



City of Homer

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Memorandum Supplemental Packet

TO: MAYOR CASTNER AND HOMER CITY COUNCIL
FROM: MELISSA JACOBSEN, MMC, CITY CLERK
DATE: MARCH 22, 2021
SUBJECT: SUPPLEMENTAL PACKET

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Peatlands At A Glance

Homer Drawdown: Peatland Project



Peatlands are wetlands

- Wetlands are generally defined in the Cook Inlet Area as any place where the water table is less than 12" from the surface for more than 2 weeks of the growing season, as defined in section 404 of the Clean Water Act

Peatlands are a combination of water, living plants, and dead plants

- In particular, living and dead sphagnum mosses play a key role in most peatlands

About half of the southern Kenai Lowlands is covered by peatlands!

- This includes Niniichik River Watershed, Deep Creek Watershed, Starisk Creek Watershed, and Anchor River Watershed

There are significant areas of peatlands within the City of Homer

- The area around the airport, Beluga Lake, and Lampert Lake is a great example

Peatlands are excellent at storing carbon. Globally, peatlands:

- Retain 500-600 gigatons of carbon overall
- Sequester about 0.37 gigatons of carbon per year
- Represent 42% of terrestrial carbon stores

Peatlands can be a critical source of carbon nutrients in many local streams

- This carbon, balanced with nitrogen from alders especially, support productive food webs that sustain juvenile salmon

Peatlands in the Kenai Lowlands can buffer stream temperature and water level during hot summers or dry years

- Peatlands slowly release cool water into the system. This can help make the streams more hospitable for salmon and other life.

Peatlands are important habitat for moose and many other animals

Globally, damage to peatlands is responsible for approximately 6% of annual human-driven carbon emissions

Some local peatlands are being overcome by grasses and trees

- Research indicates accelerating invasion of woody vegetation into wetlands on the western Kenai Peninsula lowlands lead to a 6.2% per decade decline from 1951 to 1968, and 11.1% per decade decline from 1968 to 1996

To learn more:

Berg et al, [Recent woody invasion of wetlands on the Kenai Peninsula Lowlands, south-central Alaska: a major regime shift after 18,000 years of wet Sphagnum-sedge peat recruitment](#), November 2009, [Canadian Journal of Forest Research](#) 39(11):2033-2046.

Gracz, Michael. (2017). [Wetlands of Cook Inlet Basin, Alaska: Classification and Contributions to Stream Flow](#). Retrieved from the University of Minnesota Digital Conservancy, <https://hdl.handle.net/11299/188829>.

Walker, C. M., D. F. Whigham, I. S. Bentz, J. M. Argueta, R. S. King, M. C. Rains, C. A. Simenstad, C. Guo, S. J. Baird, and C. J. Field. 2021. [Linking landscape attributes to salmon and decision-making in the southern Kenai Lowlands, Alaska, USA](#). *Ecology and Society* 26(1):1. <https://doi.org/10.5751/ES-11798-260101>

IUCN, 2021. Issues Brief: Peatlands and Climate Change. Accessed March 22, 2021 from <https://www.iucn.org/resources/issues-briefs/peatlands-and-climate-change>

To: Mayor Castner and Homer City Council
From: Scott Smith, Homer Planning Commissioner
Date: March 17, 2021
Subject: Planning Commission Report for City Council Meeting

Attending: Commissioners Highland, Petska-Rubalcava, Venuti, Barnwell, Smith and Deputy City Clerk Renee Krause were present. Commissioners Bentz and Conely were excused.

Work Session

Director of Public Works Janette Keiser presented the Proposed Road Financial Plan to the Commission. Using funds from the HART Fund, she highlighted their approach of their “fix the worst first” system of repairing Homer’s roads. The commission was able to introduce a couple questions that Ms. Keiser will process to improve the analytics. The Planning Office and Commission will produce and present City Council a document of recommendation to move forward with this effort.

Regular Meeting

Agenda was amended and approved.

There were neither **Public Comments** nor **Reconsiderations**.

Consent Agenda was passed without discussion or objection.

There were no **Presentations** or **Visitors**

Reports

Staff Report 21-15 City Planner’s Report was reviewed by City Planner Abboud. He highlighted several Resolutions and Ordinances and the great challenge of producing funds for these efforts. Also included were updates on a CUP Remand, Planning Office Staffing Challenges, and Commissioner Training. In the report on Zoning Permits, Mr. Abboud believes he is seeing

a new trend of more development in the Homer area which he believes will continue to increase this year and beyond.

Public Works Task Force Report by Commissioner Charles Barnwell: there is a lot of work going on. They are producing and reviewing a large amount of data in regard to potential Tsunami impact on the location of the new Public Works Facility, as well as how operations and workforce needs could impact a particular location.

Public Hearings

Staff Report 21-16, Conditional Use Permit 21-02 to allow two duplexes and a triplex at 89 Sterling Highway was unanimously approved. Acknowledging the shortage of affordable, temporary housing, this is a housing project by the owner of the Aspen Hotel to provide housing for their employees to work in the hotel.

A question was raised about building residences in what is known to be the Tsunami flood area: are we being wise to allow housing in the potential flood area? HPC will address this in a future meeting.

Plat Considerations

Staff Report 21-17, West Hill Subdivision – Harness Addition Preliminary Plat was unanimously approved.

A question was raised about the potential use of this property since the applicant owns the adjacent property (which is in the RR Zone, not allowing for heavy equipment storage) and currently stores such equipment on his land. Being this is in the Bidarki Creek watershed area, does this need to be addressed?

Staff Report 21-18, Barnett’s South Slope Subdivision Quiet Creek Park Lot 38 Replat Preliminary Plat was unanimously approved.

Pending Business

Staff Report 21-19, Community Design Manual - City Planner Abboud briefly shared on the developments on the CDM.

Informational Materials – Commissioner Petzka-Rubalcava highlighted the great success of the Homer Seed Library, noting that it was nice to see some “normalcy” returning to the community and that her kids really enjoyed using this service.

Homer Planning Commission will go through deliberations of the recent Appeal Hearing during the April 7th Work Session. Our next Regular Meeting will follow virtually by Zoom at 6:30 p.m.