the City would pay for the library would help her narrow down the options and make a final decision. She understood the two sites would have different funding options and she was not aware of what those differences would be.

Mayor LaMear said City Council also needed to know how housing would create a different funding scenario and what types of funding sources would be available for a mixed-use building.

Kate Summers believed the Library Board was ready to help City Council narrow down the options, but could not help with cost estimates or bond math. The Library Board is ready to discuss the \$8 million to \$12 million project and how to get the public's support. Regardless of the bond amount, a lot of legwork will be necessary to get the community involved. The Library Board wants to make a decision with City Council and give Council any information they need.

Mr. Oser added that when the Library Board meets in June, they planned to develop a formal recommendation to City Council on what direction to go based on what is best for the library. Their recommendation would not be about costs or what type of housing might be built. Once a decision is made, the Library Board wants to be very involved with the community.

Ms. Summers added that the Library Board wants a decision to be made because many people have put in a lot of hard work to get many options considered over a long period. This process began in 2003 and making no decision has made a significant impact on the library.

Councilor Herzig believed City Council should also consider the costs of not having a library. There will be a cost to the public no matter what decision is made. The City has already cost the public a lot and no one is at fault for that. However, costs continue to mount as no decisions are made. He suggested Staff find out the costs of a \$5 million bond and a \$10 million bond.

Staff confirmed they would put together a spreadsheet that includes all of the options. However, the scenarios would be rough hypothetical situations.

Mayor LaMear called for public comments.

Bruce Jones, 455 45th Street, Astoria, said City Council should prioritize the needs of Astoria's youth because the library renovation project is about their future. The youth deserve the advantages that a modernized library would provide. Astoria needs a library that meets the needs of this century, not the last one. The need for well-organized and accessible information is growing. The local schools do not have fully funded libraries or librarians. A well-planned modern library can strengthen Astoria's cultural, social, and economic vitality and can help level the playing field for many of Astoria's neighbors that do not have well stocked bookshelves, a learning environment, or computer access at home. He asked City Council to consider the goals of citizens to preserve the existing library and the Merwyn separately from the goal of building a modern library. The need for a great library should not be held hostage to the fate of those buildings. City Council should also consider the cost to the community, especially the young people, of not having a modern library. Costs include lost educational opportunities and lost future earning potential. Give Astoria's young people a leg up on their future by giving them a great, new, modern library.

George McCartin, 490 Franklin Avenue, Astoria, said Mr. Jones was correct that Astoria needs a library, whether the existing building is renovated or a brand new one is built to meet the needs of young people in the 21st Century. However, Astoria is a city of about 10,000 people, which means there are limits on taxpayer funds and the needs of the library's structure and services. Therefore, he recommended Option A because funds could be raised and the project could be completed soon, but still adequately.

Mayor LaMear appreciated all of the comments, including those turned in at the open house. This has been a long process, but City Council wants to do the right thing for the community. She believed another joint work session with the Library Board was necessary.

Staff confirmed the summary of public input would be forwarded to both City Council and the Library Board. The 30-day comment period would give people time to submit input through the vacation season and Council could continue to submit questions and comments to Staff before the next joint meeting. Staff wanted to give Council and Library Board members time to digest all of the information before a decision is made.

Mayor LaMear said the City has been working on this for years and a decision needs to be made. Coming to a consensus would not be easy. City Manager Estes understood the Library Board would provide a more concise

message to City Council after their meeting in June. The Library Board's recommendation would be discussed with Council at the next joint work session. Then, if City Council still has questions, Staff would provide more information.

Councilor Price said the presentation was very helpful, but if she had more financial information, she could make a decision. She believed she could make a decision in July because that would give her enough time to talk with constituents, consider the options, and review the financial information.

Councilor Nemlowill believed the Library Board already had a preferred option and confirmed that the Board could make a formal recommendation by July.

The Library Board confirmed that City Council wanted their recommendation to state their first choice option and an alternate.

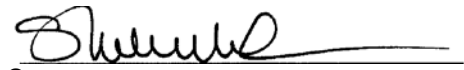
Councilor Warr said Council was nowhere near a consensus on what should be built. He believed it was important to consider how Astoria could afford this project and what the cost benefit ratio would be. Until City Council agrees on what Astoria can afford to spend and how the project will be financed, discussing options is difficult. The City skirted around the money and hired a consultant. When the City decided it did not like the work, another consultant was hired. After running around in circles for several years, the City is still not any closer to a final decision. Council needs to decide how much to spend on a new library and how to finance the project before the building options will mean anything.

Mayor LaMear believed Council would get this information from Staff and the majority of Council would be ready to make a decision in July. She thanked everyone for attending the open house and work session, Staff for all of their work, and the consultants for such a nice presentation.


ADJOURNMENT

There being no further business, the work session was adjourned at 8:40 pm.

ATTEST:


Secretary

APPROVED



City Manager