

ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT ADVISORY COMMISSION
SPECIAL MEETING
AUGUST 9, 2016

Session 16-06 a Regular Meeting of the Economic Development Advisory Commission was called to order by Chair Marks at 6:10 p.m. on August 9, 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, KEISEL, MARKS, RICHARDSON, SANSOM

ABSENT: PETERSON

STAFF: DEPUTY CITY CLERK JACOBSEN
CITY PLANNER ABBOUD

AGENDA APPROVAL

Chair Marks asked for a motion to amend the agenda to move the new business item A Capital Improvement Plan review before Pending Business.

SANSOM/RICHARDSON MOVED TO ACCEPT THE AGENDA CHANGES AS NOTED.

There was no discussion.

VOTE: NON OBJECTION: UNANIMOUS CONSENT.

The amended agenda was approved by consensus of the Commission.

PUBLIC COMMENTS REGARDING ITEMS ON THE AGENDA

RECONSIDERATION

APPROVAL OF MINUTES

A. Regular Meeting Minutes of June 6, 2016

Chair Marks noted the Pioneer Project Task Force Report second paragraph similar to Pioneer Avenue should be corrected to similar to Bunnell Street Art Gallery.

SANSOM/RICHARDSON MOVED TO APPROVE THE MINUTES AS AMENDED.

There was no discussion.

VOTE: NON OBJECTION: UNANIMOUS CONSENT

Motion carried.

VISITORS

A. South Peninsula Amateur Radio Club

Club President Shandley Kerls, Vice President Mike Velikanje, and Secretary Toby Reich presented to the Commission. Ms. Kerls opened with an overview of the club, which was established in May of 2014 after 30 years without a club and their current membership is 39. They explained the importance of Ham operators as a source of free emergency communication in times of disaster. When disaster happens, today's main sources of communication can fail, including telephones, cell phones, internet, satellites, and radio systems, but Ham radio doesn't need those things to operate. Ham operators can go out portable and mobile at any time and set up and have worked through wildfires, earthquakes, tsunamis, search and rescue and other community emergencies. A lot of Ham radio operators in Alaska work closely with local, state, and federal agencies during times of disaster. They also work with the Borough EMS out of Soldotna. Dan Nelson from the Borough's Emergency Services Department has talked with the club and other agencies during emergency service demonstrations, mentioning that the southern part of the Kenai is lacking in resources as far as communications with everyone in the area, unlike Anchorage where there are a lot of Ham radio repeaters. They work closely with the Red Cross, MARS Military Amateur Radio Services, CERT Community Emergency Response Training, and ARES Amateur Radio Emergency Service. The club's goal is to work with local agencies and establish a network of linking repeaters that would adequately provide coverage of emergency communications in times of disaster.

Ms. Kerls explained the how repeaters work to enhance the radio signal and send it farther out. Instead of line of site from the spit to the bluff, the repeaters will allow them to have signal to communicate with Kodiak, Soldotna, across the bay, Anchorage, and so on. In times of emergency when systems can fail or become overloaded they can get on their radios and talk to people in other communities. They would like to work with the City to find locations that would provide the best coverage in their area and a small space in a secure location to put a repeater, radio, and equipment that would be used in emergencies and day to day communications.

They briefly shared some personal experiences working with Ham radios in emergency situations including 2003 Space Shuttle disaster, Hurricane Katrina, the 1964 Alaska earthquake, and locally with search and rescue of a snow machiner who was lost in the Caribou Hills a few years back.

In response to questions about location, Mr. Velikanje said there are various locations around town and out on the spit. An important criterion is that it will still be there after a main event so right on the bluffs and spit aren't ideal locations. In town the library is a good location that provides reasonable coverage along the bay to McNeil Canyon, which is a challenging area to reach consistently. There are towers up on the hill but they need to find locations accessible to the group with good coverage.

Mr. Reich said they can piggy back on existing towers, but need to be able to access it and maintain the equipment, and they would have to get permission to use it. There is one on Diamond Ridge they can use, but it's on private property, the tower has been there since the 50's and they aren't able to maintain it. The cost for a multi band repeater is \$1,500 to \$2,000, and then you have a tower, coax, a filter systems so an entire set up could be up to \$25,000. Piggy backing on an existing tower is less expensive, and they would only need a space the size of a closet for their equipment. They have not reached out to tower owners as they are hoping to gain support from the City.

Deputy City Clerk Jacobsen said this could be scheduled on the next Commission agenda and memo could be provided for the commission to review and make a recommendation to council

REPORTS

A. Marine Trades Association Report

The Marine Trades Association provided a written report as a laydown item.

B. Chamber Director Report

The Chamber Director provided a written report as a laydown item.

C. Pioneer Avenue Task Force Report

Chair Marks reported the task force is progressing with plans on the gardens with the City and with property owners. There will be planting and some work done this fall and more done in the spring. A couple of murals are still being worked on and there is a peony path paving and painting project demos for the fall. We'll see what it looks like in the spring and decide whether it should be continued or not. There has been some discussion about doing something at Baycrest letting people know what's down the hill with the Pioneer Project.

D. Staff Report

PUBLIC HEARINGS

NEW BUSINESS

A. 2017-2022 Capital Improvement Plan Review

Chair Marks commented the commission discussed the Capital Improvement Plan at their worksession and asked if there is a motion for a recommendation from the Commission.

SANSOM/KEISEL MOVED THE COMMISSION SUPPORTS TWO PROJECTS, THE ICE PLANT UPGRADE AND THE COMMUNITY CENTER.

There was no discussion.

VOTE: NON OBJECTION: UNANIMOUS CONSENT

Motion carried.

PENDING BUSINESS

A. Comprehensive Plan Update Economic Vitality Chapter

The Commission discussed chapter 8 and the economic vitality chart with the City Planner.

Chair Marks noted in the old chapter there were specific items like finding a high tech business to come into town, and the updated chapter suggests we need to have some of these businesses but doesn't specify the type of business. She submitted that one thing that needs to be added back is there should be a city employee who works as an economic development staff member. She recognized Special Projects and Communications Coordinator Carroll who works with the Commission and is indirectly doing this, but thinks it's important that it be listed as a function for a staff member to have in their title.

There was brief discussion around the success of high tunnels increasing the growing season for local farmers and for the Farmer's Market, and also wind turbines. City Planner Abboud commented that city code could be improved in relationship to high tunnels depending on how we want to see them supported. He referenced item 2A1 in the list. He explained there are rules for wind turbines and in researching them there is concern of the view shed and in town there are just a few very specific areas that will provide enough wind for a year to pay for a device. There haven't been any requests other than the demonstration project on Pioneer. When the spit was suggested City Planner Abboud noted it is unique because there may be too much wind and that he hasn't had any permitting requests for them. Commissioner Sansom suggested a fast track permitting process as an incentive for people wanting to install solar or wind energy systems.

They reviewed and discussed the Economic Vitality chart in the packet the following suggestions:

- Expand Residential Office zoning
- Continue commercial zoning out East End Road where there is more opportunity and open land available
- Increase GC1 zoning allowing for more industrial and commercial activities
- It would be important for the commission to know what commercial land is available before we start looking for businesses
- Including the EDC in item 2A1 to look at different types of land use options
- Information Infrastructure
- Lobbying to expand the nursing program at the local campus and also develop student housing
- Encouraging multifamily development and rental properties to accommodate student rentals and affordable housing.

The commission agreed to finish this up at the next meeting.

B. Action Plan Goals on Marketing and Promoting Complementary Medicine

Commissioner Sansom noted information she passed out to the commission to take a look at and said she will have more at the next meeting specific to wellness.

Chair Marks noted their work schedule of trying to have something to Council in time for the budget, but recognized it may take more time to prepare a complete package and they continue to work on it for a future budget request. She also suggested they continue to work on a catch phrase as Councilmember Smith had suggested as it has worked well for the Peonies on Pioneer project. Lastly

she suggested they need to start discussing pros and cons of Homer from a business perspective in an effort of emphasizing the pros and being aware of the cons.

INFORMATIONAL ITEMS

A. Commissioner Attendance at City Council Meetings

Commissioner Sansom said she would attend the next City Council meeting.

COMMENTS OF THE AUDIENCE

COMMENTS OF CITY STAFF

There were no staff comments.

COMMENTS OF THE COUNCILMEMBER

COMMENTS OF THE CHAIR

Chair Marks said she's excited to have Ms. Keisel join the commission. She is looking forward to making more progress. It's great they are charting the course and framework, but it seems sometimes to spin wheels when just working on charts and not actually doing something. She appreciates everyone coming and thanked them.

COMMENTS OF THE COMMISSION

Commissioner Keisel said she's excited to be part of the board and looks forward to making some progress.

Commissioner Richardson said it was a good meeting.

Commissioner Sansom thought they got a lot done.

Commissioner Gustafson had no comment.

ADJOURN

There being no further business to come before the Commission the meeting adjourned at 803 p.m. The next regular meeting is scheduled for Tuesday, September 13, 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: _____