

Session 18-05 a Regular Meeting of the Homer Education and Recreation Complex Task Force was called to order by Chair Matthews at at 3:00 p.m. on August 28, 2018 at the City Hall Cowles Council Chambers located at 491 E. Pioneer Avenue, Homer, Alaska.

PRESENT: Task Force Members Derry, Haines, Knight, Lowney, Marks, Matthews, Reiss, Slone

STAFF: Deputy City Planner Engebretsen
City Clerk Jacobsen Jacobsen

APPROVAL OF THE AGENDA

PUBLIC COMMENTS REGARDING ITEMS ON THE AGENDA

The Audience may comment on matters on the agenda not scheduled for public hearing 3 minute time limit

Chair Matthews asked for a motion to approve the agenda.

SLONE/MARKS SO MOVED.

There was no discussion.

VOTE: NON OBJECTION: UNANIMOUS CONSENT.

Motion carried.

RECONSIDERATION

SYNOPSIS APPROVAL

A. August 14, 2018 Synopsis

DERRY/LOWNEY MOVED TO APPROVE THE SYNOPSIS AS WRITTEN.

There was no discussion.

VOTE: NON OBJECTION: UNANIMOUS CONSENT

Motion carried.

VISITORS

A. Todd Hindman, Fireweed Academy Principle

Mr. Hindman explained that Fireweed Academy has been around for over 20 years, beginning as two rooms, two teachers and 30 kids. He shared a brief overview of Charter schools beginning in Alaska in 1997, that they fall under the umbrella of the school district in Alaska, they have control of their own budget, in comparison to the other district schools that share expenses between schools. Fireweed's budget is built on their student numbers, currently they have seven full time classroom teachers and 115 students currently enrolled.

In response to questions from the task force Mr. Hindman explained their goal of wanting to have one campus. Currently they have grade K-2 classes at Little Fireweed on East End Road and grade 3-6 classes on the West Homer Elementary campus, but they'd like to build a consistent K-6 school culture. He explained their operating and maintenance difference between their Little Fireweed leased location and shared services MOU at West Homer. They're on on a one year extension at the leased property and have been approved for operation by the State and the District for a ten year term for their contract. The school has an Academic Policy Committee (APC), which is a group of parents who act as their board and oversee operation of the school.

Specific to the HERC building, Mr. Hindman explained if modifications upstairs can be made to the areas that have been subdivided in to smaller offices and created into classrooms, they would just have room enough upstairs. They would want access to the kitchen, gym, and the multi-use room downstairs as well.

There was also brief discussion about the possibility of being able to use portions of the building after hours for community members and for after school programs, usage of the facility grounds, and accessibility needs.

STAFF REPORTS & Committee Reports (10 minutes)

A. Julie Engebretsen, Deputy City Planner

Deputy City Planner Engebretsen reviewed her staff report and discussed upcoming meeting dates, worksessions, and Brown Bag Lunches at the library.

B. Brown Bag at the library report

PUBLIC HEARING

PENDING BUSINESS (20 minutes)

A. Goals (formerly Scope of Work)

Mr. Slone commented there seems to be some concern over the meaning of the term and thinks some might feel it's impeding the ability to explore other areas and issues. After doing research on the term he'd like to propose a changing scope of work to goals, related to the four items in the resolution from Council.

Mr. Derry concurred that it's worth clarifying.

DERRY/LOWNEY MOVED THAT WE RENAME OUR ADOPTION FROM SCOPE OF WORK TO GOALS.

There was no discussion.

VOTE: YES: HAINES, KNIGHT, MATTHEWS, REISS, DERRY, LOWNEY, MARKS, SLONE

Motion carried.

B. Remodeled or New Recreation Facility Update

Mr. Haines updated the group on their project work plan. He explained the efforts to connect with people and groups for data collections had a goal of completing this by the end of August, but due to people's availability, it's moving into September. They are attempting to look at products and services that meet the need of a HERC building, whether new or remodeled, in terms of being able to justify the expenditures and the space. The two primary focuses are one, where space is needed for activities and products that are fast growing. A good example is the Community Recreation Program where they have a number of service offerings that are growing from 200% to 300% over a three year period, and eventually they will need additional space. The other area is products and services that are not available yet in the community or not provided by the private sector, an example from talking to library staff is offering tech related activities for senior citizens get a better understanding of technology.

Mr. Haines added that he is working on a mission statement to bring back to the group for approval and the economic impact assessment. Regarding the assessment he's attempting to create a model that shows the increase in economic activity due to a refurbished or new HERC building.

Lastly he recalled at the last meeting they discussed the cost of approximately \$400+ per square foot for a new building. Now the focus will be working through the refurbished HERC building.

C. Report on other rec facilities

Mr. Slone reported that he's reached out to the cities of Kenai, Soldotna, Seward, Cordova, and Valdez by submitting questions via email, and phone with some. Seward has responded and he anticipates receiving input back from the other cities.

In response to questions, Mr. Haines suggested a report should be ready for the task force to consider by their first meeting in October.

NEW BUSINESS (20 minutes per item)

A. Budget Considerations, City funding mechanisms

Deputy City Planner Engebretsen reviewed her memorandum, the capital funding resource information, and financing information from the police station project that was provided in the packet. Administration's standpoint is if we want more community recreation in the sense of a building and more programs, we'll need more revenue to pay for it. The police station information shows what a sales tax increase or mil rate increase could look like and the stance is that there will probably need to be a vote of the people to raise taxes to pay for the building and maintenance.

Discussion points included

- The Needs Assessment showed at least a segment of the population was willing to pay for recreation.
- Our fees for recreation have been stagnant for years and possibly raising the fees would bring some revenue, another component is potentially charging people who don't live in the city a slightly higher fee.
- There is the potential of demo-ing the HERC and having land to be used as an outdoor park with recreation in an outdoor setting.

Regarding the capital funding resources Deputy City Planner Engebretsen explained a lot of the funders typically don't want to be the 20% that get a project started, they want to be the 20% that get you to the end. The community has to be invested and have a good portion of the funding in place before attracting other dollars. She explained processes the city went through for other loans, like the USDA funding for the library building and the half percent sales tax increase to pay for the new building and for community recreation. She also touched on impacts to the general fund from loss of sales tax revenue with the seasonal sales tax on non-prepared foods. In her opinion the city would be most successful in having citizens interested in either a sales tax or property tax proposition, followed up with addressing fees.

Point was raised that it's more than just building a building, there are ongoing maintenance costs as well. Brief discussion ensued regarding contracting for operation of the facility, and

targeted taxes on things like alcohol and tobacco. It was suggested that they need to look at funding sources other than the taxation model, the more options we have will be beneficial.

It was suggested that at the next meeting they discuss the Needs Assessment surveys and the criteria utilized because it's somewhat misleading when talking about the number of people who support building a facility, for example.

B. Fire Marshal conversation, building code and occupancy considerations

Deputy City Planner Engebretsen touched on incremental use of the HERC, as has been previously discussed. The building codes are being updated over time and one thing that will become an issue is the way the stairwell is constructed. She understands now it's considered a fire break. When the building code changes in about two months, the stairwell may not be considered a fire break. One of the recommendations of the Fire Marshal was to have an architect look at it to help determine if it's okay, needs to be remodeled, or if doing anything is the major remodel. Her idea of incremental use appears to be dying down.

Mr. Reiss concurred and reviewed his discussion with the Fire Marshal's office that is outlined in the packet. They are unsure if the stair well is considered a fire break and the codes are tightening up on that. Essentially the only way to have a use upstairs and a separate use downstairs is if the stair well can be considered a fire barrier. An individual architect who is certified to look at those issues could review it, it doesn't have to be Stantec. If it can be certified, or easily configured into a fire barrier, then the upstairs can have one use factor and the downstairs with the gym can have a second use factor. If not, the building takes on the more stringent determination for the use. In discussion with Mr. Fisher from the Fire Marshal office, what they need to know for their determination is what the use is, then they can apply what's outlined in statute to determine if it meets certain fire code parameters. They don't want to do the work at this early stage, but will when the use is determined, and drawings are available at about 90-95%. He reviewed some information about costs and options related to minor and major modifications and potential sprinkling upgrades.

In discussion about demolition, it was suggested the smaller HERC 2 building it could potentially be \$250,000 on the low end, as a contractor could possibly salvage items to help keep the cost down. HERC 1 is almost three times the size and could be upward to \$1 million, worst case.

Discussion ensued on the need to establish whether or not the stairwell can be considered a fire barrier as that will help determine what can be done regarding the use of the building. There was back and forth discussion about timing for an architect to come in, whether to wait on taking action until after the upcoming September 5th worksession with Public Works, and different architectural needs that need to be addressed.

MARKS/LOWNEY MOVED THAT WE APPROVE USE OF FUNDS TO HIRE A FIRE CERTIFIED ARCHITECT TO GO THE HERC AND LOOK AT THE ISSUE OF THE FIRE BARRIER AT THE STAIRS, WITH THE IDEA WE WILL BE HIRING THAT PERSON AFTER SEPTEMBER 5TH.

There was brief discussion regarding the need to include a date.

LOWNEY/MARKS MOVED TO AMEND INSTEAD OF USING THE TERM HIRE TO SAY WE WOULD ACTIVATE A HIRING IF THE NEED AROSE AFTER THE WORKSESSION ON SEPTEMBER 5TH.

Discussion moved in the direction of needing to establish a use.

SLONE/LOWNEY MOVED TO AMEND TO ADD FOR THE PURPOSE OF REVIEWING FOR B OR E OCCUPANCY.

There were comments that there isn't a need to review for a specific use related to this action for review of the stairwell.

VOTE (secondary amendment re: b or e occupancy): YES: SLONE
NO: MARKS, REISS, KNIGHT, LOWNEY, MATTHEWS, DERRY, HAINES

Motion failed.

VOTE (primary amendment re: activate hiring): YES: MARKS, REISS, LOWNEY, HAINES, DERRY, KNIGHT
NO: SLONE, MATTHEWS

Motion carried.

VOTE (main motion as amended): YES: DERRY, MARKS, REISS, KNIGHT, HAINES, MATTHEWS, LOWNEY
NO: SLONE

Motion carried.

C. Next Steps

Deputy City Planner Engebretsen noted in interest of time, she will work with the Chair on next steps to outline the next few meetings. At the next meeting there will be more discussion on use, the needs assessment and the statistically valid survey, what questions we have answered at this point, what's left, and our worksession with Council on the 24th.

It was requested a tentative date be set to do a public forum in the evening. Chair Matthews noted Dr. Marley was in the audience and she thought he might have something to share based on comments he made at the Chamber meeting. She asked if staff could reach out to him to provide his comments in writing or have time on the agenda to share.

INFORMATIONAL ITEMS

COMMENTS OF THE AUDIENCE

The Audience may comment on any item. 3 minute time limit

None

COMMENTS OF CITY STAFF

None

COMMENTS OF THE TASK FORCE

Mr. Derry commented that he's done some expense analysis on operating costs for the building and will consult with Julie on when to talk about it.

ADJOURN

There being no further business to come before the Task Force the meeting adjourned at 5:05 p.m. The next regular meeting is scheduled for September 11, 2018 at 3:00 p.m. at the City Hall Conference Room located at 491 E. Pioneer Avenue, Homer, Alaska.

MELISSA JACOBSEN, MMC, CITY CLERK

Approved:_____