

Session 13-04 a Regular Meeting of the Economic Development Advisory Commission was called to order by Chair Sarno at 6:00 p.m. on April 9, 2013 at the City Hall Cowles Council Chambers located at 491 E. Pioneer Avenue, Homer, Alaska.

PRESENT: COMMISSIONER KRISINTU, MAXWELL, ROSS, SARNO, WAGNER

STAFF: COMMUNITY & ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT COORDINATOR KOESTER
DEPUTY CITY CLERK JACOBSEN

AGENDA APPROVAL

The agenda was approved by consensus of the Commission.

PUBLIC COMMENTS REGARDING ITEMS ON THE AGENDA

None

RECONSIDERATION

There was no reconsideration scheduled.

APPROVAL OF MINUTES

A. March 12, 2013 Regular Meeting Minutes

MAXWELL/WAGNER MOVED TO APPROVE THE MINUTES.

There was no discussion.

VOTE: NON OBJECTION: UNANIMOUS CONSENT

Motion carried.

VISITORS

A. Jess Tenhoff – Affordable Housing and Lightweight Housing Alternatives

Jess Tenhoff of Nomad Shelters gave the commission an overview of her life. She has been in Homer since 2000 with her husband producing yurts. Shelter is a basic need. The problem is shelter in our society is that it is the carrot at the end of a stick for the whole system. That system doesn't work for everyone because not everyone can get a bank loan, like students, elderly, poor, and unemployed. Lightweight shelter is another way do things and can free people. Mrs. Tenhoff talked about challenges of lightweight housing and opportunities for using them for personal housing, community housing, schools, or businesses.

In response to questions Mrs. Tenhoff reviewed what her company offers for yurts, costs, and payment options. She explained that yurts don't qualify for bank financing, but they are insurable and allowed in

the city if they are connected to utilities. Point was raised that it is inexpensive housing, but a person would need a piece of land to put it on.

STAFF AND COUNCIL REPORT/COMMITTEE REPORTS/BOROUGH REPORTS

A. Staff Report: Affordable Housing: A first look at the Homer market

Community and Economic Development Coordinator Koester reviewed her staff report.

The commission reviewed and discussed the housing costs provided by Mrs. Koester and brainstormed some ideas regarding affordable housing. Comments included:

- We have an “immigrant class” of really cool young people who come in and want to work, and then decide to stay. We have the ingredients to create a good culture that would make use of the affordable housing.
- There are great ways to do this with planning central areas where people can live. There is a way to put people in small units but give them what they want. Greenbelts and corridors for wildlife are important.
- Small five or six unit homes planned well with surrounding greenbelts can build community and still have security and a sense of smaller community.
- Intentional communities, like the European model, that have multi housing units. They are more efficient and can be really attractive.
- Yurts could be a good option for college housing if there was land available for them.
- Homer has infrastructure for water and sewer but not all are accessible by road, and that is something that should be resolved.

PUBLIC HEARING

PENDING BUSINESS

A. Review of electronic survey to work from home entrepreneurs.

The Commission reviewed the survey and agreed a good option is for each of them to pass it on to people they know.

NEW BUSINESS

A. Schedule of City Council Updates

The Commission discussed the best way to plan for attendance at Council meetings. They agreed to decide each month what information they will give to the council and who will speak that month.

B. Appointment of EDC member to the Lease Committee

Commissioner Krisintu said she would serve on the Lease Committee. The commission agreed by consensus.

INFORMATIONAL ITEMS

None

COMMENTS OF THE AUDIENCE

Larry Slone, city resident, provided a laydown about Hallo Bay, a locally based business that provides service outside of Homer. His goal was to encourage the commission to cast a wider net with their survey. He also provided some information from a 2008 survey by Hallo Bay that outlined some parameters they used. Regarding affordable housing Mr. Slone commented that he would categorize it as a starter home, in the \$150,000 range. He would also categorize an affordable home as anything under \$10,000. What was proposed in developing an alternative culture is a culture that won't graft well with the current structure. Homer is based on the model that has been developed over hundreds of years with specific building standards that have to be met with respect to construction materials, plumbing, and etcetera. There are government standards when they provide low income housing for people. The lending institutions are geared toward permanent structures of a more significant investment where they can recoup benefits through interest. People who are going to invest in a permanent structure aren't likely to want to have a yurt placed alongside. He agrees the advantage should be presented to the people who will benefit from it, but for the reasons he explained, it won't happen within Homer, unless a housing unit was set up as a test case.

Bumppo Bremmicker, city resident, commented that it is great they are looking at affordable housing. He thinks affordable means different things to different people, but he would say under \$100,000. Traditionally in Alaska a starter cabin was 16x20 feet for one person. He said for future discussions it would be good to know the median income in Homer, as well as the median home price, and then see how far apart those numbers are. It would be interesting to know. One thing they discussed on the Town Center Committee was mixed housing for students and seniors, also businesses with housing above it. Homer doesn't really have a lot of standards like they do outside, there are a few, but not the same at all. Larry made some good points tonight.

Jess Tenhoff, city resident, noted they had just talked about participation at the meetings and from her perspective the faster this city government can get hooked into the electronic world where they can have direct participation in our democracy, the faster we can make decisions happen. In the social networking world you can get consensus very quickly. It's archaic not to take that step. She encouraged the commission to take the first step in getting people to participate by putting it on line and making it interactive. To address Larry's concern with property values and yurts, a yurt is a portable structure so it has no effect on the home or land equity. It can happen where you make laws not to allow it, but then you limit portable shelter. She wants them to remember light weight living on the earth is the way of the future, because we have to.

COMMENTS OF CITY STAFF

None

COMMENTS OF THE COUNCILMEMBER

None

COMMENTS OF THE CHAIR

ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT ADVISORY COMMISSION
REGULAR MEETING
APRIL 9, 2013

Chair Sarno said it was a great meeting. She is so grateful to the staff and to the commission for their work.

COMMENTS OF THE COMMISSION

Commissioner Wagner thanked Larry for his feedback. The Hallo Bay example matches up with what they are looking at. Another commissioner could be virtual. It could happen, but probably not very soon.

Commissioner Maxwell thanked everyone who participated tonight. It is a lively group and it is great to get input. She loves the idea of a virtual commissioner; she participates in a lot video conferencing from her work place. She likes the idea of the city having a link where folks could submit comments, and check and see what is going on with the committee.

Commissioner Krisintu had no further comments.

ADJOURN

There being no further business to come before the Commission the meeting adjourned at 7:28 p.m. The next regular meeting is scheduled for Tuesday, May 14, 2013 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: _____