

Session 18-05 a Regular Meeting of the Economic Development Advisory Commission was called to order by Chair Karin Marks at 6:01 p.m. on September 11, 2018 at the Conference Room, City Hall located at 491 E. Pioneer Avenue, Homer, Alaska, and opened with the Pledge of Allegiance.

PRESENT: COMMISSIONERS MARKS, BROWN, AREVALO, EVANS, GUSTAFSON, JOHNSON
COUNCILMEMBER SMITH (arrived at 7:20 p.m.)

STAFF: SPECIAL PROJECTS AND COMMUNICATION COORDINATOR CARROLL
DEPUTY CITY CLERK TUSSEY

AGENDA APPROVAL

Chair Marks requested a motion to approve the agenda.

GUSTAFSON/AREVALO MOVED TO APPROVE THE AGENDA.

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 for August 14, 2018

Chair Marks requested a motion to approve the minutes as written.

EVANS/GUSTAFSON MOVED TO APPROVE THE MINUTES OF AUGUST 14, 2018.

There was no discussion.

VOTE. NON OBJECTION. UNANIMOUS CONSENT.

Motion carried.

VISITORS

REPORTS

- A. Marine Trades Association Report
- B. Chamber Director Report
- C. Pioneer Avenue Task Force Report

D. Staff Report – Jennifer Carroll, Special Projects & Communications Coordinator

Chair Marks noted a brief status on each report.

Special Projects & Communications Coordinator Carroll shared a laydown item that provides a “Nuts & Bolts” description of what the Economic Development Advisory Commission does, to help the commissioners familiarize themselves with the process. It was briefly discussed that this information can later be incorporated into the commission’s bylaws when the City Clerk’s Office updates all commission/board bylaws. Ms. Carroll provided an update on the ASAP survey.

The commission discussed the following topics with Ms. Carroll:

- Kenai Peninsula Economic Development Tim Dillon’s presentation on Homer’s economic stats, specifically strong sales tax returns and housing market;
- Meetings with Tim Dillon and Port Director/Harbormaster Bryan Hawkins in regards to the harbor’s sling lift/barge haul-out CIP projects;
- City Council’s final decision on CIP project prioritization;
- Upcoming Economic Development forum, held by Mr. Dillon in Homer on January 9, 2019;
- HERC Task Force’s work and its relevance to the EDC.

Chair Marks noted that City Council and the HERC Task Force are holding a joint worksession on September 24, 2018 if any commissioners are interested in attending.

PUBLIC HEARINGS

PENDING BUSINESS

A. Wayfinding and Streetscape Plan Proposal

Chair Marks provided a brief overview of the commission’s work thus far, and referenced Special Projects & Communications Coordinator Carroll’s memo in the packet.

Ms. Carroll noted the following from her memo-report:

- “Take 2” of the wayfinding-streetscape plan proposal development: asking the commission if the draft she and Deputy City Planner Julie Engebretsen wrote captures the intent of the commission’s efforts;
- Outlining a Scope of Work for the EDC, and asking the commission to approve a scope of work that’s primarily pedestrian-orientated;
- Ways to save on consultant costs, doing items in-house, and determining how much the EDC plans to utilize local expertise to develop the plan’s building blocks;
- Signage designs and what is Homer-appropriate, and how much control over the design does EDC want or if it should just be determined by a designer.

Chair Marks continued explaining the memo-report and her opinion on how the commission should proceed with decision-making. The commission deliberated extensively over the report and what should be the next goal to focus on; commissioners provided their comments/concerns on scope of work topics such as:

- Realistic level of volunteerism the commission can rely on;

- Signage ordinance is an issue but not the focal point at this time;
- Difficulty of finding things in Homer for newcomers/visitors; not a clear “downtown” area
- Concerns on hiring outside consultants;
- Reiteration that the decision before the commission is to set the wayfinding scope of work, specifically to focus on pedestrians, before they bring in public and get council input;
- Utilizing technology, phone apps, or advocating for businesses to set up online information to better aid visitors;
- Reiteration that the EDC is the “local task force group”, comprised of local businesses and the chamber, that is making the decision to set the scope;
- Acknowledging that there are some vehicle-experience issues involved, but the emphasis of the scope of work should be the pedestrian experience (based on the Wayfinding Survey and Ms. Carroll’s report);
- Tasks that have already been identified: Defining the three areas (Spit, Downtown, Old Town) and doing an inventory of what signage already exists to determine what other signs are needed.

Chair Marks brought the commission back to defining a broad scope of work, suggesting an inclusion of utilizing technology to the general scope. The commission further deliberated how that can be incorporated. Chair Marks referenced Ms. Carroll’s memo-report for specific verbiage to make a motion.

MARKS/EVANS MOVED THAT THE ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT ADVISORY COMMISSION PROPOSE DEVELOPING A WAYFINDING/STREETSCAPE PLAN WITH AN EMPHASIS ON:

- 1) PEDESTRIAN EXPERIENCE WITH CONTINUITY WITH VEHICLE SIGNAGE, PARTICULARLY AT HOMER GATEWAYS;
- 2) DESIGN THAT IS COHESIVE, BUT NOT NECESSARILY IDENTICAL, AND THAT ENHANCES AND REFLECTS THE DISTINCTIVE AND CREATIVE CHARACTER OF HOMER; AND
- 3) USE ALL ASPECTS OF TECHNOLOGICAL AND PHYSICAL WAYFINDING SIGNAGE AND TOOLS.

There was no further discussion.

VOTE. NON-OBJECTION. UNANIMOUS CONSENT.

Motion carried.

There was brief discussion on the recent approval status of the City’s Comprehensive Plan, and components from the wayfinding survey being included in it.

Chair Marks voiced concerns about time restrictions and getting through all agenda items; it was agreed to continue the discussion on the Wayfinding and Streetscape Plan Proposal agenda item at the next meeting, and to move onto new business.

NEW BUSINESS

- A. Identifying Next Action Item from BR&E Survey Report

Chair Marks introduced the next agenda topic and provided a brief summary of what the commission has done so far. She further clarified that the ease policy has already been updated on the City Council level, which leaves zoning options/permit process or sign ordinance for the commission to choose to address first. She then opened the floor for discussion.

Commissioner Gustafson questioned if there was too much overlapping with the Planning Department if EDC addressed zoning options/permit process and sign ordinances. Chair Marks pointed out that these issues were prioritized by local businesses, and that the role of EDC is to bring those businesses' concerns (from an economic standpoint) to other commissions/departments in an effort to solve the issues together. Commissioner Brown concurred, noting the business signage issue as an example. There was questions and discussion on the survey results on signage ordinance issues, and how the responses significantly varied. Ms. Carroll encouraged the commission to figure out what is problematic for businesses, and then make recommendations to Advisory Planning Commission for code amendments.

Councilmember Smith arrived at 7:20 p.m.

Chair Marks continued the discussion on how EDC collaborates with other commissions, voting on the three items in the survey's executive summary to narrow down on a next step, and how EDC can still work on the other issues in tandem to the primary one.

The commission extensively deliberated on identifying the next action item from the Business Retention and Expansion Survey, and honing down the public's complaints into specific regulatory barriers that the City can work with.

AREVALO/BROWN MOVED THAT THE NEXT TASK FOR THE ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT ADVISORY COMMISSION WILL BE LOOKING INTO SIGNAGE ORDINANCE ISSUES.

There was no further discussion.

VOTE. NON-OBJECTION. UNANIMOUS CONSENT.

Motion carried.

There was brief discussion on how much more time the commission should spend on this agenda item. Commissioner Evans shared that he will be here for the next meeting and so it was mutually agreed by the commission to continue the discussion at the October 9, 2018 meeting.

INFORMATIONAL ITEMS

- A. City Manager's Report for August 27 & September 10, 2018
- B. Commissioner Attendance at City Council Meetings

Chair Marks read the informational item titles for the record. She reviewed the schedule for the upcoming City Council meetings, and encouraged the other commissioners to attend.

COMMENTS OF THE AUDIENCE

COMMENTS OF CITY STAFF

Deputy City Clerk Tussey requested clarification on when the commission wanted to revisit the agenda item regarding Vice-Chair voting. Chair Marks noted that there may be an additional member joining the EDC at the next meeting so they will soon have a full commission. It was agreed to postpone the voting until the November 13th meeting during the annual chair/Vice-Chair elections, and that Chair duties will fall on the most senior member, Commissioner Gustafson, during Ms. Mark's absence at the October meeting.

Ms. Carroll shared that she will be out on leave the week before packet deadline, and reminded the commission to contact her beforehand with any packet materials they'd like to submit.

COMMENTS OF THE COUNCILMEMBER

Councilmember Smith noted that since he is running uncontested in the upcoming City election, that he will continue serving as councilmember to the Economic Development Advisory Commission. He also suggested that after the commission has delved into sign ordinance issues, to invite a Planning/Zoning staff member to help facilitate the process.

COMMENTS OF THE CHAIR

Chair Marks reiterated that she will be traveling and not attending the October meeting. Mr. Gustafson will oversee the duties of Chair.

COMMENTS OF THE COMMISSION

Commissioners Gustafson and Brown had no comment.

Commissioner Evans opined on getting the Chamber of Commerce involved. The commission discussed initiating a conversation with the Chamber on what their organization has already accomplished in regards to wayfinding, and to eventually have them attend an EDC meeting or hold a joint worksession. It was agreed that Mr. Evans and Ms. Brown would attend the next Chamber's meeting, provide a report at the October 9th meeting, and then the commission can vote on how to proceed.

Commissioner Johnson introduced himself and provided his background summary, sharing what strengths he's able to bring to the commission.

Commissioner Arevalo gave a report on the Green Infrastructure Conference she had attended earlier that day. There was brief discussion on how the information can be incorporated into Homer. Ms. Arevalo further noted that all of the resources provided at the conference will be submitted to each attendee, and that she can share those results with whoever is interested.

ADJOURN

There being no further business to come before the Commission, Chair Marks adjourned the meeting at 7:56 p.m. The next regular meeting is scheduled for Tuesday, October 9, 2018 at 6:00 p.m. at the City Hall Cowles Council Chambers located at 491 E. Pioneer Avenue, Homer, Alaska.

RACHEL TUSSEY, DEPUTY CITY CLERK I

Approved: _____