

Session 12-03, a Regular Meeting of the Economic Development Advisory Commission was called to order at 6:00 p.m. by Chair Sarno on March 13, 2012 at the City Hall Cowles Council Chambers located at 491 E. Pioneer Avenue, Homer, Alaska.

PRESENT: COMMISSIONERS: FAULKNER, NEECE, SARNO, WAGNER

COUNCILMEMBER: WYTHER (absent)

STUDENT: DAVIS

STAFF: COMMUNITY AND ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT COORDINATOR
KOESTER
CITY CLERK JOHNSON
CITY PLANNER ABOUD
PORT AND HARBOR DIRECTOR HAWKINS

APPROVAL OF THE AGENDA

FAULKNER/NEECE – MOVED TO APPROVE THE AGENDA AS PRESENTED.

There was no discussion.

VOTE: YES. NON OBJECTION. UNANIMOUS CONSENT.

Motion carried.

PUBLIC COMMENT REGARDING ITEMS ON THE AGENDA

None.

RECONSIDERATION

APPROVAL OF MINUTES

A. February 14, 2012 Regular Meeting Minutes

FAULKNER/NEECE – MOVED TO APPROVE THE MINUTES AS PRESENTED.

There was no discussion.

VOTE: YES. NON OBJECTION. UNANIMOUS CONSENT.

Motion carried.

VISITORS

A. Kate Mitchell with the Marine Trades Association

Kate Mitchell, Marine Trades Association, reported the group originally started in 1994 as a committee and is now named the Marine Trades Association. They currently have 60 members. The Marine Trades Association plans include promoting and encouraging Homer's marine industries with no fish politics. When the association is more organized they will speak for harbor infrastructure improvements and all things that allow businesses to grow.

The association wants to promote Homer to bring more business to town by bringing more boats into the harbor. They have formed a website: homermarinetrades.com. In November they attended Fish Expo in partnership with the City of Homer Harbor. There are other shows they may consider: a show in Kodiak and the Sportsman's Show in Soldotna. Goals for 2012 include: establishing bylaws, membership levels, and fees. The association has three advertising contracts and will network to build business as a whole.

The State of Alaska is working on a survey for the marine industry and will solicit responses from everyone in the marine industry.

The Marine Trades Association will encourage people to get their boats worked on in Homer. The economic impact of the marine trades will be substantial in comparison to the tourism industry. Kenny and Snooks Moore put in the boatyard shop which houses up to 75 ton boats. The boat repair industry supports well-paying jobs. People come here to get their boats rewired and for other mechanical issues.

As the community grows the infrastructure needs to increase. The association is considering an option for bigger boat haul out, possibly on the old chip pile site. It would be a place to haul a boat out and allow the workmen to come to work on a boat at that location. Local marine trades people can work on the boats, get the work done, and get the boat back in the water. The association is looking at the aspects of hauling boats out safely and renting work space on the Spit.

Port and Harbor Director Hawkins reported there are two projects created for the Capital Improvement Plan: large vessel marine haul-out and a barge mooring facility in the vicinity of Pier One Theatre. The barge mooring facility would have a series of pilings that extend out into the bay with deadmen on the beach and a stern anchor or dolphin system heavily built for mooring four vessels on the pilings. At Northern Enterprises they have the ability to move vessels up to 70 ton, but the majority of the fleet has to go somewhere else to have work done. If we can find a way to get large vessels up on the chip pad it would be a market that is untapped. The market would be for the tugs and barges serving Western Alaska. We are looking for a place to store barges during the winter and a means of hauling them out to do work for inspections. An idea is using 30-ft. long air bags that can maneuver boats in and out of water. To look at permitting, letters were sent out to industries. It would provide another revenue stream for the harbor. If there is support of a barge haul out we will be looking at fast tracking it and it could be funded locally. We may ask the City Council to fund it and pay back the costs with the harbor enterprise fund.

STAFF & COUNCIL REPORT/COMMITTEE REPORTS/ BOROUGH REPORTS

- A. Staff report from February 14th meeting: Marine Trades Expo, BizIDEA Contest and Natural Gas distribution system funding possibilities.

Community and Economic Development Coordinator Koester summarized the staff report.

Marine Trades Expo: This is the Seafair that the marine trades business people are no longer doing. They have thought about doing something more focused to the marine trades industry. The Marine Trades Association is still exploring the possibilities. Carrie Couey of the Kenai Peninsula Economic Development District has expressed an interest in partnering with the City in some type of business day.

BizIDEA Contest: Library holds this contest every other year awarding a good business idea seed money. The contest will be this year in the fall or winter.

Natural Gas

Distribution System: Council is working through how they will fund the natural gas system and whether it will be the core area of town or the entire city. Council has a couple ordinances regarding the natural gas system.

As to implementing the Comprehensive Economic Development Strategy (CEDs), City Manager Wrede suggested bringing it to Council to ask for direction and to get their support. The City Council expressed an interest in a joint worksession with EDC.

Commissioner Neece related he won the BizIDEA last year. There was not much follow-up. He was told The Homer Foundation would be the next step and applied to the foundation and was handed the packet right back without them even looking at it. He has been working with Senator Stevens and Representative Seaton on his film school idea for some time and now has the Legislature behind it. For this year's BizIDEA it is important that The Homer Foundation get behind the presenter's idea. The Foundation is funded by the City.

Commissioner Faulkner reported he attended the last gas line committee working group. The EDC should weigh in on it at the next meeting to see where the City is considering going. His testimony to Council was to Think Big. They were looking at funding the core with a grocery tax, while the rest of town would need to pay for the more expensive areas to develop. You don't have to do the whole town, you just need to get the trunk line up West Hill, up Skyline, and down East Hill and out to East Road. The gas line is one of the biggest economic development ideas for Homer. It will lessen carbon emissions more than anything.

FAULKNER/WAGNER - MOVED THAT EDC TAKE UP THE GAS LINE.

Different mechanisms of funding for the gas line are being explored. Costs are expected to be \$6M to \$12M. The core area contains about 2,500 people, with half the land tax exempt. There is discussion of spending the extra money to get it up and around the entire city. Every subdivision could have a Local Improvement District. Funding may come through the Legislature. A plan is need prior to when the Legislature session ends.

VOTE: YES. NON OBJECTION. UNANIMOUS CONSENT.

Motion carried.

Commissioner Neece's last meeting will be in April. He will then be gone for four months, but would like to rejoin the commission in August.

Commissioner Faulkner has convinced another person to apply for the EDC.

PUBLIC HEARING

PENDING BUSINESS

A. Sign Code: Temporary Commercial Signs

City Planner Abboud related the City Council referred the sign ordinance back to the Planning Commission and asked that the EDC look at the sign code, specifically temporary commercial signs. The Planning Commission reviewed the sign code again and voted that a permit was needed for the temporary commercial signs with a 14-day limitation. The permit could include when they are displaying the sign within a 90-day period. He asked that the EDC weigh in on the temporary commercial signs and make a recommendation to Council.

Commissioner Faulkner asked if there was a 90 day period defined on a quarterly fashion.

City Planner Abboud answered the requestor could prescribe the 90-day period when applying for the permit. The temporary sign would be one sign per lot.

Commissioner Faulkner noted it liberalizes temporary signage a little during the prime tourist season, and makes enforcement easier. There could be a quarterly time, such as taxes are computed.

Commissioner Wagner pointed out the need to select the dates and display them on the permit. He asked if there was any way to enforce the regulation.

City Planner Abboud answered he would dedicate staff time for enforcement.

Commissioner Faulkner had talked with the sandwich board sign people and had his ear chewed off with City Council meddling in sandwich board signs. He determined the sandwich board signs might not be so bad.

Commissioner Wagner prefers to keep it simple to enforce the rule.

Chair Sarnos would like to abide by the quarterly method, keeping it simple. It could be self-enforcing.

Other cities are all over the board with no regulations in Soldotna. A lot of towns are designed better for temporary signs. Here every sign is unique since right-of-way is not standardized any way throughout the town.

Commissioner Neece commented Homer is an artist's community. Some consideration must be given for the temporary signs. In some areas they look really good and work.

It was suggested a prominent sticker be displayed with the permitted dates posted.

Chair Sarnos asked that the policy be a simple one page rule and be self-enforcing. We could follow how it makes it through the summer.

FAULKNER/NEECE - MOVED THAT THE 90-DAY PERIOD FOR TEMPORARY SIGNS SHALL BE CONSIDERED QUARTERLY AS DEFINED BY KBP TAX QUARTERS SO YOU COULD HAVE 14 DAYS WITHIN ANY QUARTER WHICH LIBERIZES THIS SOMEWHAT DURING THE SUMMER SEASON.

There was no additional discussion.

VOTE: YES. NON OBJECTION. UNANIMOUS CONSENT.

Motion carried.

NEW BUSINESS

A. Election of Vice Chair

WAGNER – MOVED TO NOMINATE BRAD AS VICE CHAIR.

Commissioner Faulkner declined the nomination as he does not wish to serve on the commission that long.

FAULKNER/NEECE – MOVED TO NOMINATE NEIL AS VICE CHAIR.

There was no discussion.

VOTE: YES. NON OBJECTION. UNANIMOUS CONSENT.

Motion carried.

B. 2012 Land Allocation Plan

Commissioner Faulkner declared a conflict of interest with his lease on Spit property and furnished the commission with an overview of some leased properties and encouraged the commissioners to read some leases.

The commission commented on possible community garden areas at the Old Intermediate School, Town Center, and Old Library land.

The commission had no recommendations on the Land Allocation Plan for Council.

INFORMATIONAL ITEMS

A. City Manager's Report, March 12, 2012

Commissioner Wagner commented on the customer charges for multi-family dwellings. About a third of the people in Alaska rent and rate increases are harder on the lower income people. We have to make everything pay, yet there is no incentive to use less. Bulk water users are charged way less.

COMMENTS OF THE AUDIENCE

Bumppo Bremicker, city resident, commented the Boys and Girls Club doesn't use the \$100,000 in energy costs for the building, but they are hoping to pay for their portion. He mentioned the corner lot of Fish Dock and Spit Road as a boat haul out site. It is a good thing for the fishing industry to have as many processors as possible. He asked if there were areas for fish processors the City could lease land to.

COMMENTS OF THE CITY STAFF

Katie Koester passed around a handout on the harbor improvement projects and the project Port and Harbor Director Hawkins mentioned. She will not be attending the next meeting unless she is way overdue.

COMMENTS OF THE COUNCILMEMBER

Councilmember Wythe was not present.

COMMENTS OF THE CHAIR

Chair Sarno thanked Katie for her work and specifically for the follow-up on BizIdeas. Good ideas can be brought to fruition. She asked the commission to consider new members.

COMMENTS OF THE COMMISSION

Commissioner Faulkner told Chair Sarno she did a nice job running her first meeting and congratulated Neil on being Vice Chair.

Commissioner Neese commented his last meeting is April and then he will be gone for four months. He can't renew his chair until August.

Commissioner Wagner told Chair Sarno she was doing a great job as Chair and said goodbye to Commissioner Neese.

Student Representative Davis commented she is learning so much being on this commission.

ADJOURNMENT

There being no further business to come before the Commission, Chair Sarno adjourned the meeting at 8:19 p.m. The next Regular Meeting is scheduled for Tuesday, April 10, 2012 at 6:00 p.m. in the City Hall Cowles Council Chambers located at 491 E. Pioneer Ave, Homer, Alaska.

JO JOHNSON, CMC, CITY CLERK

Approved: _____