

DESIGN REVIEW COMMITTEE

Astoria City Hall

May 5, 2016

CALL TO ORDER:

President Rickenbach called the meeting to order at 5:30 p.m.

INTRODUCTIONS – ITEM 2:

ROLL CALL – ITEM 3:

Commissioners Present: President Jared Rickenbach, Vice President LJ Gunderson, Derith Andrew, and Hilarie Phelps.

Commissioners Excused: LeAnn Hensley

Staff Present: Community Development Director Kevin Cronin and Planner Nancy Ferber. The meeting is recorded and will be transcribed by ABC Transcription Services, Inc.

ELECTION OF OFFICERS – ITEM 4:

In accordance with Sections 1.110 and 1.115 of the Astoria Development Code, the Development Review Committee (DRC) needs to elect officers for 2016. The 2015 officers were President Jared Rickenbach, Vice President LJ Gunderson, and Secretary Sherri Williams.

Commissioner Phelps moved to re-elect Jared Rickenbach as President, LJ Gunderson as Vice President, and Sherri Williams as Secretary for 2016; seconded by Commissioner Andrew. Motion passed unanimously.

APPROVAL OF MINUTES – ITEM 5:

President Rickenbach called for approval of the minutes of the June 4, 2015 meeting. Vice President Gunderson moved to approve the June 4, 2015 minutes as presented; seconded by Commissioner Andrew. Motion passed unanimously.

Vice President Gunderson said she received an anonymous phone call from a neighbor of the Applicant whose designs were reviewed at the June 4, 2015 meeting. The caller claimed the Applicant was not following what the DRC had approved, so she asked Staff to follow up on the claim. However, since the minutes had not been approved after almost a year, she was unable to review what the DRC had approved. She suggested the DRC meet more often, even if it is just to approve minutes.

Planner Ferber confirmed the situation had been corrected.

President Rickenbach asked if minutes could be approved via email. Director Cronin said he would ask City Attorney Henningsgaard if the DRC needed to meet in person just to approve minutes.

The Commission agreed to meet the month following a public hearing to approve the minutes if approval was not allowed via email.

PUBLIC HEARINGS:

President Rickenbach explained the procedures governing the conduct of public hearings to the audience and advised that the substantive review criteria were available from Staff.

ITEM 6(a):

DR16-01 Design Review DR16-01 by Josh Kolberg, architect for PKA Architects on behalf of Columbia Lutheran Charities dba Columbia Memorial Hospital to construct an approximate 19,657 square foot two story building dedicated to cancer related treatment and services at 1905 Exchange within the Gateway Area in the AH-HC, Attached Housing-Health Care zone.

President Rickenbach asked if anyone objected to the jurisdiction of the Design Review Committee to hear this matter at this time.

Dr. Don Fell, 1938 Grand, Astoria objected on the basis that Federal law superseded the jurisdiction of the DRC in this case. He believed Federal law prohibits certain facilities, including hospitals, to be built in tsunami zones, and the proposed location of this facility and its parking lot are about 20 feet inside a tsunami zone.

President Rickenbach confirmed the DRC reviewed building designs, not Codes or the location of the building.

Dr. Fell disagreed and said Federal law overrides the DRC. He believed this hearing needed to be postponed because proceeding would result in liabilities for the City.

President Rickenbach asked if any member of the Design Review Committee had any conflicts of interest or ex parte contacts to declare. He confirmed that he and all other members of the DRC had visited the site. His company, Rickenbach Construction, has worked with Columbia Memorial Hospital, but it is not involved in this project. Therefore, he did not believe the potential conflict was relevant to this issue. He called for a presentation of the Staff report.

Planner Ferber reviewed the Findings and Conditions contained in the Staff report. Staff recommended approval with conditions.

President Rickenbach opened the public hearing and called for testimony from the Applicant.

Josh Kolberg, PKA Architects, gave a presentation on the design of the proposed facility, which was included in the agenda packet. He explained that Columbia Memorial Hospital was currently offering medical infusions and oncology treatments in the Park Building; however, they have outgrown that space. The new facility is being built in collaboration with Oregon Health & Sciences University to offer medical infusions, oncology treatments, and linear accelerator treatments for radiation oncology. In order to make Exchange Street more pedestrian friendly, he proposed adding benches in two locations along the sidewalk, heavy landscaping in the 10-foot setback between the sidewalk and the building, and placing potted plants on the curb side of the sidewalk.

Commissioner Andrew asked if the Applicant could plant trees on either end on that side of the building. She noted that there were trees on all other sides of the building and Exchange Street is supposed to be pedestrian friendly. She was concerned that the back of the building faced Exchange Street, but understood the Applicant was trying to give the area a courtyard look.

Mr. Kolberg said there was room for trees on either the east or west side of the building outside of the view corridor from the area where people will be receiving chemotherapy treatments. He confirmed patients would not be staying overnight, as this would be an outpatient treatment facility.

President Rickenbach called for testimony in favor of or opposed to the application. Hearing none, he called for testimony impartial to the application.

Dr. Don Fell, 1938 Grand, Astoria wanted to know the height of the building from the Exchange Street sidewalk to the top of the penthouse and why the variance was required.

Planner Ferber explained that the variance was from the required 1:1 floor-to-area ratio. The hospital will only be using part of a lot the size of a football field, so they needed a variance granting a lower ratio.

Dr. Fell reiterated his concern about the tsunami zone. He believed the DRC was out of line because a hospital cannot be located in a tsunami zone. However, it is proposed to be built 19 feet inside the tsunami zone. He believed the DRC was overstepping its bounds and objected to the meeting. He requested a written response to his concerns.

Director Cronin confirmed Staff would consult with the City Attorney on this matter. President Rickenbach called for the Applicant's rebuttal.

Mr. Kolberg said he estimated the height of the mechanical penthouse from the level of Exchange Street was about 35 feet. The Development Code allows 35 feet, not including any mechanical penthouse, which is exempt.

President Rickenbach noted that the DRC does not review variance requests or elevation issues relevant to the tsunami zone. Planner Ferber confirmed that the Gateway Overlay zone requires the floor-to-area ratio as part of the design standards. However, the Planning Commission would review the variance request.

President Rickenbach called for closing remarks from Staff.

Planner Ferber stated the proposed pedestrian oriented designs did not meet the criteria and should be discussed further.

President Rickenbach closed the public hearing and called for Committee discussion and deliberation.

Commissioner Andrew asked if Staff believed the benches and planters would be adequate. Planner Ferber believed those elements were a good start, but as a pedestrian, she would not feel welcome on that façade. However, she understood why the building would be oriented with the back facing Exchange Street. The Commission could approve the request with an additional condition that the Applicant submit additional landscaping designs.

Vice President Gunderson suggested adding a water feature and salmon-wrapped garbage cans. Planner Ferber said the garbage cans were acquired by the City with grant funds. She did not know if any of the garbage cans were available, but if not, more could probably be purchased.

Commissioner Andrew said she was concerned about trashcans and believed the planters and benches were a feeble effort to make the area pedestrian friendly.

President Rickenbach said the street presented challenges as every site sits 10 feet below the sidewalk and the current hospital campus has steep landscaping separations. All of the buildings along that stretch of Exchange Street are rear approach buildings except the old blacksmith shop. The DRC could provide direction on landscaping, but the landscaping will change in two or three years anyway. As long as there is room for the landscaping and the area is heavily landscaped, he was fine with it.

Commissioner Andrew appreciated that the landscaping would follow the theme of the Pavilion Building.

President Rickenbach re-opened the public testimony.

Dr. Fell said he was glad the back of the building faced Exchange Street because people who have cancer like privacy.

President Rickenbach closed the public testimony.

Planner Ferber said the Commission could consider requiring a half circle seating option. Director Cronin believed the half circle seating would address the criteria and the site constraints.

President Rickenbach asked the Applicant to comment on the half circle seating.

Mr. Kolberg said that type of seating would cut into the planting area and block views from the office windows. He proposed smaller seating areas spaced so they would not be in front of the windows. President Rickenbach said he would be okay with allowing the Applicant to work with Staff on the landscaping.

Vice President Gunderson believed the project would improve the view.

Vice President Gunderson moved the Astoria Design Review Committee adopt the Findings and Conclusions stated in the Staff report and approve Design Review DR16-01 by Josh Kolberg with the conditions listed in the Staff report; seconded by Commissioner Phelps. Motion passed unanimously. Ayes: President Rickenbach, Vice President Gunderson, Commissioners Andrew, and Phelps. Nays: None.

President Rickenbach said he appreciated Dr. Fell's concern and explained that he continued with the meeting because the DRC's review criterion has nothing to do with the location of the project in relation to tsunami zones and flood plains. Director Cronin confirmed he would be meeting with the City Attorney to discuss this issue. Astoria does not have any committee with the jurisdiction to review tsunami related issues.

President Rickenbach read the rules of appeal into the record.

REPORTS OF OFFICERS/COMMISSIONERS – ITEM 7:

Director Cronin updated the DRC on upcoming meetings and the Riverfront Vision Plan implementation.

NEW BUSINESS – ITEM 8:

New Committee Member List – For Information Only

Director Cronin provided some background information about LeAnn Hensley.

PUBLIC COMMENTS – ITEM 9:

ADJOURNMENT:

There being no further business, the meeting was adjourned at 6:13 pm.

APPROVED:



Community Development Director