

ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT ADVISORY COMMISSION
REGULAR MEETING
JUNE 8, 2010

Session 10-04, a Regular Meeting of the Economic Development Advisory Commission was called to order at 6:00 p.m. by Chair Erickson on June 8, 2010 at the City Hall Cowles Council Chambers located at 491 E. Pioneer Avenue, Homer, Alaska.

PRESENT: COMMISSIONER DAUPHINAIS, ERICKSON, RAVIN, SIMPSON

ABSENT: COMMISSIONER FAULKNER, HOPPE, NEECE

COUNCILMEMBER: WYTHE

STAFF: SPECIAL PROJECTS COORDINATOR HOLEN
DEPUTY CITY CLERK JACOBSEN

APPROVAL OF THE AGENDA

The agenda was amended to hear pending business item B before item A.

RAVIN/DAUPHINAIS MOVED TO APPROVE THE AGENDA.

The amended agenda was approved by consensus.

PUBLIC COMMENTS REGARDING ITEMS ON THE AGENDA

There were no public comments.

RECONSIDERATION

There were no items for reconsideration.

APPROVAL OF MINUTES

A. Meeting Minutes of May 11, 2010

RAVIN/SIMPSON MOVED TO APPROVE THE MINUTES.

The minutes were approved by consensus.

VISITORS

A. Kyra Wagner, Sustainable Homer

Kyra Wagner, a volunteer with Sustainable Homer, explained that it has become a list service network of local and state resource information on subjects like local food, energy efficiency, green building, transportation and those types of focuses. Through the website Sustainablehomer.org Mrs. Wagner also does a weekly list serve that announces happenings around town regarding sustainability. She said she is a member of the Chamber EDC and economic development is something she has always focused on. Local food production is near and dear to her heart and seems to be ripe right now. She has applied a for VISTA position through UACED. They are waiting to see if they are going to get VISTA funding this year, and if it does come to fruition she has a three year work program that is focused in three phases:

ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT ADVISORY COMMISSION
REGULAR MEETING
MAY 11, 2010

- Data Collection to get information on prices paid for local food, local demand, and local production. It will get the VISTA into the community and building into the network.
- Integration to find out what kind of programs are available for sponsoring local production.

Regarding the integration phase, Mrs. Wagner explained that the South Kenai Peninsula Communities Project did a year long study around town to analyze, in a broad way, the health of the community. The study came up with 3 foci for this year; the violence and substance abuse situation, a community resource center, and healthy lifestyle choices, which got narrowed down to food. With food, there is a serious weak link for transportation and economic dependency on the lower 48 for food. For rock solid economic development, as much of it that can be produced here, stays here. She noted that the state just ratified the Farm to School Bill which gives local producers the ability to sell their food to local schools, something that has been illegal to this point.

- To promote, by working through the Homer Farmers' Market, local food and local economy. One aspect being considering is promoting local currency through the Farmers' Market and participating businesses.

Mrs. Wagner explained that the VISTA is being sponsored by the Homer Farmers' Market and once the VISTA is gone, this network of organizations that have worked together will be established. Councilmember's Roberts and Lewis are talking about a resolution of support for the VISTA, and the Homer Foundation has approved a grant for the first year of housing.

There was discussion regarding information about data collections and ways to expand the ability to grow food locally because of Homer's short growing season.

STAFF AND COUNCIL REPORT

There were no Staff or Councilmember comments.

PUBLIC HEARING

There were no items for public hearing.

PENDING BUSINESS

A. Sitka Economic Development Association-a Model for Homer?

Commissioner Dauphinais commented that the SEDA website is easy to read, very intuitive, and has an inventory of what Sitka has to offer, both in terms of available land, buildings, and services. He said it looks like a unified front of the City, Borough, and Business. In Homer there is an EDC for the City and one for the Chamber. Sustainable Homer is doing some economic development things, all which are good, but there really isn't a place to go for someone who wants to see if Homer is a suitable place for their business. His recommendation would be to bring it all together somehow for a unified front. Discussion points included:

- The City's new website could serve as a unified point for information.

ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT ADVISORY COMMISSION
REGULAR MEETING
MAY 11, 2010

- Some fundamental points need to be resolved like: What is the economic development body going to be? Is it a policy body? Is it going to actively market the potential for development in Homer? Is it going to be something else all together? Is it a group or a person? Where will their direction come from, Chamber or City? Questions to that effect.
- Homer has done a lot of what Sitka has done, it just hasn't been consolidated.
- This Commissions role is outlined in Code. One responsibility is to develop recommendations on how the community should proceed with planning and encouraging development of the community, and what procedures and processes should be considered. One way of putting this forward is through the CEDS.
- The CEDS can serve as an important document for putting forward recommendations. The current draft has a section that refers to the issues previously brought about a unified point for information on bringing business to Homer.
- The importance of having vocational education in high school to bring awareness of the trades in our area to the local youth. That is an important aspect in keeping our young people here to raise their families.
- Currently the good jobs in Homer have low turnover. Creating jobs is important and how to invite new business in needs to be considered. Without that, how does the community keep their kids here so the community can grow?

Commissioner Dauphinais said he will talk to people in other areas about what they do, including a more urban community for contrast and provide information for discussion at the next meeting.

Chair Erickson noted that there is no meeting in July due to anticipated absences and would like to have this on the August 10 agenda for discussion of where to go next.

Commissioner Simpson suggested that the City could create its own resume to post on the web and send out to businesses.

B. Comprehensive Economic Development Strategy (CEDS)

Special Projects Coordinator Holen explained that she has worked on the first two sections of the outline. It is a very rough draft that will be shaped further by input from the Commission and the public. She noted that previously Councilmember Hogan suggested eliminating the economic sectors but she sees value in including them. It will help keep from having too much emphasis on tourism, and it will show there are other sectors and diversification. The Commission was in agreement to keep the sectors and to consider a priority order for how they would like to see the community develop.

There was brief discussion in support of adding transportation, education and a type of miscellaneous general merchandising to the sectors. It was also suggested that something in line with Commissioner Dauphinais' earlier suggestions be addressed as well.

There was consensus that Special Projects Coordinator Holen continue on with her work and include it on the August agenda for more discussion.

NEW BUSINESS

No New Business Items were scheduled.

INFORMATIONAL MATERIALS

- A. Comments of the City Manager and Port and Harbor Director Re: Proposed Changes to the Lease Policy
- B. Copy of EDC Memo to City Council Re: Store Size Cap
- C. Memo from Sheri Hobbs Re: On the Job Training Program
- D. Correspondence with State Demographer Greg Williams Re: Homer Population
- E. News Articles of Possible Interest
- F. Items of possible interest from recent City Council meeting packets

Chair Erickson referenced the laydown information provided by Commissioner Faulkner. She said she had asked him to provide the Commission with comments on the City Manager's points, but that was not available for this meeting.

Commissioner Ravin expressed his frustration that it appears that several hundred person hours from the Commission working on the lease policy has pretty much been flushed and they are at risk of having completely wasted their time for the last year.

Councilmember Wythe commented that Council has the EDC's information and will continue to proceed through it. Comment has been made that the review is not unlike reviewing the Comprehensive Plan. There is a lot of philosophical change that has to be looked at. It will be a process.

There was brief discussion regarding the demographic information that was provided and whether it would change the age distribution. Special Projects Coordinator Holen commented that the state doesn't go into that specific of detail, but we will know more when the census results are available.

COMMENTS OF THE AUDIENCE

No audience comments.

COMMENTS OF CITY STAFF

There were no staff comments.

COMMENTS OF THE COUNCIL MEMBER

Councilmember Wythe encouraged the Commissioners not to become discouraged when things they promote to the Council don't get approved. She encouraged them to continue looking at things and bringing them forward. The things they are looking at are things that are very large changes in the way the community and City do business. If the advisory bodies never bring up alternative decisions or recommendations, they are things that potentially would never come before the Council to think about. It may be a thought whose time is not yet here, but it has the opportunity to come back at a later time for consideration. Part of the functions of the Commissions and Committees is to do the in-depth leg work that the Council doesn't have time to do. She encourage them not to feel unappreciated if Council doesn't accept the changes, it just may be something that isn't ready yet to come forward.

ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT ADVISORY COMMISSION
REGULAR MEETING
MAY 11, 2010

Chair Erickson noted the weight of staff input versus the Commission input. Councilmember Wythe commented that in fairness to the Council they look at the whole picture recognizing that we hire staff and expect them to be professionals on the Council's behalf in performing their duties and Commissions are appointed to do the in-depth work. She has encouraged them to bring forth all the detail they went through so the Council has that information to consider. This Council appears to do their due diligence in reviewing the information and asking good questions.

COMMENTS OF THE CHAIR

Chair Erickson thanked everyone and reminded them about the upcoming worksession on the Spit Comprehensive Plan.

COMMENTS OF THE COMMISSION MEMBERS

Commissioner Ravin commented that demographics are the ultimate bellwether of economic trends. If we look at the data in front of us we can look at the future of our community. If we are able to digest the data of the last decade and a half we can see how people move into our community and how they age, what jobs they take, what the employment trends are, we can see the future of our community. To change the future we have to provide the tools for our community to grow, specifically in the 20-35 age demographic, we are losing that. It is a huge demographic hole that we as the EDC need to fill. Business owners need to find help, yet the young people are leaving town to find work somewhere else. We need to find a way to tie those things together.

Commissioner Simpson commented that for a short meeting it was productive. He asked if there was anything the Commission could do to assist Ms. Holen in her work on the CEDS. She responded that they feel free to provide input on any of the sectors that they are familiar with.

Commissioner Dauphinais had no comment.

ADJOURN

There being no more business to come before the Commission the meeting was adjourned at 7:15 p.m. The next regular meeting is scheduled for August 10, 2010 at 6:00 p.m. in the City Hall Cowles Council Chambers.

MELISSA JACOBSEN, CMC, DEPUTY CITY CLERK

Approved: _____