

ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT ADVISORY COMMISSION
REGULAR MEETING
MAY 10, 2016

Session 16-03 a Regular Meeting of the Economic Development Advisory Commission was called to order by Acting Chair Sansom at 6:00 p.m. on May 10, 2016 at the City Hall Cowles Council Chambers located at 491 E. Pioneer Avenue, Homer, Alaska, and opened with the Pledge of Allegiance.

PRESENT: COMMISSIONER GUSTAFSON, PETERSON, RICHARDSON, SANSOM

ABSENT: MARKS, STANISLAW (both excused)

STAFF: SPECIAL PROJECTS & COMMUNICATIONS COORDINATOR CARROLL
DEPUTY CITY CLERK JACOBSEN

AGENDA APPROVAL

Acting Chair Sansom called for a motion to approve the agenda.

GUSTAFSON/RICHARDSON SO MOVED

No discussion.

VOTE: YES: GUSTAFSON, PETERSON, RICHARDSON, SANSOM

Motion carried.

PUBLIC COMMENTS REGARDING ITEMS ON THE AGENDA

RECONSIDERATION

APPROVAL OF MINUTES

A. Regular Meeting Minutes of March 8, 2016

Acting Chair Sansom called for a motion to approve the minutes.

PETERSON/GUSTAFSON SO MOVED

There was no discussion.

VOTE: NON OBJECTION: UNANIMOUS CONSENT

Motion carried.

VISITORS

A. Woodard Creek Coalition

Robert Archibald showed the Commission a power point presentation and gave them an overview of the history of the Woodard Creek Coalition and their efforts over the past 20 years. He showed the area of the watershed below the bluff. The vision of the Coalition is Woodard Creek as a vibrant, healthy, safe community asset. Their mission is to bring together diverse groups, property owners and citizens to promote the health and safety of the Woodard Creek Watershed as a community asset. Mr. Archibald reviewed some of the work that has been done recently, including daylighting the Pioneer Avenue culvert, improving the Soundview Avenue culvert and the bridge over Soundview Avenue. The Coalition's work is ongoing; a current effort is to put a trail across from the east to west side of the creek into Hornaday Park. They have stressed daylighting Woodard Creek underneath Pioneer Avenue and with the rebuilding of the road it would be a big plus. There is dialog with DOT about it and others who are involved, but he's not sure if they will get any traction on that.

In response to questions, Mr. Archibald talked about efforts to improve parking areas at Hornaday Park. The Pratt is planning on daylighting the creek through their property once their new building is complete. He said work is being done on a trail that goes from the museum to Pioneer Avenue coming out next to the LIO building and they are looking at having a creek clean-up day sometime this spring. There has been talk of repainting the creek on the road, but isn't sure if it will happen. Mr. Archibald also talked about work and discussion with property owners along the creek.

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

Karen Zak, Chamber Director, reported that things are happening at the visitor center. The number of daily visitors to the center has tripled since April. They will probably see close to 100 per day for the shorebird festival and will be open seven days a week starting Memorial Day weekend. She reported the following recent and upcoming events including:

- Winter King Tournament
- Clean up day
- Collections for the Food Bank
- Shorebird Festival
- Halibut Derby

She is looking forward to a report from the Borough on activity during the winter salmon derby and will give an update next time.

Mrs. Zak also reported on advertising opportunities the chamber has taken advantage of in the Seattle Mariners game program, Harbors Magazine, the Alaska Sporting Journal and radio ads. She said they are promoting all things Homer, not just fishing.

Special Projects & Communications Coordinator Carroll reviewed her staff report that was included in the packet.

PUBLIC HEARINGS

PENDING BUSINESS

A. Pioneer Avenue Revitalization Effort

Special Projects & Communications Coordinator Carroll reported to the Commission about the task force that is working on the Pioneer Avenue Revitalization project. It represents a lot of different organizations and is comprised of public and private businesses and is primarily focused on revitalizing Pioneer Avenue as the historic and commercial core of Homer. The group's focus is to make it more of a destination for people to come to, linger, and have a nice time. Ms. Carroll participates on the task force as well as Chair Marks. The group has been consulting with DOT about their rehabilitation project which initially started off with major improvements but has been scaled back to a pavement preservation project. The task force is trying to understand to what extent that will help accomplish some of the goals of safety, walkability, and so forth. She said one issue that was talked about was the daylighting of Woodard Creek. They want DOT to know this process is happening in Homer and that primarily it's about storm water management. It could be that it becomes part of the project, but there is also room for input to DOT on how the project can work along with some of the other efforts to revitalize Pioneer. Ms. Carroll explained there is an effort to work with local business owners for beautification, and working with a muralist; area trails groups are working on the task force who want to help connect Old Town with Pioneer Avenue; and there's been an effort toward looking at the old garage near the Acropolis Building to see if something can be done with that.

Ms. Carroll encouraged the group to look at any other avenues or ideas toward helping develop Pioneer Avenue's economic potential. She thinks it's a fruitful place for a commissioner to be involved and noted that Chair Marks is involved as a business owner and would like to be a representative from the EDC. She encouraged the rest of the group to think about it as well.

Question was raised how Main Street ties in with the Pioneer improvements. Ms. Carroll said since she has been participating with the task force they haven't talked about the connectors, but people are welcome to bring ideas to the meeting. She said Main Street is on the city's capital improvement plan for improvement and it's a matter of funding to get that going. There are other roads that Planning wants to bring to the table for safer pedestrian walkways.

Discussion ensued about the need for parking to help draw people in to Pioneer, particularly in the summer. Lack of parking is one thing that can drive people away from the town center. Councilmember Smith noted he thinks there is some land that could be accessible below the old Pioneer Building. Some Councilmembers aren't keen on creating parking lots, but there is a need for them so people can go in either direction and access the businesses more easily. He added that Main Street is on the Council's radar but there are some right of way issues to secure the space needed to put sidewalks. They may need to look at connective paths to get to different areas of town. Recommendations from the commission as to what they see as being important and why will be key to helping Council make good decisions in working to open things up.

The group also talked briefly about the peony planting project along Pioneer.

B. Promoting Complementary Medicine in Homer

Acting Chair Sansom reviewed the information she provided on complementary medicine that was included in the packet. She explained that at a previous meeting the group was encouraged to suggest ideas the commission could address through their action plan. Relating to Complementary Medicine we have some very fine practitioners in town, a fine hospital facility, and all the support systems along with the view that could be combined to promote Homer as a wellness area. She has talked with Karen Zak at the chamber and she wants to be able to go to the City Council at some point to ask for money to promote this. She touched on some of the actionable items she included like advertising what the different practitioners specialize in. She also shared that as a B&B owner there could be opportunities to offer lodging to people who may be here for wellness services and can convalesce in a comfortable space that has a capability to work with dietary needs, and restaurants and other businesses could be incorporated as well.

Mrs. Zak commented about the marketing the Chamber is doing in magazines. She has also talked with Denali, the production company that does the cable stations to see how they can get video done to have on the cable stations. They said they would check with Ravn airlines to see if they could get some funding to promote a special fly to Homer type of experience. The Chamber working on a wellness tab on their website to see all the members and what services they offer.

Special Projects & Communications Coordinator Carroll commented the Commission's role is bringing recommendations to Council to tell them what they think is important. In looking at the energies being put toward marketing from an economic development perspective, it's important to look at the bigger picture of how in the near term are we going to provide the economics that keeps Homer thriving and healthy in the current Alaska fiscal condition. It may be that we're going to be a little more dependent on tourism and visitors bringing their dollars here. What she is hearing from Chair Marks and Commissioner Sansom is let's put some energy toward Pioneer Avenue and promoting small business and Homer as a place that would attract people to come for health and wellness. So the question becomes what the commission sends to council to promote these things to help the city. The commission is here as advisors to the council and tell them what they think could keep us economically stable.

Councilmember Smith agreed with Ms. Carroll and added that the volunteerism on the Commissions is awesome and Council really relies on the groups to flush out the ideas and things they see as a priority and what will do the most good. It's great to have good ideas, but as far as seeing how you put it in a vehicle and get it to its destination is where they take it to Council and explain why and how it will work.

C. Adoption of Action Plan

Special Projects & Communications Coordinator Carroll explained that this document came together through the Commissions work to put together a strategic plan that would define some goals and focus the group's efforts for the year. It is a working document that will be revised and updated as tasks are accomplished or revised throughout the year.

The group reviewed and talked briefly about the goals and objectives, and also how they might work through the objectives.

GUSTAFSON/RICHARDSON MOVED TO ADOPT THE ACTION PLAN.

There was no discussion.

VOTE: NON OBJECTION: UNANIMOUS CONSENT.

Motion carried.

NEW BUSINESS

A. Appoint EDC Member to Pioneer Avenue Revitalization Task Force

Acting Chair Sansom noted in the staff report that Chair Marks willingness to serve as the Commission's representative on the task force. She asked for a motion to approve Chair Marks for the task force.

RICHARDSON/GUSTAFSON SO MOVED.

There was discussion that they aren't actually appointing her to the task force but supporting that she represents the commission as a member of the task force.

VOTE: NON OBJECTION: UNANIMOUS CONSENT

Motion carried.

B. Memorandum from Deputy City Clerk Re: Changing June meeting date to Tuesday, June 7th

Acting Chair Sansom asked if there was any discussion about changing the June meeting date. Commissioner Gustafson said it would be better for him because will be gone on June 14th.

PETERSON/GUSTAFSON MOVED TO APPROVE CHANGING THE DATES.

There was no discussion.

VOTE: NON OBJECTION: UNANIMOUS CONSENT.

Motion carried.

C. Scheduling Worksession for June

Special Projects & Communications Coordinator Carroll commented that the Economic Development chapter of the Comprehensive Plan would be coming to the Commission and Chair Marks thought it could be helpful to have a worksession to talk about the plan before it comes before them as an action item.

There was discussion whether it would be better to try and meet before or after the June meeting and some members shared conflicts they have with meeting before June 7th. Staff offered to send out some potential dates and see what works best for the group.

INFORMATIONAL ITEMS

- A. City Manager's Report May 9, 2016
- B. Appointment of Heath Anders Gustafson and Sarah Richardson to the Economic Development Advisory Commission

COMMENTS OF THE AUDIENCE

None

COMMENTS OF CITY STAFF

None

COMMENTS OF THE COUNCILMEMBER

Councilmember Smith thanked the group for volunteering their time to the Commission. He said the Anchorage Economic Development Corp. has the vision to be the number one city in America to live, work, and play by the year 2025. He encouraged the group to check it out at <http://aedcweb.com> and that we should come up with something catchy to promote Homer. He thinks some great things came out of the meeting tonight.

COMMENTS OF THE CHAIR

Acting Chair Sansom said she will be glad for Karin to be back and thanked everyone. She looks forward to working with the group.

COMMENTS OF THE COMMISSION

Commissioner Gustafson asked if there is an economic analysis of Homer to review to show where the money in Homer is being spent, how much the marine industry brings in versus tourism and information like that. He thinks it would be helpful to have.

Commissioner Peterson agreed that information would be beneficial for the group to look at and thanked Councilmember Smith for the idea of the mission statement; she thinks it's pretty catchy. It gives a focus and feeling of unity and a lot of things spring from that statement.

Ms. Carroll said she would send out a link to the KPED statistics. There information is mainly borough wide but have some specifics on Homer. The Department of Labor may have some statistics, but she doesn't have those specific numbers.

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ADJOURN

There being no further business to come before the Commission the meeting adjourned at 8:35 p.m. The next regular meeting is scheduled for Tuesday, June 7, 2016 at 6:00 p.m. at the City Hall Cowles Council Chambers located at 491 E. Pioneer Avenue, Homer, Alaska.

MELISSA JACOBSEN, CMC, DEPUTY CITY CLERK

Approved: _____