



Edward Stratton/The Astorian

Astoria has approved changes to Bridge Vista, which guides development along the Columbia River in Uniontown.

Bridge Vista: ‘The city is unilaterally imposing its will on the Port with the imposition of the view corridors’

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“We were elected to oversee its management,” Rohne said, reading an email he wrote to City Councilor Roger Rocka. “The city is unilaterally imposing its will on the Port with the imposition of the view corridors. It was with complete disregard to the elected Port board that the City Council does this.”

Jim Knight, who resigned in June as the Port’s executive director, had pushed for the plan districts. He said it was preordained that the City Council wanted more

restrictions to protect views, and that the city has yet to look at the economic impact of not allowing property to be developed to its full potential.

While city councilors were open to collaborating with the Port Commission, a majority did not support delaying Bridge Vista amendments over the view corridors. Councilor Joan Herman and Councilor Jesamyn West noted that the business owners appealing for view corridors were not at Monday’s meeting to plead their case.

Councilors accepted the conclusion of Rosemary Johnson, a city planning

consultant, that the view corridors would not reduce the square footage that can be built on the affected properties, but slightly shift building placement to the west. They also noted the flexibility the plan districts give the Port to potentially bypass some development restrictions.

“We have tried to accommodate as best we can the need for Port development and industrial development,” Rocka said. “People keep talking about the value of a working waterfront, and I agree with that. But what is a working waterfront? It’s not hotels.”

Downtown: Public hearing open until Nov. 26

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The proposed building height restrictions include 28 feet over water, meaning the 39-room Bowline Hotel could be able to add a second story. Buildings could also rise to 35 feet over water for water-dependent uses, or with narrower widths higher up.

Property owners like Steve Fick, who owns a seafood-processing pier and a historic brick building he’s turning into a distillery at the foot of Fourth Street, had complained that the proposed code changes were too restrictive. Fick has pushed for flexibility and chafed at the notion he would not be able to use his buildings for things like hotels, while Bowline is under construction only a couple of blocks east.

Fick and Stephen Allen, a local accountant who owns five properties along the waterfront between 10th and 12th streets, asked Tuesday whether the city had looked at the economic impact of proposed restrictions.

“I hope you have given careful consideration to what this will do to all of us businesspeople who love this community and over the years have put a lot of time and effort into our proper-

ties,” Allen said.

After receiving a letter from the Astoria Downtown Historic District Association calling for flexibility, planning commissioners decided medical practices and other professional offices should also be allowed over water, whether in existing or new buildings. Such offices would bring higher-paying jobs downtown than hotels, Cameron-Latteck said.

The proposed development codes would preserve an 80-foot-wide swath of land along the Astoria Riverwalk and a 70-foot view corridor along streets. Planning commissioners agreed that buildings should be able to rise to 35 feet on land within 100 feet of the Riverwalk corridor. They dismissed a recommendation for setbacks on higher stories, arguing the 35-foot height limit achieved the

same desired outcome.

They agreed that farther inland, buildings should be allowed to 45 feet outright, essentially nixing a recommendation that affordable housing should be required in new buildings rising to four stories.

“I don’t think we should be talking about affordable housing in the most expensive property in Astoria under these circumstances,” Commissioner Cindy Price said.

With the amount of changes from what was originally recommended, the Planning Commission left the public hearing on the proposed Urban Core development rules open until Nov. 26.

Commissioners could then kick the recommendations up to the City Council, which could hold hearings in December and adopt the codes by next year.

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