

Session 15-10, a Regular Meeting of the Homer Advisory Planning Commission was called to order by Chair Stead at 6:30 p.m. on June 17, 2015 at the City Hall Cowles Council Chambers located at 491 E. Pioneer Avenue, Homer, Alaska.

PRESENT: COMMISSIONERS BOS, BRADLEY, ERICKSON, HIGHLAND, STEAD, STROOZAS, VENUTI

STAFF: CITY PLANNER ABBOUD
DEPUTY CITY CLERK JACOBSEN

Approval of Agenda

The agenda was approved by consensus of the Commission.

Public Comment

The public may speak to the Planning Commission regarding matters on the agenda that are not scheduled for public hearing or plat consideration. (3 minute time limit).

There were no public comments.

Reconsideration

Adoption of Consent Agenda

All items on the consent agenda are considered routine and non-controversial by the Planning Commission and are approved in one motion. There will be no separate discussion of these items unless requested by a Planning Commissioner or someone from the public, in which case the item will be moved to the regular agenda and considered in normal sequence.

- A. Approval of Minutes of June 3, 2015 meeting
- B. Staff Report 15-45 Removal of plan note for Lillian Walli Estate Subdivision

Chair Stead called for a motion to approve the consent agenda.

HIGHLAND/BRADLEY SO MOVED.

There was no discussion.

VOTE: NON OBJECTION: UNANIMOUS CONSENT

Motion carried.

Presentations

- A. Representative from GCI, Towers Ordinance

No one from GCI was in attendance to present to the Commission.

Reports

A. Staff Report PL 15-44, City Planner's Report

City Planner Abboud reviewed the staff report.

He clarified the portion of Fairview Avenue being considered for improvement in the Lillian Walli Special Assessment District petition.

Public Hearings

Testimony limited to 3 minutes per speaker. The Commission conducts Public Hearings by hearing a staff report, presentation by the applicant, hearing public testimony and then acting on the Public Hearing items. The Commission may question the public. Once the public hearing is closed the Commission cannot hear additional comments on the topic. The applicant is not held to the 3 minute time limit.

A. Staff Report 15-46, Waddell Way Project

Chair Stead called for a 10 minute recess at 6:42 p.m. to read four letters provided as lay down materials for the public hearing. The meeting reconvened at 6:52 p.m.

City Planner Abboud reviewed the staff report.

Carey Meyer, Public Works Director and John Pekar, engineer with Kinney Engineering, commented to the Commission about options A and B regarding the Waddell Way improvement project. Mr. Meyer commented that there may be an opportunity to eliminate the sidewalk adjacent to curb and gutter and provide some separation from the travel lanes. The downside is that a separated pathway is more expensive and more problematic for snow removal. He touched on the non-consensus of the public relating to options A and B. Some prefer option A because it brings the connection to Heath Street closer to the library. Others for option B think in addresses conflicting turning movements and connecting Waddell to Grubstake would aggravate the situation. He thinks the connection could relieve the congestion. Regarding a traffic study, he isn't sure a computer generated traffic study is going to answer the question of how people will use this road and give insight into this particular question. There has been some discussion of traffic calming and curves in the road, he thinks adding a little more curve in the road tends to slow people down rather than being able to go fast and straight. His first instinct about a three way stop, is to put a stop sign at the top of Waddell coming north, but not east and west, but he's willing to listen to discussion. The idea of building this road is to move people more efficiently without putting to many barriers in the way. He continues to believe option A is the better of the two.

Mr. Pekar added that either option will take pressure off Pioneer and Sterling Bypass. At Heath the difference at the two intersections will be minimal but there will be benefit along Heath at both the north and south ends where it intersects by giving an alternate traffic path.

Chair Stead opened the public hearing.

Catriona Reynolds, city resident, commented that there may be some consideration around the ease of land acquisition and perhaps option A is easier to complete, but thinks everything else points to option B as a better choice, particularly because it brings you out about halfway up Heath Street. This is an opportunity to work toward creating a walkable, bike-able, people friendly community. She is

sure the engineers will take into account studies from places like Portland where traffic calming like a three way stop and the rate of travel benefit people in motorized vehicles as well as people on bikes. She would like to see road markings here, and around town, to help people understand that people using bicycles can be in the road. She agrees that the library is regular destination for citizens and tourists and option B benefits that as well. She doesn't agree with the the suggestion of Gold Mine for the street name.

Wayne Aderhold, city resident, noted his written comments in the laydown packet and added that if there is going to be a road he supports connecting at Bonanza. He supports separated pathways wherever possible but because he is comfortable riding his bike in traffic he is more interested in seeing the emphasis in on-street markings. He believes almost every road in Homer will fit in the category of a shared facility. He mentioned our existing facilities are marked in a bad way because you don't want bicycles riding against traffic. He also mentioned the trend in young adults is they are moving to cities that are bike-able, walkable, and also have mass transit. They are going car free.

Kenton Bloom, city resident, commented that he worked with Wayne on the Poopdeck Trail; it was one of the first real successes in Homer in terms of urban trail work. He thinks is good to look at what we want to accomplish in the big picture in terms of what are we connecting with when we get to Heath Street. He doesn't really see how the continuity is be projected so it seems an open ended discussion. On the aspect of the separated path, there is a nice one at the library on the north side of Hazel, but it just ends. He advocated when it was being developed it should connect to Heath Street, but it didn't happen. This case feeds into multi-modal transportation, and raises question about what are we doing with people when we bring them on the separated path to Hazel. He would like to see coherent intersection of the pedestrian access through the library site somehow.

There were no further public comments and the hearing was closed.

Commissioner Erickson commented relating to traffic safety she would prefer seeing stop signs versus other options. It's important, especially for people turning left. She also noted that in the winter Heath Street can get really icy and questions which option would be the safest place to stop on Heath and if intersection upgrades would be needed related to winter driving. Public Works Director Meyer suggested the grade might be slightly better at Grubstake, but he doesn't recall there is a significant difference. He added that flattening out an intersection would aggravate the grades on either side. He would look at increasing sanding in the area once it becomes a four way intersection.

Commissioner Venuti asked if the design could be modified so as not to channel bike traffic out on to a busy road. Public Works Director Meyer said they haven't talked much about the north south section but his memo and presentation previously has been to extend the existing pavement width and lane configuration that exists from where the pavement ends up to the east west extension of Waddell and that existing cross section has a shoulder/bike lane. They plan to try to facilitate bike movement down Waddell as well across Waddell.

Commissioner Bos questioned if the group had discussed a four way stop for this project. Public Works Director Meyer said he didn't recall a discussion about it. He talked about the challenges of traffic engineering. Right now the plan is conceptual with a general alignment and a general idea of

cross section. At 35% design there will be recommendations on these types of issues based on professional engineers experience in dealing with these.

Commissioner Stroozas asked about the driveway fix for HEA when aligning with Grubstake. Public Works Director Meyer said some project money may need to be spent to realign it based on what HEA is interested in.

Commissioner Erickson asked about a left hand turn lane on Heath Street if there aren't going to be stops at the intersection. Public Works Director Meyer explained that the lanes would have to line up on both sides of the street. He doesn't know if the budget provides for that, and suggested a right turn only lane could be a way to handle it.

Chair Stead noted that either option will require addressing the HEA driveway. If the driveway is moved to the T the trucks will most likely go down the existing Waddell Way so it will be important to consider if the road can take that kind of traffic.

VENUTI/HIGHLAND MOVED THAT THE PLANNING COMMISSION RECOMMENDS THE PROPOSED WADDELL WAY PROJECT IMPROVEMENT IS CONSISTENT WITH THE GENERAL PLAN AND ESTABLISHED PLANNING PRINCIPLES IN THAT -

1. THE TRANSPORTATION PLAN SUPPORTS CONSTRUCTION OF WADDELL WAY AND
2. THE PROVISION OF CONNECTED STREET SYSTEM AND PEDESTRIAN AND CYCLE AMENITIES ARE CONSISTENT WITH ESTABLISHED PLANNING PRINCIPLES IN THE CITY'S ADOPTED COMPREHENSIVE PLANS.

Commissioners Erickson and Bradley made comments in terms of winter driving in that gaining momentum to get up Heath when the roads are slick it may be more beneficial to have the intersection location in option B to provide increased distance between congestion points, especially during winter travel.

Commissioner Highland expressed her opposition to naming the road Gold Mine. She also commented regarding her understanding that curves are a method of traffic calming.

Deputy City Clerk Jacobsen noted that there will be opportunity to address specifics about the project after the Commission addresses the motion on the floor.

VOTE: YES: BOS, STEAD, HIGHLAND, ERICKSON, VENUTI, BRADLEY
NO: STROOZAS

Motion carried.

ERICKSON/BRADLEY MOVED THAT WE SUPPORT OPTION B.

Commissioner Bos commented he supports option A. He noted Public Works Director Meyer's comments that the difference in the grade between the the two options is minimal and that he has been able to get us up East and West Hill in the winter time. Option A is less expensive and it may get us more in the sense of bike-ability and walkability.

Commissioner Erickson commented option A leaves a little triangle of unusable property and option B opens up a bigger area with usable land for businesses.

Commissioner Bradley said the comments in the laydowns and from the public made her think about her experience when she walks that area. Having the new intersection at Bonanza would move it away from an already congested area and would be helpful for pedestrian traffic.

Commissioner Stroozas noted that soil remediation should be investigated on the subject triangle on option B. Chair Stead commented to he has some historical knowledge of that particular area and in his experience there haven't been any monitoring wells placed on that property and it hasn't been considered contaminated.

Chair Stead supports option A. It's a shorter walking path to get from the library across to Lake Street and Smokey Bay. It connects to Grubstake which has several businesses on it. Bonanza seems to be more residential. He sees the east west corridor on option A as removing traffic from Heath Street and alleviate some of the congestion. He doesn't know if it would increase traffic at the intersection or not.

VOTE: YES: ERICKSON, BRADLEY
NO: HIGHLAND, STEAD, VENUTI, STROOZAS, BOS

Motion failed.

There were comments to clarify the majority of the group supports option A.

HIGHLAND/BOS MOVED TO SUPPORT LEVEL TWO ON THE NORTH TO SOUTH AND LEVEL FOUR EAST TO WEST.

There was brief discussion to clarify the levels, locations, and bike lanes.

VOTE: NON OBJECTION: UNANIMOUS CONSENT.

Motion carried.

VENUTI/BOS MOVED WE RECOMMEND TO SUPPORT LESS CURVES IN THE DESIGN, MINIMIZE THE AMOUNT OF MARGINAL REMAINDERS OF LOTS DUE TO ROAD ALIGNMENT, LIGHTING AT THE INTERSECTIONS, RESOLVING A REASONABLE FIX FOR THE DRIVEWAY FOR HEA, AND ADD INSTALLING CROSSWALKS ON LAKE STREET AND HEATH STREET.

City Planner Abboud noted that Lake Street is a state road and the city wouldn't be authorized to add a cross walk.

Commissioner Highland commented that rather than less curves, she would support traffic calming. City Planner Abboud noted this is marginally less curve; the idea is to minimize the marginal remainders left over.

VENUTI/HIGHLAND MOVED TO AMEND TO INCLUDE TRAFFIC CALMING.

There was no discussion.

VOTE: (Amendment) YES: VENUTI, BRADLEY, BOS, STEAD, HIGHLAND, STROOZAS
NO: ERICKSON

Motion carried.

There was no further discussion on the main motion as amended.

VOTE: NON OBJECTION: UNANIMOUS CONSENT

Motion carried.

Chair Stead called for a short recess at 8:34 p.m. and the meeting resumed at 8:38 p.m.

Plat Consideration

None

Pending Business

A. Staff Report PL 15-47 Towers Ordinance

City Planner Abboud read through the comments from GCI that were included in the packet, noting the information was sent out to others who agreed with the comments or had no additional input.

Question was raised about being able to add on to the towers. City Planner Abboud explained that the federal regulations allow towers to grow by a certain percent. It raised a challenge regarding the CUP process if a tower is built at a height that is not required to come in for a permit, but then come back later and add more height.

Discussion ensued regarding setback standards and that they may need to take time to address setbacks specific to districts and also considering what the standard is for harmful impact.

Regarding abandonment, City Planner Abboud commented that in a lot of cases people wanting to install a tower will first look at leasing city land and city leases require proper insurance coverage. For towers on private lands it will be challenging to follow up on insurance or bonding.

New Business

A. Staff Report PL 15-48 General Commercial 1 Land Availability

VENUTI/BOS MOVED TO POSTPONE GC1 TO THE NEXT MEETING.

There was no discussion.

VOTE: NON OBJECTION: UNANIMOUS CONSENT

Motion carried.

Informational Materials

- A. KPB Notice of Decision Webber Subdivision No. 9 Preliminary Plat
- B. KPB Notice of Postponement Hodnik Subdivision Preliminary Plat
- C. City Manager's Report from June 15th Council Meeting Packet

Comments of the Audience

Members of the audience may address the Commission on any subject. (3 minute time limit)

Catriona Reynolds, city resident, thanked the Commission for their well thought out points of view. She noted 13AAC02.385 states clearly that bicycles are vehicles and therefore should obey all the rules of the road. Their lights should be visible 500 feet behind and in front of a vehicle. When going down Heath Street the area defined as a shoulder is on rubble and un maintained surface to the point you have to bike in the road lane. Apart from Ocean Drive and the spit, there aren't any shoulders that are truly wide enough to be bike lanes. Relating to the idea of cross walks and the fact that people don't know how to use the ones we have new, if we had the flashing light with the button it might bring pedestrians and drivers awareness to the crossing locations.

Wayne Aderhold, city resident, said page 80-87 in the book he gave to Commissioners explain that it's a fallacy in many cases that you will solve congestion with building more roads. He agrees with that thinking as he's against any road extension there. He appreciates the position of the Commission. He referenced a scene in the movie Office Space where there are cars held up in traffic and a guy with a walker is making faster progress than the cars. Traffic calming is a behavior issue, wiggles in the road should slow them down, but Hazel is a speedway right now, particularly at night. He thinks it's an enforcement issue. Regarding bike behavior, laws do exist and again it's a matter of enforcement and educating bicyclists. He referenced an article that summarizes the information very well. He would support bicycles having a license to ride on the road.

Comments of Staff

None

Comments of the Commission

Commissioner Bradley commented it was an interesting discussion tonight concerning pedestrian zones. Having attended college in Eugene, OR where there is a bicycle highway through campus, it's interesting to see the direction we are going with this. She recommends reading *The Walkable City*; it's a quick read with antic dotes that show pros and cons of certain situations. An interesting point about creating a class of citizens that will move back to your city is related to walkability. She is hopeful that

if we create a walkable community, maybe her friends who moved to Portland and DC will move home.

Commissioner Erickson said safety always comes first for her. She was a big advocate for the bike lane on Ocean Drive from back when she served on the Economic Development Commission. She is concerned with safety for the bicyclist and also the person in the car. She would like things to be clear and consistent in moving forward.

Commissioner Bos said it was a good meeting and thanked Rick for the tower ordinance work. It expedited things and made it clear.

Commissioner Stroozas commented that Normal Lowell is not going to be the Grand Marshall for the July 4th parade and Clem Tillion has stepped in. He also said the Irish Ambassador will be visiting Homer and invited the group to the reception being held at the Chamber of Commerce.

Commissioner Highland, Venuti, and Chair Stead had no further comments.

Adjourn

There being no further business to come before the Commission, the meeting adjourned at 9:34 p.m. The next regular meeting is scheduled for July 15, 2015 at 6:30 p.m. in the City Hall Cowles Council Chambers. A worksession will be held at 5:30 p.m.

MELISSA JACOBSEN, CMC, DEPUTY CITY CLERK

Approved: _____