

Planners: Opinions mixed about establishing a limitation zone in Astoria's Urban Core

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With consultant Matt Hastie providing ideas and suggestions, Tuesday's work session focused on form: What the city wants to allow in terms of the size and scale of new development versus what is allowed now. A work session in November will focus on what's inside of the buildings. A third work session will begin to establish what these buildings look like — the skin, said City Manager Brett Estes.

In general, the majority of planning commissioners were in favor of shorter buildings, greater space between new buildings and the Astoria Riverwalk, new buildings that feature setbacks and setbacks to open up views, as well as public piers alongside new buildings to give people access to the river.

There were mixed opinions about whether the city should establish a limitation zone in the Urban Core. The zone would prohibit any kind of development over the

water in lots that are already free, or mostly free, of development. Commissioner Daryl Moore was not in favor of this proposal, saying he would instead support a uniform set of codes to manage development of the over-water lots.

Several of the commissioners said they would prefer no new development over the water, but were not opposed to denser development on shore.

The Planning Commission found it to be tricky work as they juggled comments from the community with the guidance already laid out in the Riverfront Vision Plan.

"You have latitude," Estes said. "Actually, right now, you have the most latitude of any group. Ultimately the City Council is going to make the decision, but the City Council relies on you as the appointed representatives to do the heavy lifting and to do the interpretation, to make the connections. That, if there are areas you feel

should have reduced heights, that you make the connection and you state why."

Residents who spoke at the meeting continued to urge the Planning Commission to preserve the city's river views with careful, thoughtful development.

The Riverfront Vision Plan gives the commissioners some really conflicting guidelines, said Commissioner Jennifer Cameron-Lattek, who was in favor of a limitation zone and denser development on shore.

"It also, I think, gives us a realistic impression of what it is like to try to figure out what we want our city to be," she added. "We do have conflicting issues. We don't want things to change, but we want jobs and we want the kind of jobs we used to have, but we don't want the environmental impacts that come with that."

"I think it is realistic and it also gives us opportunities to make compromises."

The Urban Core in Astoria includes the riverfront from Second Street to 16th Street.

Colin Murphey/The Daily Astorian



Kitzhaber: 'Gillnets ... snare and kill the wild endangered salmon'

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feature people like Larry Cassidy, who has been president of the Northwest Steelheaders, a sport fishing group. He has testified in favor of the Kitzhaber plan to replace gillnets with seine nets and he questioned the results of studies on seine nets that concluded mortality rates were far higher than expected with the gear.

The website declares, "Gillnets are nonselective killers. Keep gillnets off the lower Columbia," with the words superimposed over a video loop showing salmon being fished with gillnets, suspended in nets, swimming freely and leaping up waterfalls.

"It's very important for Oregon and Washington to maintain this compromise that protects the wild salmon runs in the main stem of the Columbia River, while still allowing the use of gillnets in off-channel areas to harvest hatchery fish," Kitzhaber said in a statement.

"Gillnets are an indiscriminate tool for harvesting fish — they snare and kill the wild and

endangered salmon we are trying to protect, as well as other river wildlife."

Jim Wells, a gillnetter and president of the commercial fishing advocacy group, Salmon For All, isn't buying it.

Washington state has not managed to open a select area for gillnet fishermen or find a suitable alternative to gillnets. Overall, the commercial fishery saw a decrease in what fishermen got for their catch, noted a document prepared by staff to assist the Washington fish and wildlife commissioners in evaluating the policy at a meeting this month.

The expected large economic benefits from the policy shift have not materialized for commercial or recreational fishing. In fact, the recreational fisheries have only seen "marginal benefits" with changes to the percentage of salmon runs they are allocated. "The expectations in the development of the policy were not met," staff concluded.

Oregon and Washington agreed to begin the reform policy in 2013, but have diverged

at times in the years since the plan was adopted. Last year, Oregon considered allowing gillnetters time on the river, a direction contrary to the original plan to phase gillnets off the main stem by 2017.

Under pressure from Brown, the Oregon Fish and Wildlife Commission backed down. However, when the commission met in Clatsop County earlier this year, commissioners spoke in support of gillnetters. Last year, Oregon fishery staff reported similar findings about the economic success of the policy as Washington's fishery staff.

"We could see (the policy) wasn't performing as it was originally intended," said Tucker Jones, ocean salmon Columbia River program manager for the Oregon Department of Fish and Wildlife.

In response, the commission approved additional smolt releases to increase production in certain commercial fishing areas in the long term, among other measures.

The summary from Washington's fishery managers says

"the plan's not working," Wells said. "It's not working for the sport fishermen, it's not working for the commercial guys. ... The select (areas) aren't working, target gears aren't working."

"With all that," Wells concluded, "Kitzhaber can say what he wants."

Kitzhaber's stance on gillnetting came with a political price in Clatsop County. Kitzhaber had won the county in his three previous campaigns for governor, but narrowly lost during his re-election campaign in 2014.

Kitzhaber resigned in 2015 amid an ethics scandal involving his fiancée. He was replaced by Brown, who chose to continue with the reform policy.

Scammers: Elderly people are the most vulnerable to scams

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'Head game'

In December, a caller told an Astoria doctor that Circuit Court Judge Paula Brownhill had issued two warrants for his arrest after supposedly missing jury duty. To get rid of the warrants, the caller told the man to go to Rite Aid and put \$1,200 on two Green Dot cards.

The doctor said the scammer was convincing and seemed to know what he was talking about, according to a police report. The scammer, for example, provided the correct address to the sheriff's office in Warrenton, when the doctor thought the office was still in Astoria.

The doctor initially said he would find a way to transfer the money.

"When you get a panicked phone call from somebody whose credentials appear to match up with a so-called law enforcement agency, next thing you know they've got you in a panic and you're, maybe, not thinking as clearly as you would if you're not in an emotional state," Dersham said. Meanwhile, the scammer demanded that the doctor keep in contact every five to seven minutes.

"They don't want you having a conversation with somebody outside of that phone party because that's going to give an opportunity for clarity," Dersham said. "It's all a head game."

When calling back, the doctor asked the scammer to identify the county sheriff. The man gave the wrong name and hung up as the doctor questioned him further.

Minutes later, the scammer called back to identify Sheriff Tom Bergin, claiming that he was momentarily confused during the doctor's questioning. A sheriff's deputy later confirmed to the doctor that the calls were a fraud.

Elderly are vulnerable

Typically, elderly people are the most vulnerable to scams.

"If you grew up in an age where computers were a part of your world from the beginning, you're going to be much less susceptible to this kind of stuff," Dersham said. "They came from a generation where if somebody told you something, there was often a reason to believe it, and now we find ourselves in a much more skeptical culture out of necessity."

One of the more dangerous crimes to surface lately is online dating scams. Between December and July, victims lost more than \$300,000 on this hoax alone, Dersham said.

Scammers often pose as people looking for romantic relationships and build up trust with victims over a long period of time before inevitably "needing" large sums

of money for specific reasons such as an arrest.

"The scary ones are the ones where, once they've developed a relationship or a rapport with their victim and they're able to string it out over a number of months," Dersham said. "They believe it and they're not willing to give up on the dream, and they're losing money while doing it."

Investigating scams is becoming even more tricky as technological developments allow scammers to conceal their identities.

Software can be used to emit a fake phone number with a local area code — even with a local government agency's phone number. It allows scammers to call from anywhere in the world.

"Depending on when it is or where it is, it can be difficult to investigate," Astoria Police Deputy Chief Eric Halverson said. "Some of that stuff is happening outside the county, and dealing with that is difficult."

Scammers tend to guide victims toward prepaid debit cards found in grocery stores, such as Green Dot cards, for payment because information can be swiftly and easily erased once a money transfer is complete.

"This is becoming the currency of the criminal element," Dersham said. "It makes tracing the money extremely difficult."

Embarrassment

Due to embarrassment, victims can also be shy about reporting times they've been shammed.

"It's to the point that, when people call in, I take note of what scam was attempted," Dersham said. "I've triaged my cases to work on those with an actual financial loss or with traceable information."

Some scammers have been caught.

Police arrested Kesha Ivett Mena, 32, earlier this year in Florida after she allegedly stole tens of thousands of dollars from an elderly man in Clatsop County. Mark Raymond Oman, 33, of Long Beach, Washington, was indicted by the U.S. Department of Justice this year for his alleged role in a Costa Rica-based telemarketing scheme.

Even then, though, factors like witness memory and lack of concrete evidence can hamper prosecution.

"By the time you get to where you have a suspect in this and you have followed the money and you have pulled it out, it gets really complicated really fast," Dersham said.

If someone suspects they are being scammed, it's best to call the sheriff's office or police department before handing over money, Dersham said. Otherwise, "by the time it gets to my desk, it's too late."

Shelters: 'If we had the people power to continue it we would'

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When the shelter program ran all week, people were more likely to utilize the help because they wouldn't need to worry about losing a space outdoors or their belongings, said Pastor Dawna Svaren, the chairwoman for the nonprofit. Often, people brought everything they owned to the shelters.

The shelter program took multiple volunteers to coordi-

nate and to handle overnight shifts. Finding volunteers willing and able to make the time commitment was a challenge.

"We're trying to decide how can we use that volunteer power to help a greater population here," Svaren said. "If we had the people power to continue it we would."

About 17 percent of Pacific County's population lives below the poverty line, according to the Pacific County Economic Development Council.

Peninsula Poverty Response is working on creating a complete document of local resources by November. The nonprofit is also in the process of starting a newsletter titled "Hand in Hand."

"We've appreciated those who have offered their time, talent and financial support," Svaren said. "We hope to continue as partners with them to serve those experiencing homelessness and unstable living conditions."

JOAN HERMAN FOR ASTORIA CITY COUNCIL WARD 3



TELL ME YOUR CONCERNS & IDEAS

October

Tuesdays @ Blue Scorcher
1493 Duane 2-3pm

Thursdays (11th, 25th) @ Peter Pan Market
712 Niagara 5-6pm

Saturday 27th @ Street 14 Cafe
1410 Commercial 2-3pm

November
New Date

Friday 2nd @ Street 14 Cafe
1410 Commercial 2-3pm

Preserve Historic Astoria ♦ Support Local Business ♦ Advocate for Affordable Housing

VALUES VISION VITALITY

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