

**ASTORIA DEVELOPMENT COMMISSION**

City Council Chambers

May 2, 2016

**ADC JOURNAL OF PROCEEDINGS**

A regular meeting of the Astoria Development Commission was held at the above place at the hour of 8:03 pm.

Commissioners Present: Herzig, Warr, Nemlowill, Mayor LaMear

Commissioners Excused: Price

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, Library Director Tucker, and Public Works Director Cook. The meeting is recorded and will be transcribed by ABC Transcription Services, Inc.

**REPORTS OF COMMISSIONERS:** No reports.

**CHANGES TO AGENDA:** No changes.

**CONSENT CALENDAR:**

The following items were presented on the Consent Calendar.

5(a) ADC Minutes of 3/21/16

**Commission Action:** Motion by Commissioner Nemlowill, seconded by Commissioner Herzig, to approve the Consent Calendar. Motion carried unanimously. Ayes: Commissioners Warr, Nemlowill, Herzig, and Mayor LaMear. Nays: None.

**REGULAR AGENDA ITEMS:**

**Item 6(a): Astor West Urban Renewal District – Plan Amendment Study Contract for Services (Community Development)**

At the March 21, 2016 ADC meeting, staff was authorized to initiate procurement of a consultant to conduct a plan amendment study for the Astor West Urban Renewal District (AWURD). This would be the first amendment for the AWURD that was established in 2002. The current ADC direction is to align multiple Council policy goals and establish a five-year action plan for investing AWURD funds. This study requires GIS mapping (City staff), analyzing the proposed boundary, developing project investments, conducting public outreach (City staff), financial analysis, legal review, and review by the Planning Commission and ADC. A final deliverable is a proposed boundary amendment that will assist in funding a retaining wall on Bond Street for two way traffic, limited traffic calming, and targeted housing improvements for blighted properties. Attached is a contract with Elaine Howard who has assisted the ADC with similar proposals. It is recommended that the Commission execute the contract and initiate the plan amendment study.

Commissioner Herzig asked how much the contract would cost. Director Cronin said the work would cost about \$30,000 and confirmed the district's boundaries would be extended so urban renewal funds could be used to help rebuild Bond Street for two-way traffic. When Staff comes to the Commission with a proposal, different methods of expanding the boundary will be presented.

Commissioner Nemlowill believed this was an important project and a strategy the City has been discussing for a couple of years and she could not see moving in a different direction now. It is too bad that City could not create a conference center or do something more significant with the original intention of the Urban Renewal District. The City of Redmond used its urban renewal money to leverage Oregon Department of Transportation (ODOT) funding for a by-pass, which really improved their urban renewal area.

**Commission Action:** Motion by Commissioner Warr, seconded by Commissioner Nemlowill, that the Astoria Development Commission execute a contract with Elaine Howard to conduct a plan amendment study for the Astor West Urban Renewal District for a not to exceed amount of \$31,000. Motion carried unanimously. Ayes: Commissioners Warr, Nemlowill, Herzig, and Mayor LaMear. Nays: None.

**Item 6(b): Astor West Urban Renewal District – Storefront Improvement Program Startup and Launch (Community Development)**

The Astoria Development Commission has been considering a storefront improvement program for the Astor West Urban Renewal District (AWURD) since 2013. Façade improvements are a popular and widely used tool by urban renewal agencies and Main Street programs to assist property/business owners with exterior improvement to buildings. The purpose of the program is to revitalize designated commercial districts and corridors such as West Marine Drive in Uniontown, which has many inventoried historic commercial buildings. The ADC hired consultant Elaine Howard in 2013 to develop this program – a first for Astoria – that would be available in the AWURD. Funds are budgeted as part of the proposed Fiscal Year 2016-17 budget; however, in order to launch the program, the ADC needs to review and authorize the program. Staff will present a set of policy questions to ADC for feedback. Based on this feedback, staff will produce a polished set of program guidelines that serve as parameters for the administration of the program and can be shared with prospective customers. Once the program is ready to launch, staff is prepared to conduct outreach as part of the AWURD Action Plan, Five Year Economic Development Strategy, and Plan Amendment Study (i.e., Bond Street Project). It is recommended that the Commission provide policy direction on the program for Fiscal Year 2016-17 implementation. It is recommended that the Commission provide feedback on the policy questions. When the program is finalized, it will be brought back to the ADC for consideration and approval.

Director Cronin briefly reviewed the presentation on the proposed Storefront Improvement Program, which was included in the agenda packet. He asked Commissioners to respond to the policy questions listed in the presentation, noting Staff's recommendations for each one. The Commission provided feedback to the questions and recommendations, as follows:

- Leverage - Commissioner Herzig believed the matching funds required of applicants should be flexible.
- Land Use – Commissioner Nemlowill believed businesses in Uniontown would benefit if the residences within the commercial area fronting Marine Drive were eligible for the program. Staff confirmed residences were already eligible for Certified Local Government (CLG) funds, but Astoria only has \$10,000. However, the residences on Marine Drive could participate in the program, leaving more CLG funds for residences on other streets within Uniontown.
  - Commissioner Warr said he did not feel comfortable commenting since he had a building and a business in the area.
- Bars, Strip Clubs, and Marijuana Dispensaries - Commissioners Nemlowill and Herzig agreed these types of businesses needed storefront improvements the most. Mayor LaMear was opposed to City funds be used to improve the exteriors of such businesses. Commissioner Nemlowill reminded that the City has used urban renewal funds to benefit businesses that serve alcohol and noted that bars are a large part of the business community in Uniontown. She asked if Mayor LaMear would support placing bars in a category separate from strip clubs and marijuana dispensaries.
  - Director Cronin explained that several bars allow minors until 9:00 pm, so they would be eligible under Staff's recommendation to make funds available to businesses that allow minors on a regular basis.
  - Commissioner Nemlowill believed the best way to combat urban blight and create more prosperity was to allow all businesses to participate in the program. Commissioner Herzig agreed and said leaving the many historic bars in the area out of the program would not be a good idea.
  - Mayor LaMear and Commissioners Nemlowill and Herzig agreed a good compromise would be to exclude strip clubs and marijuana dispensaries, but allow bars to participate in the program.
- Religious Institutions - Mayor LaMear and Commissioner Herzig agreed with Staff's recommendations.
- Urban Design Assistance – The Commission agreed with Staff's recommendations.
- Approach – Commissioner Warr believed the program should be proactive for two reasons, 1) many business or building owners might not otherwise be aware that funds are available, and 2) the program will be used more once Staff actively demonstrates the benefits of the program to a business whose storefront needs improvement. Mayor LaMear believed businesses along Marine Drive should take priority since that street is the entrance to the city.
- Repeat Business - Commissioner Herzig did not agree with the five-year waiting period to reapply for funds. He wanted businesses that make good investments for the City to have the opportunity to apply for funds more often. Mayor LaMear said the City wants to make their limited funds available to as many businesses as possible. Commissioner Herzig said obviously, first-time applicants should take priority over repeat applicants and if there are enough funds remaining, the repeat applicants could benefit. He just wanted more flexibility. Commissioner Nemlowill agreed and recommended repeat applicants be required to pay off their loan first.
  - Director Cronin said the required matching funds could be increased for repeat applications or the waiting period could be reduced.

- Staff was concerned that only the bars would participate in the program, then the other businesses would complain that funds were only going to one type of business. Commissioner Herzig added that if the City does a good job of letting businesses know about the program, maybe the bars would make use of the funds and inspire other businesses to do the same. He liked the idea of a shorter waiting period if the loan has been paid off.

Director Cronin reviewed the next steps, listed in the agenda packet. Program guidelines would be developed by Staff based on tonight's feedback and reviewed by the Development Commission in June. Once the program has been implemented, Staff will give regular project updates to the Commission.

Commissioner Herzig asked if some of the pedestrian and storefront design elements that were part of the Bridge Vista Area of the Riverfront Vision Plan could be part of this program. City Manager Estes reminded that former Planner Rosemary Johnson developed design guidelines before she retired.

Commissioner Nemlowill was concerned about communication with the Port of Astoria because a large part of the District encompasses the Port. She understood Staff has communicated with Port Director Knight, but wanted to make sure communication was a regular part of the process. It seemed as if the Port was being excluded in this conversation because the Port had not been mentioned. Director Cronin confirmed that Director Knight is aware of the proposed program however, Staff has not made a presentation to the Port Commission. He met with Director Knight on Friday to discuss the results of the Request for Qualifications (RFQ).

City Manager Estes asked if the Commission's focus was along Marine Drive or the area closer to the Port. Properties closer to the Port would not be ineligible for program funds and there are some larger Port properties that could use the funds right away. Accommodations could be built into the program so that funds could benefit Port and non-Port properties.

Mayor LaMear was excited to move forward with the program because Marine Drive is not the entrance to the city that everyone would like to see. She thanked Staff for their work and said she believed the majority of work should be done on West Marine Drive.

Mayor LaMear called for public comments.

Ted Osborne, 345 Alameda, Astoria, asked how much funds the Urban Renewal District had. Commissioner Nemlowill believed the amount was around \$2.5 million. City Manager Estes added that Staff would propose a specific amount to be allocated to the Storefront Improvement Program each fiscal year. Mr. Osborne said he has participated in several façade improvement programs over the years in other cities. He recommended the City consider a formula that uses a multiple of \$10,000 based on the size of the façade.

Commissioner Herzig said the Astor West Urban Renewal District's ending fund balance for FY2014-2015 was \$3,391,553. The Astor East Urban Renewal District had \$791,869.

Staff believed that about \$150,000 had been budgeted for the Storefront Improvement Program for FY2016-2017.

Director Cronin confirmed the program could be structured based on linear square footage, but he wanted feedback from the Commission on the policy questions before getting into that level of detail. He wants to make sure the City is leveraging its dollars as well as possible.

#### **ADJOURNMENT:**

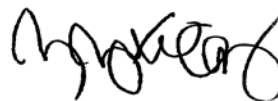
There being no further business, the meeting was adjourned at 8:41 pm.

**ATTEST:**



Secretary

**APPROVED**



City Manager