



AGENDA

ASTORIA CITY COUNCIL WORK SESSION

March 21, 2016

**Immediately Follows City Council Meeting
2nd Floor Council Chambers
1095 Duane Street · Astoria OR 97103**

- 1. CALL TO ORDER**

- 2. ROLL CALL**

- 3. COMMUNICATIONS TOWER**

- 4. ADJOURNMENT**

THIS MEETING IS ACCESSIBLE TO THE DISABLED. AN INTERPRETER FOR THE HEARING IMPAIRED MAY BE REQUESTED UNDER THE TERMS OF ORS 192.630 BY CONTACTING JULIE YUILL, CITY MANAGER'S OFFICE, 503-325-5824.



CITY OF ASTORIA
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March 17, 2016

MEMORANDUM

TO: MAYOR AND CITY COUNCIL

FROM:  BRETT ESTES, CITY MANAGER

SUBJECT: ASTORIA CITY COUNCIL WORK SESSION OF MARCH 21, 2016

Item 3 **Communications Tower**

Attached is a memorandum outlining the history of replacing the City of Astoria communication facilities at Astor Park. In order to move forward with plans to address this issue, direction is requested from the City Council.



CITY OF ASTORIA
POLICE DEPARTMENT

March 14, 2016

MEMORANDUM

TO: MAYOR AND CITY COUNCIL

FROM:  BRETT ESTES, CITY MANAGER

SUBJECT: EMERGENCY COMMUNICATIONS, ASTOR PARK AND VERIZON WIRELESS

DISCUSSION/ANALYSIS

In 2008, Verizon Wireless (VZW) approached the City about the possibility of expanding their presence on the City owned communications tower at Astor Park. This occurred just as the Police Department assumed management of the communications facility at Astor Park. The Police Department was concerned that the loading of the tower, as is, was excessive for performance and required a structural engineering study prior to entering into lease negotiations with VZW. That study confirmed that the fears were correct and that the tower could not handle the additional needs of both the City and VZW, who is a tenant of the City on the site.

From the beginning of this conversation staff believed that Astor Park was not the best place for a communications tower and tried to find ways to minimize the risk to the site from public pressure caused by the conflict of a communications tower located in a historic park, the physical risk from tree damage, and find ways to improve the aesthetics of the park.

Staff worked directly with VZW on several concepts and shopped those ideas with the Council at that time. Staff had identified the Reservoir Ridge as a potential location but this site was dismissed out of hand by VZW because it did not meet their needs fully. Meeting VZW needs was important because that was the key to reducing cost to the City. The idea that resonated most as a solution was construction of a simple monopole north of the existing tower. While this site still had potential risk staff felt that this, in the environment then, was the best possible concept. This idea was brought to the Council in a public meeting on April 1, 2013. The plan was opposed by the Friends of the Column who were in attendance at the meeting as they desired to create a master plan for the park. Council members gave input at that meeting that they wanted to see the tower relocated, that the lease from VZW created insufficient income, and that the City should explore other opportunities before allowing anything to move forward at Astor Park. All conversation at that meeting made it clear that staff should move toward a solution that removed emergency communications from Astor Park.

Staff continued work on this matter working with a consultant hired by Friends of the Column to develop a solution that had minimal cost to the City, possibly generate revenues, and have the lowest possible impact on aesthetics. In order to move VZW toward accepting the move to Reservoir Ridge it was apparent that the business needs of VZW had to be met. Those needs involved filling in the areas that the move decreased coverage. The best balance determined by consultants and staff to address these various factors was the plan presented to the City Council via lease negotiations. City Council approved leases for the Reservoir Ridge site and vacated a street for the Shively Park site. After the land use appeal denying the Shively tower, staff needs clear vision of Council's policy related to this issue. Not until Council's vision related to emergency communications, Astor Park, and VZW is provided, staff cannot move forward. It is hoped that by creating some policy options Council can give direction to staff on how to proceed.

Some points related to the current situation:

- The current communications tower at Astor Park is overburdened. The wind load on this increasingly exposed hilltop is a significant danger to emergency communications.
- The lease for the current presence of VZW at Astor Park expires 8/31/16.
- Verizon removing their equipment from the existing tower will buy public safety communications some additional years from the threat of wind loading and structural issues but not the trees; however, we will still be faced with a tower that will need to be replaced in the future.
- The existing shelter for public safety communications is inadequate and maintenance has been deferred while negotiating this issue. There is a need to spend roughly \$30,000 - \$40,000 to replace the generator and isolate it from the electronics in the building.
- The existing lease with VZW is not acceptable to VZW as it was based on the ability to obtain both Reservoir Ridge and Shively. Any site that VZW is able to locate to replace Shively Park will provide lower levels of coverage for them.
- The approved leases provided \$24,000 per year to the Capital Improvement Fund and \$24,000 to the Parks Operation Fund. These amounts escalated to \$42,000 for each fund by the term of the contract. Both sites anticipated being able to negotiate with other potential providers for access to the VZW towers. Staff had hoped to attract additional tenants at each site which could have doubled or tripled the income from each site.
- The Reservoir Ridge location offers equivalent coverage for public safety land mobile radio (LMR). It also provides connectivity opportunities not available at any other sites which will allow the ability to connect to remote sites which are not currently accessible.
- The City has had both vendors it uses for Land Mobile Radio (LMR) look at an alternative that has been floated to locate public safety LMR at the commercial broadcast site off of Pipeline Road. Both vendors have indicated this is a suboptimal solution. The geography is such that LMR coverage will be decreased in the majority of directions requiring additional sites and more complicated LMR system design. It will also eliminate the ability to connect this radio site to the existing network without purchasing additional fiber connectivity.

Staff has been contacted by VZW and Friends of the Column board members. Based on the land use findings approved by Council, the conversations with the parties listed, and the points above, the following options seem to be most likely but Council guidance is required. Estimates on financial items are just that. They are rough calculations based on experience but are closer to back of the napkin to financial analysis.

Option Packages

1. Let the Astor Park lease with VZW expire and allow VZW pursue options outside of collocation with the City. This option leaves the existing communications tower at Astor Park. It will require capital costs to increase the functionality of the communications building, replace the generator, and realign existing communications equipment to capitalize on the additional territory cleared up by the removal of VZW. Most areas of VZW would see significant decrease in cell phone coverage. Total cost to the City for this option will exceed \$50,000. All other nonpublic safety tenants would also be removed. In addition to the cost of this option the removal of tenants will remove income.
2. Status Quo remains with little change. Tower is stripped of all tenants except for VZW and Public Safety. This will require significant structural work to reinforce the tower, if possible. It will increase lease revenue and require the upgrades listed previously for the public safety shelter.
3. Explore modifying the VZW lease with reduced cost to VZW to determine if the City can reach terms where they will continue with the Reservoir Ridge site while pursuing their options for a fill in site. There has been an offer from VZW to pursue this option. This lease negotiation will result in lower income or increased cost to the City. It will also likely require a lease extension at Astor Park of at least a year to allow VZW to maintain coverage while they seek out the fill in site.
4. The City builds its own site at Reservoir ridge in an attempt to lure collocated providers. This would likely require an investment of \$750,000 - \$800,000. Financed, the City would need to create income in the area of \$60,000 annually to break even on this proposal. While possible, this is speculative.

RECOMMENDATION

It is recommended that Council discuss this item and provide direction allowing staff to move forward with communications tower issues included in the memorandum.



Brad Johnston
Chief of Police
Assistant City Manager