

## **DESIGN REVIEW COMMITTEE**

**Astoria City Hall**

August 3, 2017

### CALL TO ORDER:

Vice President Gunderson called the meeting to order at 5:35

The Commission proceeded to Item 3: Roll Call at this time.

### ELECTION OF OFFICERS – ITEM 2:

This item was addressed immediately following Item 4: Approval of Minutes.

In accordance with Sections 1.110 and 1.115 of the Astoria Development Code, the Design Review Committee needs to elect a new Secretary for 2017. The previous Secretary was Sherri Williams. It is recommended that Anna Stamper be elected as Secretary for 2017.

Vice President Gunderson moved to elect Anna Stamper as Secretary for 2017; seconded by Commissioner Phelps. Motion passed unanimously.

The Commission proceeded to Item 5: Public Hearings at this time.

### ROLL CALL – ITEM 3:

This item was addressed immediately after Item 1: Call to Order.

Commissioners Present: Vice President LJ Gunderson, Leanne Hensley, and Hilarie Phelps.

Commissioners Excused: Jared Rickenbach and Derith Andrew.

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

### APPROVAL OF MINUTES – ITEM 4:

Vice President Gunderson called for approval of the minutes of the January 5, 2017 meeting. Commissioner Hensley moved to approve the January 5, 2017 minutes as presented; seconded by Commissioner Phelps. Motion passed unanimously.

The Commission proceeded to Item 2: Election of Officers at this time.

### PUBLIC HEARINGS:

This item was addressed immediately following Item 2: Election of Officers.

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

### ITEM 5(a):

DR17-01 Design Review DR17-01 by Mike Stults, Cross Development, to construct a new 9,100 square foot commercial building at 2275 Commercial within the Civic Gateway and Greenway Overlay Zones in the LS, Local Service Zone.

Vice President Gunderson asked if anyone objected to the jurisdiction of the Design Review Committee to hear this matter at this time. There were no objections. She asked if any member of the Design Review Committee had any conflicts of interest or ex parte contacts to declare. Vice President Gunderson declared that she went online to look at the history of the business to see what their storefronts looked like over the years. She called for a presentation of the Staff report.



Planner Ferber reviewed the Findings and Conditions contained in the Staff report. She noted the public notice contained an error on the tax lots, but the address was correct. Staff resent the notice with the correct tax lots. No correspondence prior to the meeting had been received and Staff recommended denial of the request.

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

Mike Stults, 4336 Marsh Ridge Road, Carrollton, TX, stated Cross Development represents the tenant, Dollar General. He understood the tenant was not critical to the review, but often times they are the elephant in the room. No matter who the applicant is, there is always a bias for or against the tenant. Usually, there is some misunderstanding of the client he represents. He and his tenant want to be good members of the community. He understood that their interpretation of the ordinances was not necessarily going to be everyone else's interpretation. He was present to gather information, seek the Commission's graces, and follow through with whatever that might be. He gave a PowerPoint presentation titled *DG at a Glance*, which provided general information about Dollar General Stores. He confirmed that he understood some of the information provided in his presentation could not be reviewed by the Commission. However, the public is usually very concerned about what is coming to Astoria. Several Dollar General Stores have been approved in Oregon and they sign 15-year triple net leases. Dollar General has core values, missions, and a prominent literacy foundation program that support local libraries. The stores are diminutive in size compared to a large grocery store or super center and they carry typical brands. The aisles are kept tidy. He and the architect went through the design guidelines in Chapter 14 and they made their best effort to capture elements of local designs and incorporate them into the proposal. He believed he would have a tough time accommodating the massing requirements. Typical downtown shopping areas have buildings right on the street with a large community gathering area right on the street. There is often a remote parking field and people will walk a block to get to the shops and restaurants. This store is more of a general mercantile with parking on site. The location is excellent for a Dollar General because it serves the community in a great capacity. The orientation and site lay out offers one location for the building. He can install brick pavers, park benches, and move the entrance to the northwest side of the site. He believed moving the entrance would not provide good service to the most visible feature of the building. The building will face a large curb cut. Pedestrians will be able to see where the entrance is located and safely congregate on the public sidewalks. It would be impossible to relocate the building on this site because doing so would lose parking and the ability for trucks to make deliveries. He can paint the building any color and add any elements the Commission would like. But in order to come to a conclusion that this is a supported project, the safety of getting cars in, receiving deliveries, and the ability to match the building to the site are the big issues that need to be addressed. The Applicants have made their best effort and they would continue to dress up the sidewalk, add benches, do some special landscaping, and create more flair in the pedestrian area. However, it will be difficult to put the building in a location that would not allow for any parking or deliveries. He was happy to continue submitting to Staff and do whatever is necessary to work with the City.

Commissioner Phelps understood the Applicants believed the massing could not be changed. She confirmed that they would be willing and able to work with Staff on the other issues addressed in the Staff report.

Mr. Stults added that the spandrel glass proposed for the windows could be eliminated to allow visibility inside the building. He confirmed that he had submitted several rounds of changes to the original proposal prior to this hearing. The application process was a surprise because he believed they had done exactly what Chapter 14 itemized. They found out their proposal was not what Staff was looking for, so they visited many other sites and buildings in Astoria before reintroducing what they believed were design elements from the community. Now, they understand that was not what Staff was looking either. They still feel like the design criteria in Chapter 14 can be met, except for the position of the building. However, if their proposal is not the vision of City Staff, they can accommodate. There is a four-story medical office plaza right beside the lot that has barrel roofing. Only two buildings in town have a similar style roofing, but the rest of the commercial buildings in Astoria have rooflines like the one they have proposed. He believed the roof would look at home. It would be a significant challenge for Dollar General to create a large barrel roof and the City encourages roofs like the one proposed.

Vice President Gunderson asked Mr. Stults to show here where the entrances would be located.

Mr. Stults showed the location of the windows and the entrance on the screen, noting that the entrance would face the center of the line of site from the street. Drivers and pedestrians would be keenly aware of the entrance to the building. The building would not fit if it were located on the lot as suggested by the City. The angles of the



lot force the building to be located as proposed. They could put the entrance to the building in another location, but that location would not be where people will walk or drive up to the building.

Commissioner Hensley said she was not in favor of the proposed siding because it seemed outdated and looked too residential. She preferred a siding material that was more aesthetic and congruent to the rest of the community. She asked how long the Applicant had been working with Staff on changing the original proposal.

Mr. Stults said he had been working with Staff for two months and had proposed a different material at first. He believed the siding was modern, but not as modern as what is in Portland. So, this proposal was their second attempt at an appropriate siding material. What looks good in Bend or Portland is not Astoria, so he drove around town to find the common threads so they could represent something local. The proposed siding can be seen all up and down Astoria and he was advised to refrain from new trends.

Commissioner Hensley stated she understood Mr. Stults' reasoning, but still agreed with Planner Ferber that a different material would be appropriate in that area. The details are important and if you do not have the right selection initially, you have to keep refining and getting creative.

Mr. Stults noted that the medial pavilion has lap siding with corrugated steel. His original proposal was for lap siding with panel steel.

Commissioner Hensley said she believed signage details should be submitted because signage is a prolific component of a commercial building, especially if branding is an element. The gooseneck lighting was nice, but the Applicant should continue to implement Staff's recommendations. She asked for more details about the proposed awnings and wall treatments.

Mr. Stults stated he reviewed the awning and wall treatment requirements in Chapter 14 and visited Astoria to look at what had actually been installed on buildings. That is what he proposed. It is his understanding that the Code requirements and what can be seen on the streets is not what Staff wants to see. He is not asking that Staff design the building for them, but they have made their best guess at what they believe was being suggest by the Code, on the street, and by Staff. They will continue to respond.

Commissioner Hensley said she believed the Applicants could follow through more with some of the recommendations.

Mr. Stults said he received Staff's recommendations last week and are now happy to respond again.

Commissioner Hensley added that because the site plan was so unique, she believed the Applicants should continue to follow up with Staff on landscaping.

Vice President Gunderson said she was concerned because the packet was full of things that had not been presented.

Commissioner Hensley stated the outside aesthetics of the building should be married with the whole concept. The typical Dollar General stores shown did not match the exterior schematics proposed.

Mr. Stults noted the exterior schematics were being updated and he would be happy to give them to Staff.

Vice President Gunderson called for testimony in favor of the application. There were none. Vice President Gunderson called for testimony impartial to the application.

Russell Thompson, 265 23<sup>rd</sup> Street, Astoria, said his major concern was the lighting. He lives 75 feet from the proposed corner of the building and the light shining all night should be directed away from Mill Pond. Public Works will have to do work on the corner of 23<sup>rd</sup> and Commercial, which is two houses down from his house. He was concerned that a traffic signal will be installed at that intersection when the City needs a traffic signal closer to the main street.

Jeff Newenhoff, 1563 Irving, Astoria, said he owns City Lumber, which is directly across the street from this project. He was excited about having more customers coming to the area, but was concerned about traffic and



parking. In 2008, he had considered tearing down his store and building a new one. The Transportation Department wanted him to change the intersection from a Y shape to a T shape, which would have created a no parking zone all the way across his property. He was concerned that this project would result in the same situation. No parking in front of his store would severely impact his business. He planned to make a presentation to the Commission next month showing plans to develop his property and hoped the Commission could find a way to address the traffic concerns. Additionally, Public Works is supposed to address concerns at 21<sup>st</sup> and Commercial, not 23<sup>rd</sup> and Commercial. He handed a letter to Planner Ferber.

Vice President Gunderson called for testimony opposed to the application.

McLaren Innes, 4807 Birch Street, Astoria, said she was on the Planning Commission for several years and understood the orientation she should offer this Commission. The overall Comprehensive Plan objectives do not figure into what she sees presented as a plan by the Applicant. There will be no enhancement of primary uses nor compliment to the downtown area. It is obscene how different the proposal reads as part of the Comprehensive Plan, which is tested to a maximum all the time. This project does not meet most of what is defined in the Staff report. The Commission and Staff have done a wonderful job addressing the items, but she was pleased with the town and its way of growth and this does not fit. She would appreciate denial of any permits for the store's existence.

Doug Thompson, 342 14<sup>th</sup> Street, Apt. 602, Astoria, said he was on the board of the Lower Columbia Preservation Society (LCPS), but was speaking tonight as a private citizen. He noted that this matter had not been considered by LCPS and the project was not adjacent to or near historic structures. When he served on City Council, he had proposed the first master planning effort in Astoria, called the Gateway Master Plan. The plan contained the first design review process that led to this Commission. He believed the design review process was very good and the Commission has been presented with a first class Staff report. The purpose of a Staff report is to set out the standards that the community wants in order to attract businesses and uses for the community. While this process may seem challenging to developers, it is part of what the City hopes is an ongoing conversation. It took almost two years to develop the master plan and design review process. Dollar General will have a 15-year triple net lease, which is a long-term lease in the current market. But this is the blink of an eye in the contest of the lifespan of a building. The building permitted for that site is likely to remain for at least a century, so this matter is much bigger than Dollar General is. It is likely that the uses of the building will change a number of times during its lifetime. The massing of the structure on that site is the biggest issue and more important than any other element of the project. Current trends that seem like science fiction, like autonomous vehicles and walk-able cities, could lead to doing away with dedicated off-street parking for retail. The Commission needs to think about the long-term horizon. Developers do not want to dedicate most of the square footage of the site to single occupancy vehicles. He supported the entire Staff report and believed the Commission should deny the application and ask the Applicants to work with Planner Ferber. He understood the Applicants were in the early stages of the process, so had not engaged with the Oregon Department of Transportation yet. However, the existing curb cut is grandfathered in and he believed it should be removed. The main entrance and face of the building should be on Commercial, not Marine. This community is overrun with Portland hipsters and their designer dogs on most weekends. Most of them drive down Highway 30 and through that curve, which is not the pedestrian face of the site or the building. The roof should have solar panels. This might not make sense today or five years from now. However, there is some indication that the planet is getting hotter and the days are getting sunnier.

Vice President Gunderson called for the Applicants rebuttal.

Mr. Stults stated the Dollar General would be required to have full cut offs for the lighting and would not be allowed to shine any lights over their property lines. Lights would not be on before or after operating hours. There might be interior emergency lights that could be seen from the outside, but they would not bleed over property lines. If this ever became a problem, it would be rectified immediately. Twenty-eight parking stalls have been proposed. At peak operating hours, across all Dollar Generals in existence, the average parked cars are 12 parking spaces. With half of the parking stalls filled at peak hours, there would be no reason for someone to park in the street. Dollar General is not a local independent business and they will strive to meet all of the criteria in the Comprehensive Plan. He understood they had homework to do and the Applicants were willing to do it. They will invest millions of dollars to clean up the property and turn it into part of the neighborhood.

Vice President Gunderson called for closing remarks from Staff.



Planner Ferber said most of her concerns had been addressed and she appreciated the Applicant's willingness to go back and forth with Staff on so many issues. Her major concern, which had not been addressed, was the massing and orientation. The Code states the project should be a visually continuous pedestrian oriented street front with no vehicle use between the building faces and the street. This is why she suggested moving the building toward Marine or reorienting it. She had also suggested a flat iron style triangle building, but understood this would be expensive. The lot is unusual and it is in a tricky spot, but the massing and orientation has not been addressed. City Codes and Development Codes prevent parking lot lighting from glaring into the neighborhood. Lighting would be reviewed as part of the building permit application. The transportation issues would also be reviewed during the building permitting process and Oregon Department of Transportation (ODOT) is already aware of this project. The barrel roofing was never required, just suggested. She believed the Applicant made a fair point about walking around town to get a lay of the land and the barrel roofing is unique to just a few sites in Astoria. The Staff report suggested a gabled or pitched roof that would blend in to the residential area. The proposed roof is too low and she was concerned about the awning materials. She had suggested lumber, but the awnings ended up looking like a south west saloon. She was also concerned about the bronze detailing on the wall, which looks decorative, but needs to be pedestrian friendly and accessible. She believed brick pavers in the parking lot would be great, especially if the lot becomes bike parking or smart car parking in the future. She would be happy to review additional landscaping plans.

Commissioner Phelps asked why the pedestrian friendly side of the building had to be on Marine instead of Commercial.

Planner Ferber stated the entire site needs to be pedestrian friendly because it is in the Gateway Zone.

Commissioner Phelps stated she liked the flat iron building design.

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

Vice President Gunderson said the Staff report was excellent. She believed a lot of information was missing from the Applicant. Columbia Bank submitted an application to the Historic Landmarks Commission (HLC) for a building design that did not compliment downtown. The Bank was not willing to work with the City. The HLC denied the application, as did City Council. Even though the Applicant has stated they would be willing to make changes to this project, she questioned whether they could do enough to make the Dollar General fit this community. Everything presented looks like a retail box with no character. The proposed building would fit well in Warrenton, not in Astoria. She was very concerned about this building being proposed at the front door of Mill Pond.

Commissioner Phelps agreed the Staff report was very good. The design looks more south west. She wondered why the Applicants proceeded with the meeting after seeing Staff's recommendations. She wanted to see more work towards following the guidelines.

Commissioner Hensley believed the Commission received good feedback from the community and the developer. Many of Staff's recommendations are missing and she did not understand why they had not been implemented by the Applicant after working with Staff for two months. The Applicant has said they would be willing to do many things and has stated their interpretation of the Code. However, it is important for the Applicant to work with the City's interpretation of its own Code. She believed the Applicant should consider the solar idea because it is hot and the climate is changing. Brick pavers would be a great idea as well. There is a lot missing, so she recommended denial of the application so the developer could submit something more creative.

Commissioner Hensley moved the Astoria Design Review Committee adopt the Findings and Conclusions stated in the Staff report and deny Design Review DR17-01 by Mike Stults; seconded by Commissioner Phelps. Motion passed unanimously. Ayes: Vice President Gunderson, Commissioners Phelps, and Hensley. Nays: None.

Vice President Gunderson read the rules of appeal into the record.

#### STATUS REPORTS – ITEM 6:

Staff updated the Commission on the following:

- Columbia Memorial Hospital Cancer Clinic
- Mill Pond Homeowner's Association Annual Meeting

REPORTS OF OFFICERS/COMMISSIONERS – ITEM 7:

There were none.

PUBLIC COMMENTS – ITEM 8:

There were none.

ADJOURNMENT:

There being no further business, the meeting was adjourned at 6:43 pm.

**APPROVED:**

  
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City Planner