

Charges: City would work with consultant

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He said examples of projects that could benefit from system development charges are adding storm drainage infrastructure where there isn't any, wastewater treatment plant improvements and projects included in the city's transportation system plan.

While the consultant and City Council would work together to determine the fee structure, Crater included examples from Warrenton and Seaside and other cities throughout the state.

Interim City Manager Paul Benoit said that if the City Council decides to move forward, the city will do a cost analysis to show the costs of doing business in Astoria.

"It's council's prerogative to set where those fees are — it's not fixed," he said. "So if you find you want to be more competitive — meaning cheaper — with other communities, you could set the fees accordingly. But I think as part of this, we would bring that information to you."

The City Council will review a contract in the com-



Lydia Ely/The Astorian

System development charges could help Astoria finance infrastructure improvements.

ing weeks with FCS Group, a consulting company that has assisted the city with utility rate studies in the past.

The subject of system development charges came before the City Council in early 2020, but Mayor Bruce Jones said the city did not have the chance to move forward as it was overcome by issues related to the coronavirus pandemic.

"I think at the time, two years ago, there was pretty broad council support and understanding that we seem to be the only municipality in Oregon that doesn't use SDCs," Jones said.

City Councilor Tom Hilton said he thinks people in

Astoria would want the council to move forward.

"The citizens that currently exist here or have been here for a while ... I think they're fed up of subsidizing new businesses coming in that demand greater amounts of water," he said.

"And then we have wastewater treatment issues. We have demand issues. We have water pressure issues. And in all fairness, cost of business is the cost of business. You want to come here, it's going to cost you. But we shouldn't be making our residents pay for new development that is going to demand upon the existing system."

City Councilor Joan Her-

man added that many of the old buildings in the city will likely be replaced at some point.

"And as much as I would like to see all of them restored, those without obvious historic value are probably going to be torn down, some of them, and replaced with new buildings," she said. "And some of those old buildings, even if they are restored, are going to require significant expense to restore them. So I do think it makes sense moving forward."

Herman also suggested looking into an exemption for affordable housing development.

During the work session, David Reid, the executive director of the Astoria-Warrenton Area Chamber of Commerce, said once the program is developed, he hopes the city will let contractors know upfront what the cost would be.

"Because one of the things that I hear about working in Astoria is that, 'We don't know until we get into the project, sometimes pretty far into the project, what our costs are going to be,'" he said.

Holen: 'A really intelligent dog with a good disposition — they can be your partners'

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Society, which since last year has worked to restore gardens at the Victorian-era property on Exchange Street. The project could use more volunteers and gardeners, as well as donations, she said.

Holen and her husband, Jim, moved to Astoria about 13 years ago when their son Chis and his wife, Jennifer, were raising a new baby while running two restaurants.

Friday is National Dog Day. In years past, Holen spent it promoting the Pet Partners program, which certifies dogs and their handlers for animal-based therapy.

Before the coronavirus pandemic led to her early retirement, Maisie, the last of Holen's five border collies, visited patients at Columbia Memorial Hospital and Providence Seaside Hospital. At Columbia Memorial's cancer center, Maisie spent time with people undergoing chemotherapy. At times, children of parents who had just died sat on the floor and held Maisie until the moment of overwhelming grief passed, Holen recalled.

At Clatsop Community College, Maisie hung out with students stressed and exhausted from exams. For a few years, children read to Maisie at the Astoria Library's "Read to a Therapy Dog."

"A really intelligent dog with a good disposition — they can be your partners," Holen said. "You really bond with them. And my dogs have gotten me through a lot in the past."

Over the course of their marriage, she and Jim have

also owned a collie, a Boston terrier, a cocker spaniel and a couple of basset hounds. A miniature Australian shepherd named Persei keeps Maisie company these days.

Holen's first dog disappeared during the 1964 Alaska earthquake.

She remembers her family evacuating their house in Anchorage. Tanana, their smooth-coat collie mix, went with them. "And we just never found her ... Hopefully somebody else found her and took care of her," she said.

Holen said her first border collie, Sophie, saved Jim and their son Davin from a grizzly bear that charged at them during a camping trip. The dog stepped between guys and grizzly and told off the beast, she said.

Later, when Holen was on a ski trail, Sophie suddenly knocked her down. At the bottom of the rise ahead was a moose and her calf, Holen recalled. Had Sophie not intervened, she is certain the cow would have trampled her.

She has heard people ask dismissively, "What's the purpose of a dog?"

"You listen to that B.S., and you think about the dogs that work with the police, and the military, and the (airports), and the dogs that save the lives of children who wander off, and the elderly who wander off, or people who get caught in the snow in an avalanche ... " Holen said. "I mean, they are amazing. Dogs are amazing."



Housing: 'We still are going to be in short supply'

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Renewal District and that he has had discussions with Davis about the project.

He said that if the city were to engage with the project, it would need a lot more information. However, he added that infrastructure upgrades are the bread and butter of urban renewal projects.

"It's the case probably with all of you. I moved to Astoria 1982 and the State Hotel, as we called it, was empty and blighted then," Benoit said. "And it's in the same condition, probably a little worse, today."

"Given the council's goals for affordable housing, given the fact that this is such a long-standing blighted building that could be refurbished, I couldn't imagine that this council or a future council wouldn't have interest in being a participant at a reasonable level depending on what the resources are and what the needs are."

The City Council unanimously supported exploring how the city could support the project.

"The opportunity to have people living there as members of our community, as opposed to becoming, for example, short-term rentals — yeah, it's a tremendous opportunity," Mayor Bruce Jones said.

'Gun-shy'

Unlike the workforce housing proposal the city considered and rejected at Heritage Square, a city-owned property downtown, Copeland Commons is not subject to a public process.

The property is located in the city's central commercial zone, which allows multifamily dwellings as an outright permitted use, so the project would not need to go before the Planning Commission or other city boards for review.

"I guess I'm still a little gun-shy from the Heritage Square process," City Councilor Tom Brownson said. "Once again, if people stood up and said, 'Well, we just don't want low-income people living in our downtown and so we're going to show up and we're going to put up a fight where the city has an opportunity to shut it down.'

You know, how are we going to respond to that?"

"We need the housing, it's another opportunity, and we should do everything we can to help them. So if it doesn't have to come in front of the council that just makes it better as far as I'm concerned."

City Councilor Tom Hilton noted the property was traditionally used as housing.

"If our citizens do object to this, then they're kind of ruthless because this is an organization who's taking incentive to improve something," he said.

"I think they know what they're getting into. They saw what happened over here. And I support it."

City Councilor Joan Herman said she is excited about the project, especially the potential involvement of Innovative Housing.

"Because they did a beautiful job restoring what had been a very, very decrepit building — the Merwyn — into a very livable space for a number of people who could not afford to live elsewhere," she said. "So we need to move forward with doing whatever

we can to bring affordable housing to Astoria.

"Even with this building, even with the Owens-Adair, we still are going to be in short supply. So we can't be looking back and worrying about what might happen as far as public outcry goes. We just need to move forward with this very positive project. So I for one would support dedicating some urban renewal dollars toward the project."

City Councilor Roger Rocka echoed Benoit's comments.

"And that is that this project really has appropriate use of (urban renewal) funds written all red in bright neon," he said. "So I certainly support it as well."

Tour: Oregon Black Pioneers received grant

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staffing, increased fundraising and partnerships allowed the organization to bring back the popular program.

The tour includes learning about Moses Williams, an ordnance sergeant and Medal of Honor recipient at Fort Stevens, as well as York, the only Black member of the Lewis and Clark Expedition, at Fort Clatsop and jazz clubs in Seaside.

"I'm happy that we can create opportunities for people to come together and celebrate our diverse heritage and to do it in a way that also highlights the great history and attractions of the North Oregon Coast," Stocks said.

His familiarity with the North Coast made it easier for him to identify stops for the tour.

"This is sort of like my backyard," Stocks said. "You know, I always enjoy the opportunity to do programming through Oregon Black Pioneers close to home, so that I can celebrate a lot of the great stories of the place that I live."

The tour will visit the North Coast for the first time because of a grant Oregon Black Pioneers received from the Oregon Coast Visitors Association.

Arica Sears, the deputy director of the visitors association, said in a statement that part of the mission is to broaden visitors' understanding of the coast and make their stays more meaningful.

"We were delighted by the opportunity to partner



A painting of York, the only Black member of the Lewis and Clark Expedition.

BLACK HISTORY BUS TOUR

The Oregon Black Pioneers will host a bus tour on Sept. 18 with stops on the North Coast.

For more information online, go to: oregonblackpioneers.org

with Oregon Black Pioneers so that we may amplify their work sharing often-underrepresented Black history by way of a tour itinerary that will be enduringly valuable to future visitors and locals alike," she said.

Stocks said Oregon Black Pioneers tries to emphasize that Black history is everywhere in Oregon, not just in Portland. The tour allows the

nonprofit to share the stories of the African American experience at the sites where they happened.

"So the ability to bring people out of the Portland metro and into those places that maybe they've never been before or probably have never been to while looking for Black history before is really core to our mission," he said.

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