

Session 12-04, a Regular Meeting of the Economic Development Advisory Commission was called to order at 6:00 p.m. by Chair Sarno on April 10, 2012 at the City Hall Cowles Council Chambers located at 491 E. Pioneer Avenue, Homer, Alaska.

PRESENT: COMMISSIONER FAULKNER, SARNO, SCHMITT, WAGNER
COUNCILMEMBER: WYTHE
STUDENT: DAVIS
STAFF: COMMUNITY AND ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT COORDINATOR KOESTER
DEPUTY CITY CLERK JACOBSEN

APPROVAL OF THE AGENDA

The agenda was approved by consensus of the Commission.

PUBLIC COMMENTS REGARDING ITEMS ON THE AGENDA

There were no public comments.

RECONSIDERATION

There were no items for reconsideration.

APPROVAL OF MINUTES

A. April 10, 2012 Regular Meeting Minutes

The minutes were approved by consensus of the Commission

VISITORS

A. Hans Rinke, Area Forester, State of Alaska Division of Forestry - Fire Safety

Judy Reese, Stewardship Forester with the State of Alaska Division of Forestry, presented to the Commission regarding fire safety, challenges going into this fire season, and programs that are underway in the state. She emphasized that fire safety is a concern peninsula wide as the available resources are shared throughout the peninsula. We are not coming into this season in a drought situation which is good as it keeps fires on the surface, takes less work and water to extinguish, and a better chance to catch them. She provided information to link to a pod cast in which National Weather Service in Alaska gives an outlook for this year in relation to El Nino, El Nina, the polar oscillation, jet stream, and an educated approach to fire prediction. Another resource put out weekly by the inter-agency coordination center in Fairbanks that gives an outlook for statewide fire risk. NOAA provides large scale trends nationally, and we are seeing below normal temperatures and normal moisture predicted for Alaska this season. She reviewed the resources available for our area as far as equipment, personnel, and education. Homeowner responsibility is an ever growing program relative to Firewise and having our communities accept part of the risk and mitigation for fire safety. Ms.

ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT ADVISORY COMMISSION
REGULAR MEETING
APRIL 10, 2012

Reese explained one of the biggest challenges is fuel loading, as the grass grows and isn't harvested, grazed, or relinquished for product it accumulates in density and depth and becomes one of the biggest threats to the community and firefighters. Mowing and grazing are the best plans of action but they hope some innovative bio-fuel technology will come to light. They face challenges with retention of firefighters after they are trained so there are always opportunities for people who are interested in becoming a firefighter. Regarding the forestry program, commercial mills are falling by the wayside and firewood is taking that place as we become more aware of fuel wood and energy cost. It is a program that needs to be developed and synchronized with the community need. It is important for the Commission and Council to consider that firewood is a resource for the future and what to do about it as a community and land management. The Division of Forestry is working closely with the Alaska Energy Authority to assess bio-fuel potential as proposals come forward. They are always looking for new insects an invasive species. Regarding stewardship, she works with several different agencies in bringing programs to the community. She noted poor access is a challenge as it limits availability to fire wood on public lands. She thinks more information will be coming forward. She noted that there hasn't been anyone on the peninsula asking for wood in a commercial way other than small local mills. Fire wood will be a growing concern and she encouraged the group to consider where they want to go as a community in planning, and where to save money mitigating fuel costs with wood energy. Ms. Reese spoke of the Tok school project and suggested that while we may not have enough wood products to heat a school, there may be enough to heat a public building. Regarding fire risk, we need to continue to be vigilant about access, egress, public safety, emergency planning, and keeping our schools and EOC's safe from wild land fire.

The Commissioner's talked about different programs with Ms. Reese and thanked her for her information.

Representative Seaton commented briefly to the Commission regarding the gas line proposal and encouraged the Commission to think ahead for the city's sake for savings for things like ice production at the harbor, the ice rink, and other places that could benefit. He has been talking to local installers and hopes to have informational forums for people to become more aware of the possibilities for transitioning to natural gas. He suggested the EDC would be a good group to be involved with the forums. Representative Seaton commented that the State funded a wood fired boiler for Port Graham, and indicated that if the city develops a proposal for a facility to look at the renewable energy grants as it is what funded the Port Graham boiler. Lastly he commented regarding tidal energy and encouraged that the city, HEA, and others can develop a tidal incubator process, he thinks that is something that would fit well into the renewable energies grant. There is a project going on in Nikiski, but it has is challenges with being off shore, silt conditions, difficulty in monitoring and seeing fish interactions. He thinks the Deep Water Dock would be a good location.

The Commissioner's commented regarding the tidal energy information and thanked Representative Seaton for his report.

STAFF AND COUNCIL REPORT

There were no staff or council reports.

PUBLIC HEARING

PENDING BUSINESS

NEW BUSINESS

A. Port and Harbor Improvement Projects

The Commission recognized that the projects proposed in the draft resolution are all necessary projects. There was discussion that the Port and Harbor Committee is the group put together to look at potential and possibilities for funding. The Port and Harbor Commission's recommendations are incorporated in this draft resolution.

FAULKNER/SARNO MOVED TO SUPPORT THE DRAFT RESOLUTION AS PRESENTED TO COUNCIL.

There was brief discussion about proposed increases to selected terminal tariff rates that are needed to raise funds for bond payments and any remaining funds raised will go into the port and harbor reserves.

VOTE: NON OBJECTION: UNANIMOUS CONSENT

Motion carried.

INFO ITEMS

A. City Manager's Report, April 23, 2012

COMMENTS OF THE AUDIENCE

There were no audience comments.

COMMENTS OF CITY STAFF

Community and Economic Development Coordinator Koester commented she will be in contact with the Chair in preparation of the next meeting. Chair Sarno commented she would like them to have discussion about Transition Towns relating to a youtube video Commissioner Wagner provided.

COMMENTS OF THE COUNCIL MEMBER

Councilmember Wythe advised that there is a resolution on the agenda at the upcoming council meeting for CEDS action items for the Commission to consider.

COMMENTS OF THE COMMISSION MEMBERS

Student Representative Davis commented that the meeting touched on renewable energy which is a passion of hers, and she thinks anything the Commission can do to further any benefits to the city with wood chipping or converting buildings with gas will be beneficial.

Commissioner Schmitt commented that it is exciting to see the natural gas pipeline might still be coming to Homer and it will be neat to see what else is in store.

ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT ADVISORY COMMISSION
REGULAR MEETING
APRIL 10, 2012

Commissioner Wagner commented that it is nice to get the updates and he is intrigued by the tidal incubator for the Deep Water Dock. He welcomed Mrs. Koester back.

Commissioner Faulkner advised that he will be absent in June. The idea of funding available for tidal energy is good to know. He knows someone who has a canned design that has computed the power that can be achieved at each of the docks. He said they had talked today about building the prototypes and if they could permission from the city to hook one to the dock. There was brief discussion about the technology that is available.

Chair Sarno asked if they could talk about tidal energy at their next meeting.

ADJOURN

There being no more business to come before the Commission the meeting was adjourned at 7:21 p.m. The next regular meeting is scheduled for June 12, 2012 at 6:00 p.m. in the City Hall Cowles Council Chambers.

MELISSA JACOBSEN, CMC, DEPUTY CITY CLERK

Approved: _____