



Photos by Danny Miller/The Daily Astorian
Bruce Francis, chairman of the Clatsop County Planning Commission, listens during deliberation on the proposed Miles Crossing project Tuesday in Astoria.

Complex: Krueger is expected to appeal

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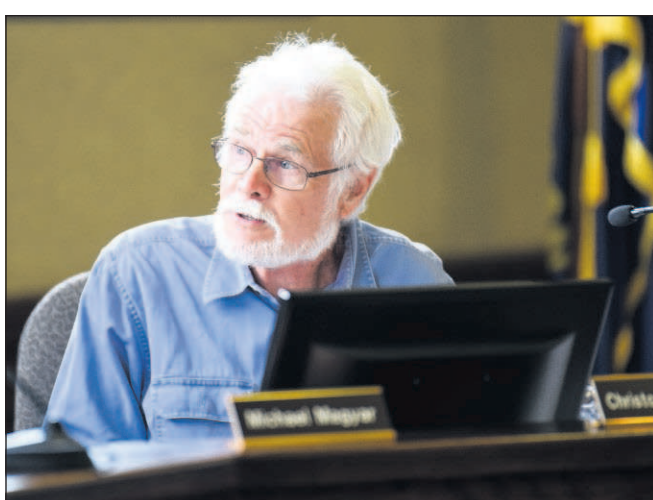
Commissioners Mryna Patrick and Thomas Merrell said, even with reducing the project to 48 units, they were troubled allowing multi-family units in a rural area.

"I'm still not comfortable with the traffic study and police and local schools as far as adding the multi-units to that area," Merrell said. "Personally, based on that criteria alone I couldn't see a zoning change."

Neighbors were especially concerned about whether the region has enough water and sewer capacity long term for the development.

"We don't want this apartment complex in our neighborhood," Cynthia Johnson, a neighbor, wrote in a letter to the county. "We already carry a heavy burden with the current sewer system."

The sewer and water districts indicated they have the capacity. A condition of approval was for Krueger to



Commissioner Christopher Farrar speaks during the Clatsop County Planning Commission's deliberation on the proposed Miles Crossing project Tuesday in Astoria.

provide proof that the Miles Crossing Sanitary Sewer District Board approve connection to the system.

Commissioner Christopher Farrar pointed to a recent letter from the sewer district board retracting their approval. The sewer board sent a previous letter of support last month, but it was sent

without formal approval from the board.

"You need something definitive from the various utility districts," Farrar said. "I have not seen that. I have seen the opposite."

Despite the sewer board's procedures, county counsel noted, the math is the same and the sewer and water dis-

tricts could handle the new development.

"If you look at it, you can still build single family homes," Hansen said. "It's the timing of the sewer district letter that messed things up."

Krueger previously built the Edgewater at Mill Pond apartments in Uppertown and the Yacht Club Apartments at the northern end of the Old Youngs Bay Bridge.

Letters of support for the Bella Ridge Apartments came from Astoria Mayor Arline LaMear, Astoria School District Superintendent Craig Hoppes, Astoria-Warrenton Chamber of Commerce Executive Director Skip Hauke and Leahy.

In addition, the Oregon Department of Transportation and Clatsop County Public Works signed off on the work.

Krueger's lawyer, David Noren, said he expects Krueger to appeal the Planning Commission's decision to the Clatsop County Board of Commissioners.

Food carts: 'It's a really big convenience'

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"I've got quite a few regulars. Some come every day. I've got a couple that are here twice a day, breakfast and lunch. And then I have some that come two or three times a week," said Robert Ripley, who owns the cart with Cheryl Stoffelsen.

The code amendment would also apply to the North Coast Business Park and Warrenton's other industrial developments.

A while back, the Port of Astoria, which owns the airport, approached the city about private food cart vendors, including The Lunch Wagon.

The Planning Commission had a "lengthy and animated" discussion on the issue, according to Urling, but didn't take action. A motion to support the code amendment failed for lack of a second.

Some Planning Commission members feared that food carts would proliferate and degrade the aesthetics in the industrial zones.

They were also concerned that mobile food outlets not only offer few employment opportunities, but, with such low overhead, have an unfair

advantage over brick-and-mortar businesses that pay rent, mortgages and taxes.

In addition, several Planning Commission members "simply didn't like the emerging concept of mobile food vendors," Urling's staff report reads.

'Really big convenience'

City staff, however, supports the idea of food carts in industrial zones.

"These units are becoming more and more popular across the country" and benefit employees whose workplaces are too remote to allow them to patronize traditional restaurants, Urling wrote. "They also are especially popular with the millennial demographic which is a growing cohort of the population."

Gary Kobes, the Port of Astoria's airport manager, said, "It's a really big convenience, for the aviation community, to have food on the field."

He added that the presence of such vendors may gradually draw more attention to the area and increase revenue over the long run.

Paul Davis, Lektro's director of operations, said the

company's half-hour lunch breaks don't give employees enough time to leave the airport, grab a meal, drive back and eat.

Retired Coast Guard Capt. Dan Travers and Command Master Chief Karl Keyes said that having a food cart like The Lunch Wagon on-site improves operations and boosts morale for servicemembers.

The City Commission will hold a final reading on the code change at the next meeting.

City manager search

In other business, the City Commission passed a resolution declaring its intent to appoint a city manager.

The previous city manager, Kurt Fritsch, resigned in June after five years amid a controversy surrounding the Eighth Street Dam.

City Recorder Linda Engbretson was appointed interim city manager. Her salary is now \$95,000 per year — Fritsch's starting salary — retroactive to the day she stepped into the position.



Gary Kobes

The city charter outlines a four-month window to make the appointment.

"I'm not sure that we can appoint a new, permanent, full-time city manager in four months," Engbretson said, adding that the hiring procedure is highly involved and needs to be handled publicly so the community can weigh in.

In the meantime, commissioners also gave Engbretson the authority to preside over personnel matters, including the hiring of two new positions listed in the fiscal year budget: a sergeant for the Police Department and a full-time marina worker.

Dam: CREST was the source of \$1 million in federal money to finance the project

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"We can all make progress working together as partners for our shared community benefit," Scheller wrote.

Some at the water district have talked about turning the dam over to the city for \$1 to get rid of the liability. The city has not publicly expressed an interest in taking ownership of the dam, although, privately, Mayor Mark Kujala and others have discussed the possibility, along with whether the city already has a legal stake in ownership.

Kujala's family, who own property near the dam, and the Nygaard family, who own Warrenton Fiber, have urged the city to take control of the dam for flood control reasons, even though the water district insists the dam provides no demonstrated flood control.

"This is about discovery. We need to know exactly what has happened here," Kujala said before the City Commission voted 5-0 Tuesday night to authorize the outside legal review.

Kujala acknowledged his family's property interest near the dam before participating in the discussion Tuesday night. The mayor has recused himself from votes related to the dam in the past because of a conflict.

Contentious issue

The scope of work for the legal review describes what has become a contentious issue for the city, citing distrust with information that has been made public and uncertainty about other information that may be available.

Kurt Fritsch resigned as city manager in June after critics of the dam's removal claimed he withheld technical reviews on the dam. Fritsch had said the reviews were prepared for the Planning Commission, so it would have been inappropriate to share the information with the City Commission, which might have had to hear a land-use question on appeal.

Some residents warned the City Commission Tuesday night about the risk of flooding if the dam is not properly operated or removed, echoing informa-

tion that had been circulating privately by critics to influence the commission before Fritsch resigned.

Bert Little, who used to serve with the water district, said flooding issues would be reduced if the dam is operated properly. The water district made a policy choice to leave the tide gates open year-round in 2012 and removed the gates entirely last fall.

"With the doors up, all the properties will always be saturated with water," Little said. "That's just the way it is."

Built in 1963

The Eighth Street Dam was built by the federal government in 1963 for flood control. The water district took possession of the dam after the structure exceeded its 50-year life span.

An engineering plan adopted by the water district concludes that there is no increased risk of flooding if the dam is removed. A technical review by a city consultant, however, questions whether engineers for the water district accurately modeled the flood plain.

The City Commission twice voted for a \$1.2 million agreement with the water district and CREST that would have provided the city with a single-lane bridge over the river to replace a gravel road once the dam is removed.

The commission, under pressure from the Kujala and Nygaard families, voted 2-2 in May against renewing the agreement.

The water district and CREST decided to move forward with dam removal by the end of 2018 without providing the city with a bridge. The water district also barricaded the gravel road because of safety concerns.

CREST, however, has pulled out. The agency's participation was critical because it was the source of \$1 million in federal Bonneville Power Administration money to finance the project.

"Given everything that's been going on, we thought that it would be best if we backed out and allowed the city and the district to work things out," said Denise Lofman, CREST's director. "At this point, we're not involved at all."



Joshua Bessex/The Daily Astorian

The city has ordered a legal review into the Eighth Street Dam over the Skipanon River.

Tax plan: Critics say the measure takes no account of a corporation's profits

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It also found that the tax would act as a consumption tax, spiking prices for consumers by about \$613 per year for a household with median income of \$51,075.

Critics of the tax say the measure takes no account of a corporation's profits, taxing instead its gross receipts.

High volume, low-margin businesses, such as Powell's Books, might owe taxes exceeding their actual profits.

Supporters of the measure, backed by public employee unions, say the tax will primarily hit out-of-state corporations that they say don't pay their fair share. Proponents say the tax

will help support education, health care and senior services. However, nothing in the measure restricts the use of the revenue to those purposes, and lawmakers have wide latitude to alter the tax. Gov. Kate Brown already has proposed several fixes to help soften the blow of tax on certain businesses and industries.

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