

ASTORIA TRAFFIC SAFETY ADVISORY COMMITTEE

Astoria City Hall

November 26, 2013

CALL TO ORDER:

President Innes called the meeting to order at 7:02 p.m.

ROLL CALL:

Commissioners Present: President McLaren Innes, Vice-President Mark Cary, David Pearson, and Zetty Nemlowill

Commissioners Excused: Al Tollefson, Thor Norgaard, and Kera Huber

Staff Present: Community Development Director / Assistant City Manager Brett Estes, Planner Rosemary Johnson, City Attorney Blair Henningsgaard, and City Engineer Jeff Harrington. The meeting is recorded and will be transcribed by ABC Transcription Services, Inc.

APPROVAL OF MINUTES:

Vice-President Cary moved to approve the October 22, 2013, seconded by Commissioner Nemlowill. Motion passed unanimously.

OLD BUSINESS:

Item 4(a): Radar Board Between 9th/12th Streets on Marine – Verbal Report by Jeff Harrington

Engineer Harrington reported the Engineering Department has been considering the vehicle speed feedback signs as a traffic safety method for quite some time. The Department's research revealed speeding drivers will slow down upon seeing their speed on the sign. Sometimes drivers are unaware of their speed or that they have entered a different speed zone. The signs also give the perception that speeding will be followed with enforcement, also a deterrent to speeding. The Oregon Department of Transportation (ODOT) does not use the speed feedback signs on a statewide basis because ODOT believes they do not work well in city environments, namely because the signs can get lost in the downtown area where so much signage exists. He noted areas in cities where the signs are especially successful. Drivers have been known to speed up to see how high they get the sign to read, so the signs were redesigned to shut off at a certain speed to deter that activity.

Astoria has eleven places on three streets where the speed limit reduces, and no one location is better suited than another. People could argue where the signs should be located but consistency is important. Signage could reduce the effectiveness of the speed feedback sign if there is no consistency. Materials to place signs in all eleven locations will cost about \$50,000 and installation costs will depend whether ODOT or the City does the installation. ODOT requires these signs to be placed on a supplemental sign. He described how the feedback signs must be placed to reflect the speeds of drivers before they enter the reduced speed limit zone. The trailer-mounted sign that is available from ODOT does not collect data. To measure the sign's effectiveness, a person would need to sit at the location to collect data before and after the sign was installed. He believed the signs would result in a change in driver's behavior if the signs were installed systematically throughout town. However, the signs are not a solution to all traffic safety issues like bad drivers, speeding, drugs, alcohol, etc.

Item 4(b): Taylor Street Request for Two-Way Traffic – Verbal Report by Jeff Harrington

Engineer Harrington reported that on-street parking would need to be eliminated to make Taylor Street, which is 20 feet wide, a two-way street. Residents who live along Taylor currently park on the street and he was unsure if other parking options were available. Use of the nearby dump station increased when the dump station near Safeway closed down. ODOT said Taylor was a two-way street before the roundabout was constructed and the road was changed to a one-way to make it safer as there was a significant accident history. It became mandatory to maintain the one-way traffic after the roundabout was installed due to how the roundabout was configured and to help alleviate traffic issues on Florence and Hamburg. ODOT believed traffic issues would be worse now that traffic volumes have increased, so having ODOT allow Taylor Street to be changed back to a

two-way seems impossible. He offered to ask ODOT to research this further, but so many requests have been made of ODOT that some important projects are being stalled, including the City's request regarding 14th Street, as well as crosswalk funding.

Item 4(c): 9th and Commercial Traffic Light – Verbal Report by Jeff Harrington

Engineer Harrington explained that traffic signals are not placed to accommodate pedestrians, but for operational activities. The light at 9th and Commercial was in its current location because of the traffic analysis conducted when ODOT initially did the grid system. Traffic signals are placed according to traffic volumes. Installing a traffic light at 9th and Commercial did not make sense at this time. The Transportation System Plan (TSP) is considering different configurations for downtown and includes part of the 9th and Commercial intersection. One option involves moving the light to 10th Street for other reasons, but it would also be a win-win for pedestrians. Traffic in that area needs to be studied in today's conditions. He recommended that no request be made to move the traffic light from 9th to 10th Street, because it will be studied further as part of the TSP. It may be moved in the future as part of a TSP project.

President Innes stated that the Traffic Safety Committee would consider each report separately, and began with the radar board between 9th and 12th Streets.

President Innes said she was not comfortable recommending that the radar board be pursued as a move toward traffic safety. Vice-President Cary did not want to recommend any of the traffic safety ideas. Commissioner Nemlowill agreed, saying that she was comfortable with all of Engineer Harrington's recommendations. She appreciated that he had followed up on the traffic safety ideas and believed he provided solid rationale for each recommendation. Commissioner Pearson appreciated all of the research and agreed with Engineer Harrington's recommendations.

Engineer Harrington suggested the Committee ask the TSP consultants to consider including speed monitoring signs for city streets in the TSP, which is necessary to get such projects funded. Though small, the project could end up costing \$100,000 by the time it is complete. The traffic light at 9th and Commercial is already being considered as part of the TSP as is Taylor Street.

Drew Herzig, 628 Klaskanine Avenue, Astoria, said that the radar board was mentioned because some merchants on Marine Drive had asked him if there was any way to slow traffic down in the area. The radar board was suggested as a temporary installation to serve as a reminder of the speed limit. He was unsure what to tell residents on Hamburg about the Taylor Street request, as they feel that they are risking their lives when turning left off Hamburg. Vehicles must cross two lanes of oncoming traffic on a blind turn and drivers do not feel safe. He hoped the Traffic Safety Committee could consider ways to deal with these issues. He disagreed that the traffic light issue at 9th and Commercial was about pedestrians, but was about traffic backing up into the intersection at 8th and Commercial. The suggestion to move the signal to 10th Street was to prevent traffic from backing up on a red light. He understood the TSP would consider this issue, but wanted to clarify that problems were not pedestrian related.

President Innes confirmed that the Traffic Safety Committee decided not to pursue any of the proposed traffic safety ideas, but would follow up with the TSP plan. Director Estes added this would be part of the work session, immediately following the Planning Commission meeting.

REPORTS OF OFFICERS/COMMISSIONERS:

President Innes asked what was being used on all the major roads immediately after the first frost. Engineer Harrington explained it was a de-icing chemical, which has replaced sand and gravel. The chemical must be placed on the asphalt before any moisture gets on the road.

PUBLIC COMMENT:

Mr. Herzig recalled that ODOT funding would pay for some crosswalk striping. He asked if that striping would occur on state highways or city streets. With the sewer project finished, many new crosswalk markings are being put on the repaved streets in the old traditional-style striping. Part of the issue was consistency in the crosswalk markings. He asked if there was any coordination between the upcoming crosswalk striping and the striping

being done on the repaved streets. Engineer Harrington replied that the striping being done as part of the current CSO project is being completed as it was prior to the project. The Continental crosswalks, which are alternative crosswalks the City asked ODOT to install, have not been considered for installation throughout town, due to the expense. The idea was to install them downtown to see how they work and how the budget would be impacted by the maintenance of the crosswalks so that Staff could project costs for installing the crosswalks citywide. At this time, the City is waiting on funding for the ODOT crosswalk project. Astoria has been bombarding ODOT with requests, but ODOT knows the crosswalk project is a high priority. He corresponds with ODOT on a weekly basis and was told the grant is still awaiting approval. ODOT crews work year-round, but must install the crosswalks on a dry day since they are made of thermal plastic.

ADJOURNMENT:

There being no further business, the meeting was adjourned at 7:21 p.m. to convene the Planning Commission meeting.

ATTEST:


Secretary

APPROVED:



Community Development Director /
Assistant City Manager