

Squabble: City staff accused of fast-tracking application to build 16,000-square-foot store

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Astoria residents — including Planning Commissioner Daryl Moore, Commissioner Cindy Price and Sarah Lu Heath, the executive director of the Astoria Downtown Historic District Association — asked the Astoria group for more information about who they are without success.

Responsible Growth Astoria has accused city staff of fast-tracking Grocery Outlet's application to build a one-story, 16,000-square-foot store on property between 21st Street and 23rd Street off Marine Drive.

The discount grocery, an outright permitted use for the property, would be next door to the Mill Pond neighborhood and a new Astoria Co+op store set to open later this year.

The city went through the required public notifications to alert people to the Grocery Outlet project and Thursday's public hearing in front of the Design Review Committee. Letters from people expressing their concerns about the new store — along with Grocery Outlet's application and a staff report recommending approval of the project — were included in a packet staff prepared ahead of Thursday's hearing.

Responsible Growth Astoria lists traffic, pollution and impacts to other small businesses among its concerns. The group has posted information from the staff report and encouraged people to attend the public hearing.

Unlike other advocacy groups on the North Coast, such as Indivisible North Coast or Friends of the Astoria Waterfront, Responsible Growth Astoria has declined to identify a spokesperson. When The Astorian asked to interview one of the organizers last week and talk in more detail about the group's concerns, a reporter was told the people best poised to talk about the group were on vacation.

A response from Responsible Growth Astoria via Facebook Messenger expressed the hope that the group's concerns about Grocery Outlet would be the focus of any reporting, not the identity of the group.

In response to further questions from The Astorian on Tuesday, a man named "Ken J.," who said he manages the Responsible Growth Astoria Facebook page, said the Astoria and Lake Stevens groups are not linked.

Perhaps when the Astoria page was started "they looked for examples and borrowed from other sources on Facebook with similar issues — perhaps too liberally from the looks of it," the man wrote in an email.

Others have also tried to identify the organizers.

"Please identify yourselves so we don't assume you are a professional PR company hired to sow discontent over the proposed use," Moore wrote in a comment on one of Responsible Growth Astoria's posts this week. "Astoria doesn't need outside agencies stirring up controversy. We are capable of that on our own."

Moore said in an interview that he does not have any trouble with someone objecting to a business like Grocery Outlet. But he has observed the rapid expansion of Grocery Outlet across the country, as well as the organized opposition that usually follows. Though there are concerns in the community about the project, he doubts a local person is behind Responsible Growth Astoria.

Moore has interacted with a number of local, organized groups during his time on the Planning Commission. The people show up to meetings, state their names and addresses and give testimony or present petitions, he said.

"They're happy to put

Growing Astoria Responsibly

RESPONSIBLE GROWTH ASTORIA • WEDNESDAY, JULY 17, 2019

We are Astoria residents, neighbors and merchants who love our community. With thoughtful planning and responsible growth, our town can thrive while still maintaining that special character and charm that makes Astoria such a special place to live.

And that is why we are concerned for the future of our town. The City is looking to approve a number of developments that are simply not in keeping with the character of our community.

Responsible Growth Palmdale

RESPONSIBLE GROWTH PALMDALE • FRIDAY, JUNE 14, 2019

We are Palmdale residents, neighbors and merchants who love our city and want to see it grow responsibly so that it will flourish for future generations. That is why we are opposed to the proposed "The Strata" mixed-use development at the corner of 15th Street West and Rancho Vista Blvd., across from the busy Antelope Valley Mall. Plans call for cramming high traffic generating commercial and high-density housing into a smaller parcel that includes a big box grocery store, retail, 4 restaurants with a drive thru, 308 apartment homes, and 36 townhomes. This is simply irresponsible growth that will generate significant new traffic and negative impacts on the surrounding neighborhoods and streets.

Join the Fight to Grow Lake Stevens Responsibly

RESPONSIBLE GROWTH LAKE STEVENS • MONDAY, JULY 1, 2019

We are Lake Stevens residents, neighbors and merchants who love our community. With thoughtful planning and responsible growth, our town can thrive while still maintaining that special character and charm that makes Lake Stevens such a special place to live. And that is why we are so concerned for the future of our town- now more than ever. The City is looking to approve a number of large-scale, commercial and housing developments throughout our community.

Facebook

their name on something they believe in and I fully support that," he said. "But when an anonymous person tells me what's best for my town, I generally don't take that well."

Moore's Facebook comments were later removed and he can no longer comment on Responsible Growth

Astoria's posts.

Later, Responsible Growth Astoria wrote in a different post, "Thank you for your support in helping us grow this page and in giving a voice to hundreds who live here who simply do not like the direction our community and growth is going." "And for the online trolls

and bullies out there trying to goad us into publicly listing everyone who supports the page and who has concerns about this project," the post continues, "we respect privacy and aren't about to create a list of people for you or the city or the developer to harass simply for speaking out."

Johnson: Forecasted an increase in voter registration among nonaffiliated voters

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Johnson, a skeptic of the bill, was temporarily removed from her post on the Joint Committee on Ways and Means just before a key vote. The senator said she would have voted "no" had she been able.

While deferring to experts on the science of climate change, Johnson said her main issue was with how the money from the tax generated from carbon offsets would have been spent.

House Bill 3063 would have ended nonmedical exemptions for school vaccination requirements. Democrats killed the bill, along with another dealing with enhanced gun laws, to end the first walkout by Senate Republicans. A second walkout was triggered by cap and trade.

Opposition to the vaccination bill brought together

a unique coalition, from members of the Russian Orthodox Church to liberal Democrats concerned with choice, Johnson said.

"Up to that point, I had never seen a group organize so organically, so quickly," she said. "And by organically, I mean they weren't urged to action by some outside third-party actors. They contacted each other and came to the Capitol with passionate pleas to oppose that bill."

Johnson forecasted a rise in voter registration among nonaffiliated voters, who already make up around 40 percent of the electorate statewide.

"My guess is that people at the national level, as well as at the state level, have had partisan politics up to here, and they are interested in seeing the state move forward with an Oregon agenda," she said.

Planners: Will take part in a series of interviews this week

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City Council approved an increase to the job's salary range at the recommendation of a recruitment agency the city hired to find applicants.

Several issues have complicated the search, Estes said. How much money the city could offer was one matter, but he noted the city is also trying to hire at a time when the economy is strong and planners with the necessary experience are scarce.

Other candidates might have a spouse or partner who struggles to find suitable employment on the North Coast.

Placido and Spencer will participate in a series of interviews with department staff, an interview committee and Estes this week.

"I would like to be able to have a direction and be moving forward before the end of the week and initiate background checks before the end of the week or the beginning of next week," Estes said.

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Q: How to share a web page with a friend.
A: With the Edge browser load the page you want to share. In the top right corner, click on the arrow pointing to the right. Choose the way you want to share the page, via email, phone, Twitter, etc.
With Firefox, load the page, then click the 3 horizontal dots in the address bar. Then click "Email" to share the page.

Q: What are dental sealants, who should get them and how long do they last?
A: Dental sealants are a clear coating placed in the deep grooves of teeth, protecting them from food and bacteria that can be hard to remove with brushing. We recommend having your child's permanent molars sealed as soon as they are fully erupted. You can expect sealants to last upwards of 10-15 years and are a safe, inexpensive way to help ensure your child's oral health. Call us today to make your appointment.

Q: What is the best way to get results from my limited advertising dollar?
A: The combination of a print and online audience is recession proof. We have an excellent print and online special for this time of year. Give your sales representative a call today to hear more about it!

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