

Session 17-02 a Regular Meeting of the Economic Development Advisory Commission was called to order by Chair Marks at 6:00 p.m. on February 14, 2017 at the City Hall Cowles Council Chambers located at 491 E. Pioneer Avenue, Homer, Alaska, and opened with the Pledge of Allegiance.

PRESENT: COMMISSIONER GUSTAFSON, LORD, MARKS, RICHARDSON, EVANS (telephonic)

ABSENT: KEISEL, SANSOM (both excused)

STAFF: DEPUTY CITY CLERK JACOBSEN

The Commission met for a worksession at 5:00 p.m. to discuss an update on business retention/expansion luncheons, USDA Grants, and a Conference Center.

AGENDA APPROVAL

Chair Marks asked for a motion to approve the agenda.

RICHARDSON/LORD SO MOVED

There was no discussion.

VOTE: NON OBJECTION: UNANIMOUS CONSENT

Motion carried.

PUBLIC COMMENTS REGARDING ITEMS ON THE AGENDA

RECONSIDERATION

APPROVAL OF MINUTES

A. Regular Meeting Minutes of January 10, 2017

Chair Marks noted a typographical error on page three of the minutes and asked the clerk to add the word "be" at the end of the fifth line of the third paragraph before the word disdain.

LORD/GUSTAFSON MOVED TO APPROVE THE MINUTES AS CORRECTED.

There was no discussion.

VOTE: NON OBJECTION: UNANIMOUS CONSENT

Motion carried.

VISITORS

- A. Peggy Paver, Executive Director, Homer Council on the Arts

Ms. Paver did not attend the meeting.

REPORTS

- A. Marine Trades Association Report

The Marine Trades Association provided a written report in the packet.

- B. Chamber Director Report

Karen Zak, Chamber Director, updated the Commission on upcoming events including the Winter King Tournament, and an Alaska State Chamber program-planning visit. At Mrs. Zak's request Special Projects and Communication Coordinator Carroll shared information about the communications tower project that will be happening on the spit, also the large vessel harbor project to move large vessels out of the small boat harbor and provide moorage that will be required of the new Coast Guard Cutters.

Mrs. Zak reported that inquiries are picking up for visitors coming to Homer this summer. They are sending out 200-300 visitor guides a week, and receiving a lot of requests for relocation guides. Lastly, she updated the group on new businesses in town.

- C. Pioneer Avenue Task Force Report

Chair Marks reported the task force met at the end of January and planned for 2017. There is interest from Homer Council on the Arts and other groups to create a festival to take place after the July 4th parade to keep people in the downtown area after the parade. They also discussed what other gardens can be planted, what might be done for additional murals, the prototype of the pavement project that is on hold until the weather improves, and signage directing people to Pioneer Avenue.

- D. Staff Report

Special Projects and Communication Coordinator Carroll reviewed the information in her staff report.

PUBLIC HEARINGS

PENDING BUSINESS

- A. Conference Center

Chair Marks commented they discussed this in the worksession. She noted the power point in the packet, specifically the yurt that Homer Council on the Arts is constructing as part of their facility upgrade. She noted the seating options for 160 to 194 seats, which will allow for one more place in Homer to hold events.

They briefly discussed the size and availability of SPARC, noting it will be interesting to keep track of how SPARC fills in some of the holes for the community.

At the request of the Commission, Mrs. Zak gave them an abbreviated overview of the process she went through in her work with developing the Dena'ina Civic and Convention Center in Anchorage. It was a three to four year plan to put it in place. The first attempt failed, so looked to see what went wrong and went back the second time with more effort on community input and backing on the project. Starting the discussion now for Homer is a way of planting the seeds to see what could happen in the future. In Anchorage they passed a bed tax to pay back the bonding to build the center rather than public/private partnership funding. After the second year, they are in the black. It takes three to five years to get a large conference committed. For Homer it would be a smaller venue so a one to two year lead for state conferences. She said she'd be happy to do a workshop with the Commission sometime if they'd like.

NEW BUSINESS

A. Identify initiatives/topics for EDC 2017

The Commission listed priorities that included:

1. Reviewing the Sign Code
 - a. Invite someone from Planning to talk to the Commission
2. Broadband/Internet Connectivity Capability round table
3. Looking at centralized parking in the Pioneer Avenue area
 - a. Consider updating signage for day use parking at the HERC for all parking, not just RV, and determine if there are other areas available for day use parking.
4. Doing a more comprehensive, more formalized business retention and expansion survey/assessment.
 - a. Taking what's been started through the luncheons and making it more comprehensive and the product being a report that outlines economic development priorities for one to three or one to five years.

In discussion of a business retention and expansion survey/assessment the Commission talked about survey development and outreach. Special Projects and Communication Coordinator Carroll said her feeling is the idea of having a survey prepared and ready to publish by next meeting is unrealistic, but she can do some research and encouraged the group to also do some research and bring ideas to the Commission they can work on at some worksessions or at the meetings.

The Commission discussed scheduling and agreed to hold a worksession to talk with Planning about the sign code, and have a report under visitors at the meeting for an update on the current situation with broadband in the city.

INFORMATIONAL ITEMS

A. Memorandum from Deputy City Clerk Jacobsen re: Procedure for Commissions Forming Committees/Subcommittees

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- B. Wellness Report and Strategic Plan
- C. Commissioner Attendance at City Council Meetings

Chair Marks acknowledged the wellness report and strategic plan and commended Commissioner Sansom for her work.

Chair Marks also agreed to attend the next City Council meeting.

COMMENTS OF THE AUDIENCE

There were no audience comments.

COMMENTS OF CITY STAFF

There were no staff comments.

COMMENTS OF THE COUNCILMEMBER

Councilmember Smith was absent.

COMMENTS OF THE CHAIR

Chair Marks said they covered a lot of ground tonight and it's good to move forward.

COMMENTS OF THE COMMISSION

Commissioner Richardson said it was a great meeting.

Commissioner Gustafson thanked Commissioner Evans for calling in tonight.

There were no other Commission comments.

ADJOURN

There being no further business to come before the Commission the meeting adjourned at 7:15 p.m. The next regular meeting is scheduled for Tuesday, March 14, 2017 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: _____