

Session 13-08 a Regular Meeting of the Economic Development Advisory Commission was called to order by Chair Sarno at 6:00 p.m. on November 12, 2013 at the City Hall Cowles Council Chambers located at 491 E. Pioneer Avenue, Homer, Alaska.

PRESENT: COMMISSIONER BARTH, ROSS, SARNO, WAGNER

ABSENT: KRISINTU (excused)

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

AGENDA APPROVAL

Chair Sarno called for a motion to approve the agenda.

BARTH/ARNO SO MOVED.

There was no discussion.

VOTE: NON OBJECTION: UNANIMOUS CONSENT.

Motion carried.

PUBLIC COMMENTS REGARDING ITEMS ON THE AGENDA

None

RECONSIDERATION

None

APPROVAL OF MINUTES

A. September 10, 2013 Regular Meeting Minutes

The minutes were approved by consensus of the Commission.

VISITORS

STAFF AND COUNCIL REPORT/COMMITTEE REPORTS/BOROUGH REPORTS

A. Non-profit impact on the economy

Community and Economic Development Coordinator Koester reviewed her staff report.

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The group reviewed the list of non-profits and recognized in a lot of cases that they rely a lot on the work of volunteers. It was noted that the hospital was not included on the list. They agreed to continue to mull the information over and talk more at a future meeting.

PUBLIC HEARING

PENDING BUSINESS

A. EDC Bylaw Review and Amendment to Include the Chamber Director as a Non –Voting Member

ROSS/BARTH MOVED TO FORWARD THE DRAFT RESOLUTION TO CITY COUNCIL.

There was no discussion.

VOTE: NON OBJECTION: UNANIMOUS CONSENT

Motion carried.

NEW BUSINESS

A. Election of Chair and Vice Chair

Chair Sarno opened the floor to nominations for Chair.

ROSS/SARNO NOMINATED COMMISSIONER BARTH FOR CHAIR.

Commissioner Barth accepted the nomination and there was no further discussion.

VOTE: NON OBJECTION: UNANIMOUS CONSENT.

Motion carried.

Chair Barth assumed the gavel and opened the floor to nominations for Vice Chair.

SARNO/ROSS NOMINATED COMMISSIONER WAGNER FOR VICE CHAIR.

There was discussion that he is currently Vice Chair.

VOTE: NON OBJECTION: UNANIMOUS CONSENT

Motion carried.

B. Memorandum from City Clerk Re: 2014 Meeting Schedule

SARNO/ROSS MOVED TO APPROVE THE ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT COMMISSION SCHEDULE AS IS.

There was no discussion.

VOTE: NON OBJECTION: UNANIMOUS CONSENT

Motion carried.

C. Hosting Chamber Mixer with Homer Advisory Planning Commission

Community and Economic Development Coordinator Koester explained that the Planning Commission is interested in co-hosting a chamber mixer in an effort to reach out to the business community and get them familiar with the Economic Development Commission and the Planning Commission. She reviewed that there would be a cost for advertising, which Planning has said they could cover advertising, and there will also be a cost for light refreshments.

The Commission was supportive of the idea and suggested March or May. Mrs. Koester said she would pass the information on to Planning and when the date is set; they can talk about who will be available to attend.

D. City Council Sign Up November 25 and December 9

Commissioner Sarno said she will attend on December 9th and give an update about the water and sewer visits.

E. Formulating an Implementation Strategy for Recommendations to Council

- i. Example Market Homer to High Tech Entrepreneurs
- ii. Leveraging Google eCity designation

Community and Economic Development Coordinator Koester reviewed her staff report and the process she suggests the Commission use in making recommendations. Since the Commission has discussed the notion of high tech entrepreneurs in some detail, she used that information to explain the process, which includes:

- Analyzing what the Commission has done thus far to explore the topic and potential holes.
- Developing an assessment of the existing resource. That may include inviting visitors to speak, outside research, or in some instances proposing hiring an outside firm.
- Developing a clear vision of the need and how it relates to Economic development in Homer.
- Brainstorming potential action items the City could take to help the need.
- Prioritizing and choosing a goal(s) worth the public resource that is doable. This may also be where the Commission decides action on this item is not a responsibility of the City or is too complex and large a project for existing resources.
- Developing implementation strategies including required resources, timelines, and responsible parties.

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The Commission agreed that it would be beneficial to consider the directives from Council, understand why these were recommended, determine whether or not keep the recommendations as priorities for the Commission to spend time on, and prioritize them in a way that they can make the best use of their time.

They briefly considered each of the directives and made the following comments:

Affordable Housing- They have already put some time and effort into analyzing this topic. One takeaway was that there isn't much housing available that is up to Coast Guard standards. This could be a piece worth focusing on, because there isn't much they can do to stimulate other parts of affordable housing that relate to builders, market, and so forth. It was suggested that it is also important to consider how the different pieces fit together to achieve the overall goal of prosperity in Homer, and attract more jobs and people to town, especially as it relates to young people. Keep on the priority list.

Vo-Tec and Marine Tech Training and Education - This is something the Commission has not addressed yet but holds merit for the community. Keep on the priority list

Market Homer for High Tech Business – There has been a lot of discussion and leg work done on this topic and could be wrapped up soon. Comment was made that high tech business is already happening with people finding out Homer is a good place to be within their own networks. Keep on the priority list.

Downtown Vitalization – Downtown vitalization can encompass different aspects. The City of Soldotna recently had a matching grant program that offered incentives to businesses for storefront renovations and things like that. The CEDS refers to the town center development plan, which they have discussed a little bit. There are so many planning issues around around the town center development. Take off the priority list and redefine at a later time.

Expand Water & Sewer Distribution – The City of Homer has low density and that is a reason our water rates are so high. Infill would make it more affordable. There was discussion that this topic isn't really relevant to the commission. They should focus on things that will improve our economy, and infill could begin to develop as a result. Take off the priority list.

Shoulder Season Sports – Sporting events bring a lot of economic benefit to the community, but it's a given those things will do that. How to get the sport events here isn't necessarily their role. Recommend Parks and Recreation Commission take a role in gathering information and both groups could provide input. Keep on the priority list.

Agricultural Center – The growth of the high tunnel movement has been big here and the more we grow and sell here the fewer dollars that leave our local economy. There is a lot of potential for Homer as an agricultural center. Generally when building the agricultural potential of an area, first take care of the local market, and then look at marketing outside. Keep on the priority list.

After consideration of the topics the group established the order in which they would consider them using implementation and recommendation strategy proposed by Mrs. Koester.

1. Market Homer for High Tech Business
2. Shoulder Season Sports
3. Affordable Housing
4. Promote Homer as an Agricultural Center
5. Vo-Tec or Marine Training and Education

They agreed to forward a memo to Council to let them know the Commission reviewed the recommendations, removed two from the list, and prioritized the remaining five. It would be helpful to explain that priority doesn't necessarily mean that it is what they are most concerned with, but the order they will work through them in the most efficient way possible.

The Commission briefly discussed the eCity designation. Mrs. Koester explained that the chamber had indicated they are working on ways to promote the designation and she will follow up with Mr. Lavrakas about it.

INFORMATIONAL ITEMS

- A. Reminder: Sewage Treatment Plant Tour Tuesday November 26, 2013
- B. RV Parking at College

Community and Economic Development Coordinator Koester briefly commented that she spoke to the college about RV parking in the summer and was informed about the reasons it wouldn't work there.

COMMENTS OF THE AUDIENCE

None

COMMENTS OF CITY STAFF

None

COMMENTS OF THE COUNCILMEMBER

None

COMMENTS OF THE CHAIR

Chair Barth thanked them for making him Chair and for their work tonight.

COMMENTS OF THE COMMISSION

Commissioner Sarno welcomed Mr. Arno. It is really good that they have a diversity of opinions and back grounds among the group. She is happy to give the chairmanship to Mike and thinks they are going to have a good year. She appreciates his focused and direct energy.

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There were no other commission comments.

ADJOURN

There being no further business to come before the Commission the meeting adjourned at 7:48 p.m. The next regular meeting is scheduled for Tuesday, December 10, 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: _____