

A work session meeting of the Astoria Common Council was held at the above place at the hour of 5:30 pm.

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

Councilors Excused: None

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

### **INTRODUCTION OF MARTY JAECKSCH, FACILITATOR, FOR STRATEGIC PLANNING PROCESS**

City Manager Estes introduced Marty Jaecksch, who had previously presented his strategic planning methodology to City Council. He noted that he asked the department heads to be present since they would be responsible for implementing the final strategic plan.

Marty Jaecksch stated he was an independent management consultant and briefly noted his professional background. He reviewed the agenda and outlined the goals of the work session. The entire planning process would remain flexible and he anticipated about four drafts would be produced before the final plan.

### **CLARIFICATION OF FINAL OUTCOME FOR STRATEGIC PLANNING PROCESS**

Mr. Jaecksch presented a hand out at the dais, which included two examples of strategic plans from small cities. He reviewed the format and contents of each plan, noting the similarities and differences between the plans and explaining how each element of the plans collectively resulted in action items that when implemented would achieve the cities' goals. The key to executing a strategic plan is in the plan's ability to translate objectives into operations. Therefore, every objective will have a measure and a target. He recommended Council consider using themes in their plan because it was a good way to describe issues the City wanted to address.

Councilor Herzig wanted Astoria's strategic plan to state whether the City's role is to lead or partner with another entities and state which department would be responsible for each action item. Mr. Jaecksch explained how the plan would provide detailed direction to Staff about how to implement each action item.

Mayor LaMear said she liked the four themes in Albany's strategic plan and wanted to use their plan as a template for Astoria's. Mr. Jaecksch pointed out that the copy of Albany's plan did not include a mission statement, vision, or values because those elements were introductory, not the body of the work. The mission statement, vision, and values were preliminary and could be displayed with the strategic plan.

Mayor LaMear asked if the themes were incorporated into the mission statement, vision, and values. Mr. Jaecksch explained that the themes were separate, but implied. Councilor Herzig understood the themes flow from the mission, vision, and values. He requested copies of Albany's mission, vision, and values so that Council could see how the two elements corresponded.

### **STRATEGIC PLANNING MODEL AND PROCESS, ASSUMPTIONS**

Councilor Price believed the planning process should consider challenges that the city faces. She liked Albany's plan because they have many of the same challenges as Astoria. However, Astoria also has some different challenges, concerns, and interests that should be considered.

Mr. Jaecksch outlined the steps involved in the strategic planning process, describing how each step involved more and more detail as the process moved forward, starting with high level statements that would eventually lead to detailed action items and review processes. He noted which parties would be responsible for each step and how Council and Staff would work together to finalize the details in the plan.

Councilor Nemlowill asked which steps included public engagement. Mr. Jaecksch said the public would be involved in developing the mission, vision, and values. After that, it would be up to City Council to decide how much public involvement would take place at each step of the planning process. More public involvement will

result in a longer planning process. City Manager Estes added that Council has indicated they would like to produce a product that could be vetted to the public. He believed Council could develop the mission, vision, and values first and then ask the public to provide feedback. He confirmed Staff could hold open houses and public input sessions anytime Council directed them to do so. He recommended Council develop more than just the mission, vision, and values before soliciting public feedback. The public should definitely have the opportunity to provide input before objectives and action items are developed, but City Council could develop the higher-level sections of the strategic plan.

Councilor Warr preferred Council develop a rough draft of the themes, goals, and objective prior to asking for any public input. Otherwise, the process could get bogged down. City Manager Estes said the document would be reviewed internally with Staff, who would provide feedback to Council as well.

Mr. Jaecksch drew a diagram that showed how the mission, vision, and values would work and described the process of collecting feedback throughout the process. He explained that as feedback is received, new drafts of the plan would be developed in response.

Councilors Price and Nemlowill briefly discussed the importance of the public input process and the various means of collecting feedback from a variety of interest groups. Councilor Nemlowill noted that while the public input process used for the Riverfront Vision Plan was great, the implementation occurred so many years later that the public's vision had changed, so, Staff offered new opportunities for the public to provide input.

City Manager Estes reminded that City Council made the decision to develop a strategic plan. If this planning process is going to include a more robust public involvement program, Staff will need direction from City Council and more time to develop the plan.

Councilor Nemlowill noted that this planning process is an opportunity to put the future of the city into writing.

Mr. Jaecksch confirmed that during the planning process, it would be up to City Council to state when they would like the public to be involved. Councilor Nemlowill wanted a public involvement timeline. Councilors and Staff discussed the importance of such a timeline, noting the difficulties of developing one so early in the planning process. Mr. Jaecksch said he would integrate public involvement milestones into the planning process, which would include suggested methods of collecting feedback for each milestone.

Councilor Price wanted Council to develop a good first draft of the mission, vision, values, objectives, and goals that could be presented to the public. She believed Council should be open to revising the draft after feedback is received. Mayor LaMear and Councilor Warr agreed.

## **ROLES CLARIFICATION**

Mr. Jaecksch stated the roles of each group were as follows:

- City Council - create, approve, and oversee the strategic plan.
- City Manager – execute the strategic plan.
- City Staff – implement the strategic plan.
- Mr. Jaecksch – consult on and facilitate the strategic planning process.
- Citizens – give feedback and offer ideas.
- Core Team – write the first draft and revise the draft based on feedback.
- He explained how the school district developed a core team during their strategic planning process, with each member representing a group of stakeholders. The core team wrote a first draft and each member presented it to the group they represented to collect feedback and ideas. The team then revised the draft based on this feedback.

Mayor LaMear asked if City Council should be part of the core team. City Manager Estes listed the requirements for conducting public meetings. Councilor Price believed it would be impossible for City Council because the core team would need to work together to write a draft. Councilor Nemlowill believed it was the consultant's responsibility to listen to the core group then write the draft. Councilor Price said this would make the process lengthy.

Mr. Jaecksch confirmed he would be willing to write the draft at City Council's direction. City Manager Estes noted that City Council wanted this process to remain affordable, which would not be the case if Mr. Jaecksch

attended every meeting. A core team could meet separately and call Mr. Jaecksch for assistance when necessary. The draft created by the core team will be presented to City Council for approval. He recommended a core team comprised of two Councilors and himself, who would develop the mission, vision, and values. Mr. Jaecksch added that after the core team developed the mission, vision, and values, the entire City Council would complete the themes, objectives, and goals.

Councilor Herzig suggested the entire Council and City Manager Estes be assigned to the core team with the understanding that a quorum would not be necessary at meetings. However, if more than two Councilors planned to attend, Staff could announce that the meeting would be public. He believed some Councilors were more interested than others were in being a part of the core team. This would give each Councilor the flexibility to be as involved as that want to be, as well as a baseline for a core group.

The entire City Council indicated they wanted to be part of the core group. Councilor Price did not understand why the mission, vision, and values could not be developed via email. She understood that public meetings could not be conducted via email, but believed that if the core group were not a quorum, there would be enough trust amongst the Council to allow two Councilors and the City Manager to do the work.

City Manager Estes asked Council to consider potential core group members while the next two items on the agenda were discussed, as the core team would be established towards the end of the meeting.

### **PROCESS FOR MISSION, VISION, AND VALUES**

Mr. Jaecksch defined a mission statement, explained its purpose, and noted considerations necessary when developing a mission statement. He and Staff guided Council through the process of developing statement, as follows:

- Council discussed what they liked about Albany's and Vancouver's mission statements and noted some concepts they wanted Astoria's statement to convey, like providing quality services, leadership, and stewardship, and Astoria's heritage.
- Mr. Jaecksch explained the differences between a mission statement and a vision statement, noting both must be meaningful to those who write the statements and understood by the organization. He briefly described the processes used to develop these statements and asked Council what they wanted to include in their mission statement.
  - Mayor LaMear suggested a statement about preserving Astoria's unique character.
  - Mr. Jaecksch noted that Councilor Herzig had already said leadership should be included, which could be interpreted several ways. He recommended Council discuss this further.
- Councilors and Staff discussed using the word "quality" in the mission statement. Councilor Nemlowill was concerned that saying the City offered quality services would not be an honest reflection, but noted the City does the best it can with the resources it has. Councilor Warr disagreed and Councilor Herzig noted the statement reflected the City's aspirations.
  - Mr. Jaecksch explained that the mission is a statement reflecting a summary of the services the City provides. The word quality indicates that the City believes it is doing a good job working towards its goals, but the word full-service is too broad for the mission statement. The mission also reflects what the City does not do. Organizations that try to do too much and are not focused end up with fuzzy mission statements. He asked Council to consider this as the mission statement is written.
- Councilors Warr and Nemlowill agreed the word "affordable" might not be appropriate because the word is subjective and Astoria's tax rates were high.
  - Councilor Nemlowill suggested the statement include, "providing quality services while preserving Astoria's unique history." The City is trying to uphold the current quality of life, so the statement should also include something about preserving a good quality of life for citizens now. Mr. Jaecksch said quality of life statements were more visionary and belonged in the vision statement.
- Councilor Herzig suggested the mission statement be, "to lead in providing quality public services while preserving Astoria's unique heritage." Councilor Nemlowill believed the wording implied that others are providing the services. However, the City is the only entity providing services. Councilor Herzig said he wanted leadership to be included somehow and agreed the statement was not very clear.
- Mayor LaMear explained that the statement should reflect the City's mission, not Council's mission. Councilors briefly discussed the role of the City Council.

The meeting recessed at 6:55 pm for a break and reconvened at 7:05 pm.

Mr. Jaecksch continued to explain the process involved in developing the mission, vision, and value statements, which would be a collaborative effort of the core team, City Staff, and City Council. City Manager Estes noted how Staff would participate in the process.

## **WRITE FIRST DRAFT OF MISSION, VISION AND VALUES**

### Mission Statement

Mr. Jaecksch described the process for coming to a consensus and asked each member of City Council to indicate his or her level of support for each suggested mission statement. City Council unanimously agreed on one of the statements.

### Vision Statement

Mr. Jaecksch gave the definition of a vision and noted the considerations necessary when developing the statement. Mayor LaMear suggested Councilors write down words and phrases as they brainstormed about the vision. Council shared ideas about the vision statement with guiding comments from Staff, as follows:

- Councilor Nemlowill said she wanted Astoria to be a place where people who work in Astoria could also live. She believed the City could make policy decisions that would achieve this vision.
- Mayor LaMear said she wanted to maintain the aesthetics of the riverfront.
- Councilor Warr believed the only way to achieve Councilor Nemlowill's vision would be to aggressively pursue economic development that would provide family wage jobs. However, the City has not shown that it wants development. Councilor Nemlowill agreed the economy was an important aspect of her vision for Astoria. They discussed the high numbers of second homes in Astoria, the housing shortage, and the current economy. While Astoria does not want to give up any of its waterfront for economic development, the City still needs to attract family wage jobs.
  - Council agreed the vision statement should include "balanced economic growth."
- Councilor Price believed the statement should also include, "a safe, healthy, active, entrepreneurial community that balances growth with preserving Astoria's unique, natural, rural, and historic character."
- Mr. Jaecksch noted that vision statements could be broken down with bullet points that more specifically explain some of the broad words within the statement. The themes would also provide more specific details about the vision statement.
- Councilor Nemlowill believed the community was another reason people wanted to work and live in Astoria. Mayor LaMear agreed. They briefly discussed the local community, which was different from a resort town and offered events year-round. Councilor Nemlowill believed balancing economy and livability should be part of the vision statement. Council agreed livability and quality of life were about parks, public spaces, access to healthcare, and transportation. Councilor Nemlowill added that while the types of blue-collar jobs in Astoria have evolved over the years, the city's heritage remains the same and she wanted this to continue into the future. Councilor Herzig noted that Astoria's heritage was already mentioned in the mission statement.
  - City Manager Estes said he had heard from many people lately that Astoria is changing for the better. Mayor LaMear said if City Council believes the authentic character of Astoria should be maintained, it should be included in the vision statement. She reminded that the public would have the opportunity to provide feedback about the statement. Councilor Nemlowill agreed. Councilor Herzig noted that he would like more information about the comments made to City Manager Estes.
- Mr. Jaecksch asked Council to describe Astoria's authentic character. Mayor LaMear and Councilors listed the aspects of Astoria they believed contributed to the character of the city, including pilings, Victorian homes, museums, the fishing community, the Coast Guard, the year-round community, the high level of volunteerism in the community, political activism, the outdoor environment, and events.
  - Councilor Nemlowill liked the phrase "Astoria for Astorians." While tourism is a large part of the economy, the niche that brings tourists to Astoria and provides quality of life is the way the City does things for the locals first. Mayor LaMear added that Astoria remains authentic because the city is not trying to be a tourist town.

Mr. Jaecksch confirmed that Council wanted to consider the following phrases for the vision statement:

- A place where people who work in Astoria can live in Astoria
- Maintain the riverfront aesthetic
- Economic development that provides family wage jobs and balance
- A safe, healthy, active, entrepreneurial community that balances growth with preserving Astoria's unique, natural, rural, and historic character
- A year-round community

- Balance the economy with livability/quality of life
  - Maintain the authentic character of Astoria
  - Volunteerism is related to the word active
  - Community involvement
- He noted three main concepts could be drawn from the list and crafted into a vision statement, 1) the City wanted a specific type of development, 2) Astoria's authentic character contributed to its livability, and 3) the year-round community was a result of community involvement and volunteerism.

The phrase suggested by Councilor Price included most of the concepts. However, Mayor LaMear and Councilor Warr did not believe the word rural was appropriate for Astoria. Councilor Price agreed Astoria was not an up and coming town, but was full of people who work hard for a living. Astoria is under pressure to make the city pretty, where all of the houses look great and all of the people work white-collar jobs.

Councilor Warr asked Councilor Price to explain what she meant by entrepreneurial. She considered Astoria's businesses to be entrepreneurial and said Astoria would not get big factories or big businesses. Councilor Herzig believed the word entrepreneurial implied hustling. Councilor Nemlowill said the word made her think of small businesses, but also believed entrepreneurial could apply to medium or large-scale businesses as well. Councilor Price said entrepreneurship included innovation.

Councilor Nemlowill suggested the vision statement include "a thriving year-round community with its authentic heritage intact." Councilors Warr and Price believed the statement should indicate where the city wanted to go. However, Councilor Herzig and Mayor LaMear liked the phrase "thriving year-round community."

Councilors brainstormed about the exact wording of a vision statement, discussing which words would best convey the concepts they had agreed to reflect in the statement.

Councilor Warr explained that Astoria's authentic character 70 or 80 years ago put large windows towards the street. No one wanted to look at the river because that was where they made their living. Today, the City is saying that in order to preserve that authentic character, it will not allow growth that would buffer the view shed. He did not believe this was authentic or economically healthy. Authenticity evolves and changes with the times. Balancing growth with the authentic character of the city does not reflect any interest in economically taking care of future generations. Tourism creates low wage jobs and the people who work in tourism cannot afford to live in Astoria. Therefore, he believed the vision statement should say to the community that the City wants to find a way to take care of its citizens economically, in addition to providing great public services. Councilors Price and Herzig believed the word thriving reflected Councilor Warr's suggestion.

Mr. Jaecksch asked how Council believed the vision statement would provide guidance. Councilor Warr said the Riverfront Vision Plan was initially crafted to leave the west end of town for riverside development. During the implementation process, the City became convinced that people withheld their views. So, the City implemented regulations that block any type of meaningful development on the river. He believed this was very economically hurtful. If this vision is for the future, the statement should include something that allows the City to be economically healthy so that people who work in Astoria can also live in the community. He believed the word thriving could mean many different things. Councilor Herzig suggested Councilor Warr's concerns be discussed in a more strategic level of the planning process.

Councilor Price said she had heard similar statements from pro-development people who have lived in Astoria for a long time, which she believed made up about 30 percent of Astoria. There are very different visions of Astoria's authentic character, so she recommended the vision state "balances growth with livability." Then, livability can be debated instead of character.

Councilor Warr believed the City needed to state forcefully that it is not anti-development or anti-business because governments do not create wealth. If this is going to be a long-range plan, the City needs to be very serious about providing more than just views, nice parks, and other comforts. The City should do what it can to provide jobs. Councilor Price said that is what balancing growth is. People want to come to Astoria because it has limited development and a lot of open space, unlike Seaside or Warrenton.

Councilor Nemlowill added that the word growth could mean many things too. Mr. Jaecksch reminded that the meanings of these words would be specified later in the process. City Council agreed the strategic plan should include an economy theme.

Councilor Warr confirmed that he believed “balances growth with the preservation of our authentic character” sounded anti-development.

Mr. Jaecksch said when the vision statement is presented to the next group for input, both sides of this conversation needed to be reflected so that the group could offer their own perspective. He proposed a specific phrase as the initial draft vision statement, which he wrote on the board.

Councilor Nemlowill asked if the information written on the board would be documented. Even if some of the concepts discussed did not fit into the vision statement, they still needed to be included in the strategic plan. Staff confirmed that discussions and hand-written notes from public, core team, and stakeholder meetings would be compiled in a project binder.

### Value Statement

Mr. Jaecksch defined value statements and explained what types of things should be included. City Council stated the value statements should include the following:

- Historic preservation
- Astoria for Astorian’s
- Honoring the workers
- Year-round community
- Environmental preservation
- Sense of place
- Economic vitality
- Economic opportunity for future generations
- Resiliency
- Fiscal responsibility
- Fiscally and environmentally sustainable
- Heritage
- Personal honesty and integrity
- Excellence
- Teamwork
- A humane and diverse organization
- Social responsibility

Councilor Price understood the characteristics should indicate the values of the City Council and the City government. Councilor Warr believed the list of values should be concise and brief and include open and honest government, fiscal responsibility, maintaining the environment, and providing sensible customer service. The City has discussed affordable housing, but has never discussed the many of the things it could do to promote affordable housing. The only way to promote affordable housing is to make it economically viable and bureaucracy makes development much less affordable than it needs to be. Therefore, business friendly should also be a value. Councilor Nemlowill agreed.

Mr. Jaecksch reminded that values provide guidance and do not make decisions. Values often come into conflict and the City would have to balance them sometimes.

Councilor Herzig wanted the values to include entrepreneurial instead of business friendly because it sounded local and artisanal. Astoria does not want Wal-Mart, but does want businesses like Fort George and the Wet Dog.

Councilor Price believed the values would resonate with the public. Councilors Nemlowill and Herzig agreed that economic development should be discussed separately.

Council agreed their initial list of values was too long and discussed the best way to make the values more concise by combining individual statements. Staff guided Council through the process by clarifying the purpose of a values statement and offering suggestions. Mr. Jaecksch stated he would refine Council’s final list of value statements and Staff would email his changes to Council for feedback and approval. Staff reminded that all communications would be added to the project binder.

### **DESIGNATION OF THE CORE TEAM**

Mr. Jaecksch confirmed he did not need to be a member of the core team and could simply coach the team through the process. Councilor Herzig discussed the importance of inviting Staff to the work session, which he believed would be beneficial when the core team solicits feedback from each department. Councilor Warr believed Council should complete the first four or five steps of the planning process, and then turn the project over to a core team that included Staff, a few Councilors, and a member from outside the City government.

believed would be beneficial when the core team solicits feedback from each department. Councilor Warr believed Council should complete the first four or five steps of the planning process, and then turn the project over to a core team that included Staff, a few Councilors, and a member from outside the City government.

Mr. Jaecksch reminded that the core team needed to be a decision-making body that would collect feedback about the draft and adjust the draft accordingly. City Manager Estes noted a few pros and cons of having the entire City Council on the core team and Mr. Jaecksch offered suggestions about how to handle some of the potential issues.

Councilor Price was concerned about how much of a burden the planning process would put on Staff and how much it would cost. City Manager Estes said he understood that he and Julie Yuill would take on additional work to facilitate the process. He could delegate some of the work to Mr. Jaecksch, but would still have to manage the budget for this project.

Councilor Nemlowill suggested the department heads discuss what they heard at this work session with their Staff, collect feedback, and present the feedback to City Council. She did not understand why the core team would have to explain the concepts to Staff because Staff attended the work session and witnessed the entire process.

City Manager Estes suggested he and a few Councilors be on the core team. City Council would still have to approve any amendments. Council debated having a few Councilors versus the entire City Council on the core team and agreed the core team would include the entire Council.

**NEXT STEPS**

City Manager Estes stated he and Mr. Jaecksch would meet in the morning to discuss refinements to the value statements.


**ADJOURNMENT**

There being no further business, the meeting was adjourned at 8:32 pm.

**ATTEST:**

  
\_\_\_\_\_  
Finance Director

**APPROVED:**

  
\_\_\_\_\_  
City Manager