

Session 15-05 a Regular Meeting of the Economic Development Advisory Commission was called to order by Chair Brown at 6:00 p.m. on October 13, 2015 at the City Hall Cowles Council Chambers located at 491 E. Pioneer Avenue, Homer, Alaska, and opened with the Pledge of Allegiance.

PRESENT: COMMISSIONER BROWN, MARKS, SPRAGUE, STANISLAW

ABSENT: ARNO, SANSOM

STAFF: ASSISTANT CITY MANAGER LAWRENCE  
DEPUTY CITY CLERK JACOBSEN

### **AGENDA APPROVAL**

The agenda was approved by consensus of the Commission.

### **PUBLIC COMMENTS REGARDING ITEMS ON THE AGENDA**

### **RECONSIDERATION**

### **APPROVAL OF MINUTES**

A. Regular Meeting Minutes August 11, 2015

The minutes were approved by consensus of the Commission.

### **VISITORS**

Ken Sprague, Small Business Developer with Alaska Small Business Innovators (AKSBI), talked to the Commission about AKSBI and its mission to use the principles of business incubation to promote entrepreneurial development and foster economic growth for rural Alaska. They are seeking opportunities to bring in additional funds to support innovation and entrepreneurship. AKSBI recently received a \$50,000 prize from the 2015 SBA Growth Accelerator Fund Competition with matching funds from the Office of Native American Affairs. They are also seeking additional 4 to 1 match in the form of cash, in-kind donations, or sponsorships and over the next few months developing their private nonprofit 501(C)3 for an Innovation Center. He explained an Innovation Center provides facilities to entrepreneurs to help reduce risk, lower capital and operating costs, and assist with early success. It also provides coaching and training programs, leadership and encouragement, and a model for entrepreneurial excellence. He reviewed their goals, including aligning with the CEDS, better community through economic growth, developing the framework for strategic development with little burden to the City, and introducing new tools for sustainable growth. In their development stages AKSBI is working with their advisory team to strengthen their 501(c)3, and with key partners to develop an Economic Impact Study & Feasibility Study for an Innovation Center. He added they are hosting a business competition, InnovateHer 2016, targeted at empowering women through business opportunities. Mr. Sprague reviewed what an Innovation Center might look like, including makerspace, food incubator, co-work space, or hybrid models. Lastly he reviewed economic impact of a business incubator, WT Enterprise Center, highlighting how total revenues are significant over the

total capital investment and also businesses assisted through incubation services and program jobs created.

Discussion followed Mr. Sprague's presentation regarding makerspace and about WT Enterprise Center out of Texas. Councilmember Zak commented the importance of a makerspace, like The Boardroom in Anchorage, and the importance of supporting this kind of project.

**STAFF & COUNCIL REPORT/CHAMBER OF COMMERCE & MARINE TRADES ASSOCIATION REPORT/  
COMMITTEE REPORTS/BOROUGH REPORT**

Jan Knutson, Visitor Center/Events Coordinator with the Chamber of Commerce, said it was a banner summer this year and the Chamber is busy launching year round efforts for the chamber. She provided the following update on statistics:

- 11,699 visitors in the chamber from May 1<sup>st</sup> through August 31<sup>st</sup>, double the number for the entire year of 2014.
- The average number of visitors for the last four years was about 8000.
- 335 inquiries for relocation information.
- 56 new Chamber members since January, 23 of those are new businesses to Homer.
- Hosted forums, including a City Council Candidate forum.
- Met with the Governor and First Lady at the Senior Center for the Senior Senate.

Ms. Knutson added that the Homer News is collaborating with the Chamber with relocation information and have sent out 125 packages, including a newspaper and real estate section. The Chamber is working to bring together a component to market Homer as a wellness destination for body, mind, and spirit. They are also focusing efforts to brand Homer as an adventure market. There is a fabulous article in Adventure Outdoor magazine focus on attracting 20- 40 year olds and there is an advertisement "Discover Your Wild Side in Homer" that talks about things to do. An upcoming event is the annual tree lighting and photos with Santa. It will be on the first Friday in December which is also the first Friday art walk so they are working on some special activities to tie it all together.

In response to questions Ms. Knutson advised there will be nine cruise ships next year scheduled late May through mid-September.

**PUBLIC HEARINGS**

**PENDING BUSINESS**

- A. Old Building Business Renewal/Pioneer Avenue Revitalization Project
  - i. City of Soldotna Storefront Improvement Plan Guidelines
  - ii. Portland Program Information

Assistant City Manager Lawrence reviewed his staff report that included an overview of the Soldotna Storefront Improvement Program that started in 2012 from a budget line item that hadn't been used. It has grown from there and become a successful project for the City.

There was brief discussion and the Commission agreed that given the current budget situation, it isn't feasible to take this project up at this time.

They agreed to separate out the Pioneer Art Revitalization Project and discuss it further at an upcoming meeting.

B. Defining New Economic Engines for Homer

There was no discussion of this topic.

**NEW BUSINESS**

**INFORMATIONAL ITEMS**

- A. City Manager's Report October 12, 2015
- B. Memo from Deputy City Clerk Re: EDC Meeting Speakers Scheduled & Pending
- C. Resolution 15-076 Amending EDC Bylaws to include the Pledge of Allegiance
- D. Commissioner Attendance List for City Council Meetings

Assistant City Manager Lawrence reviewed the City Manager's report provided in the packet.

The commission reviewed the memorandum regarding meeting speakers and no additions or changes were suggested.

Commissioner Sprague agreed to attend the November 23<sup>rd</sup> City Council meeting and Commissioner Marks agreed to attend the December 7<sup>th</sup> City Council meeting.

**COMMENTS OF THE AUDIENCE**

**COMMENTS OF CITY STAFF**

Assistant City Manager Lawrence welcomed Commissioner Sprague.

**COMMENTS OF THE COUNCILMEMBER**

Councilmember Zak gave an overview of budget discussions at the previous night's City Council meeting. He touched on the A and B budget versions, current and proposed cuts to staffing and services, and the December 1<sup>st</sup> ballot proposition to reallocate the .75 of 1% from the HART fund to the general fund for three years as a short term solution. Council will be discussing a 1% sales tax increase to take to the voters at the regular election in October of 2016.

Councilmember Zak also talked to the Commission about his experience at the International Economic Development Conference touching on:

- Shovel-ready projects really sell the opportunity to someone to come into a community.
- Trusts looking for ways to put their money to work within communities.
- Homer is ripe for Public/Private partnership opportunities.

They generally discussed what it might look like to work through the process of developing a shovel-ready project and working with a trust. Things to consider are:

- Is the town ready.
- There is not a dedicated economic developer.
- There are state and federal grant funds available to help rejuvenate our older buildings.

Question was raised if it is in the commission's purview to work on getting things shovel ready or what avenue would need to be taken. It was suggested the Commission review the notes Councilmember Zak provided and see if some of the steps included would help them answer those questions, figure out who else might need to be involved, and establish what public private partnerships and shovel-ready might mean. Another point of view is that shovel-ready approach is a step backward in economic development for the city. There has to be a dedicated Economic Development Director in order to run economic development.

They agreed to include this on the agenda for the Commission to begin to address.

#### **COMMENTS OF THE CHAIR**

Commissioner Brown thanked Commissioner Sprague for joining the commission. He also acknowledged the information about Children's Librarian Claudia Haines.

#### **COMMENTS OF THE COMMISSION**

Commissioner Sprague had no comments.

Commissioner Stanislaw thanked Commissioner Sprague for stepping up and being part of the commission.

Commissioner Marks confirmed the process for scheduling other speakers for after the beginning of the year. She also asked about updating the Community Economic Development Strategy and it was explained that it will be scheduled when the City Manager, Assistant City Manager, and Council are ready for them to take on the task.

#### **ADJOURN**

There being no further business to come before the Commission the meeting adjourned at 7:46 p.m. The next regular meeting is scheduled for Tuesday, November 10, 2015 at 6:00 p.m. at the City Hall Cowles Council Chambers located at 491 E. Pioneer Avenue, Homer, Alaska.

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MELISSA JACOBSEN, CMC, DEPUTY CITY CLERK

Approved: \_\_\_\_\_