

Session 19-03 a Regular Meeting of the Economic Development Advisory Commission was called to order by Acting Chair Charles Evans at 6:05 p.m. on March 12, 2019 at the Cowles Council Chambers, City Hall located at 491 E. Pioneer Avenue, Homer, Alaska, and opened with the Pledge of Allegiance.

PRESENT: COMMISSIONERS BROWN, AREVALO, RICHARDSON, EVANS, JOHNSON

ABSENT: COMMISSIONERS MARKS & GUSTAFSON (excused)

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

APPROVAL OF AGENDA

Acting Chair Evans requested a motion to approve the agenda.

AREVALO/JOHNSON 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 February 12, 2019

Acting Chair Evans requested a motion to approve the regular meeting minutes for February 12, 2019.

AREVALO/BROWN MOVED TO APPROVE THE MINUTES.

There was no discussion.

VOTE: NON OBJECTION: UNANIMOUS CONSENT.

Motion carried.

VISITORS/PRESENTATIONS

A. Travis Brown, Planning Tech – Overview of Sign Ordinance

Travis Brown introduced himself and gave an overview of the City's sign ordinance and fielded the following questions:

- Are there reasons that show the current code is working or not working? – It is working in Planning’s opinion; there will never be a perfect code, but majority of business owners coming in have plans that can be approved and staff works with them to get it approved if there’s issues.
- What are the rules for sandwich boards? – Sandwich board signs were allowed in the 2012 rewrite to one per lot, 16 sq. ft. in size.
- How much signage is allowed to businesses in a shared building? – Overall signage on the building is still regulated by the size of the building, regardless of the number of tenants, but they are allowed more free-standing sign space.
- Are there many buildings in town that have more than four tenants where this issue impacts them? – Planning’s feedback from businesses show that it’s mainly the landlord leaving it up to the tenant to apply for their sign permits, which requires Planning to do a site check, and the process works out for the most part. Only two buildings in town have multiple tenants and have an issue with not having enough sign square footage for their businesses.
- What does Planning hear businesses complain about? – Complaints from general public to their office are mainly that they don’t like the flashing light signs. From businesses, biggest complaint is not allowing to have enough off-site signage for businesses that are not located directly on street frontage.
- Is there limits on the content of the sign? – No, codes are content neutral.
- Are signs limited to what the business provides? – Yes, business cannot advertise for off-site services; there is separate code pertaining to realtor and political signs.
- Murals with the business name in it: what’s interpreted as art vs sign? – Depends; art is excluded from sign regulation, but any part of a sign cannot exceed the height regulation whether it’s the art portion or the commercial message. Planning reviews each case: if the art is considered the background of the message then it counts as signage; if the art is separate from the commercial message then it does not count. Art that depicts services/products sold at the site is considered signage.
- Open signs: do they count as signage? – Technically they do count towards the square footage; big painted window advertisements count, but a tiny flip sign that you can’t see til you walk up doesn’t count.
- Lighting on signs: what’s allowed/not allowed? – Fluorescent light boxes allowed in business districts only; no sign ordinance regulations on brightness. Current code has limitations on scrolling/moving signs.
- What was the issue with the inflatable wacky tube guy? – Anything that can be deformed in the wind (banners, balloons, flags, etc.) not allowed unless they’re affixed to a hard surface.
- Is it a requirement that Dan Coe have to paint all the signs in the town? – No, but he has done many of them.

Mr. Brown invited the commissioners to direct further questions to Ms. Carroll to pass onto him, and that he can always attend another meeting in the future.

STAFF & COUNCIL REPORT/COMMITTEE REPORTS

- A. Homer Marine Trades Association Report
 - i. HMTA Meeting Minutes for February 2, 2019
- B. Chamber Director Report

- C. Pioneer Avenue Task Force Report
- D. Staff Report – Jennifer Carroll, Special Projects & Communications Coordinator
 - i. Memo to City Council Re: Developing a Wayfinding-Streetscape Plan
 - ii. Wayfinding-Streetscape Plan Presentation to City Council

Special Projects and Communications Coordinator Carroll provided her staff report. She touched on the Open Meetings Act training that was held earlier in the day with the City Attorney and shared that the Wayfinding-Streetscape Plan was presented to City Council.

Acting Chair Evans asked what City Council is doing with EDC's recommendation on the Wayfinding-Streetscape Plan being folded into a multimodal transportation plan. Ms. Carroll said it is being included as a section into a request for proposal that will hire a consultant to conduct the work. Acting Chair Evans thanked Ms. Carroll and Commissioners Marks and Johnson who did the presentation.

PUBLIC HEARINGS

PENDING BUSINESS

- A. EDC Bylaw Amendments
 - i. DRAFT EDC Bylaw Amendments

Acting Chair Evans initiated discussion on the proposed amendments. Deputy City Clerk Tussey and Special Projects and Communications Coordinator Carroll provided answers on the following topics:

- What the purpose of the CEDS (Comprehensive Economic Development Strategy) is, and the EDC's responsibility in evaluating and maintaining it per City Code.
- Verbiage related to how the commission communicates to the Mayor and City Council.
- Definition of what an excused absence is, and who states if an absence is excused or not.
- History of the commission including the Pledge of Allegiance in their meetings.
- Verbiage related to what constitutes a quorum, and how it pertains to members participating telephonically.
- Clarifying when committees report to the Commission.
- When and how commissioners can amend the agenda after the agenda deadline.
- Whether to make additional amendments or not to sections pertaining to the regular meeting months, the Pledge of Allegiance, and when to hold annual elections.
- If the commission was interested in designating certain months to review topics such as the budget, goals, or policies, specifically a strategic plan.

BROWN/AREVALO MOVED TO CHANGE ELECTIONS FOR CHAIR AND VICE CHAIR FROM NOVEMBER TO APRIL.

There was no further discussion.

VOTE: NON OBJECTION: UNANIMOUS CONSENT.

Motion carried.

EVANS/RICHARDSON MOVED TO LEAVE THE PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE IN THE BYLAWS.

Acting Chair Evans shared his thoughts on why the commission should continue opening their meetings with the Pledge of Allegiance.

VOTE: NON OBJECTION: UNANIMOUS CONSENT.

Motion carried.

Councilmember Smith noted a need to revise Article VIII, Section 2, to ensure consistent verbiage related to “participating” telephonically versus “appearing” telephonically.

There was further discussion on the regular meeting schedule and if there was a need to amend holding a regular meeting every month, or if it could remain as-is and the commission could cancel an unnecessary meeting at that time.

Acting Chair Evans asked for a motion to hold a second reading at the next meeting.

AREVALO/EVANS MOVED TO HOLD A SECOND READING OF THE DRAFT BYLAWS AT THE NEXT REGULAR MEETING.

There was no further discussion.

VOTE: NON OBJECTION: UNANIMOUS CONSENT.

Motion carried.

NEW BUSINESS

A. Proposed Orientation Packet for New EDC Members

Acting Chair Evans and deferred to Deputy City Clerk Tussey and Special Projects and Communications Coordinator Carroll who reviewed the memo in the packet and what staff is proposing. Councilmember Smith inquired if information pertaining to the Open Meeting Act (OMA) will be included in the orientation materials; Ms. Tussey confirmed that it would be. She further explained how the City Attorney wanted to include an OMA info page that is specific to each commission/board. Mr. Smith provided some insight on the OMA and the training that had just taken place earlier that day.

Ms. Tussey and Ms. Carroll collected feedback from the commission on the suggested material, determining what type of information is relevant to a new commissioner.

EVANS/BROWN MOVED TO APPROVE THE CONTENT OF THE ORIENTATION PACKET AND DIRECT STAFF TO COMPLETE THE PACKET, AND THEN SHARE IT WITH THE EDC AS AN INFORMATIONAL ITEM AT A LATER MEETING.

Commissioner Arevalo shared her thoughts on strategic plans and the need for having one. There was discussion on what that would entail and Ms. Carroll recommended they have EDC strategic Plan/Goals on the next agenda. Councilmember Smith suggested that their strategic plan should really correlate with what's in the City's Comprehensive Plan.

VOTE: NON OBJECTION: UNANIMOUS CONSENT.

Motion carried.

B. Sign Ordinance Review

Acting Chair Evans noted the agenda item and opened the floor for discussion. Commissioner Johnson shared his appreciation for the visitor, and further commented on Ms. Carroll's memo and Mr. Brown's presentation on what the purpose is for the sign ordinance. Ms. Carroll explained how the main goal of the code is to give the public some control over the streetscape environment, balanced with the need for businesses to advertise their services. Discussion ensued on overall goals of sign code, finding balance, how it doesn't make businesses adhere to a specific design, and signage code issues such as concerns on the 55,000 sq. ft. buildings issue.

Deputy City Clerk Tussey suggested some next-step options for the commission, either to formulate recommendations more, direct staff to write a memo to the Planning Commission, schedule a joint worksession with Planning Commission, or just have this topic on the next agenda for further discussion. The commission discussed the options, what the next steps would be, and the need to talk to businesses and have them attend the meetings to have their additional input on possible issues.

EVANS/BROWN MOVED TO HAVE SIGN ORDINANCE REVIEW ON THE APRIL AGENDA.

Commissioner Johnson clarified with Ms. Carroll how Sign Ordinance pertains to their work on the Wayfinding-Streetscape plan.

VOTE: NON OBJECTION: UNANIMOUS CONSENT.

Motion carried.

C. Follow-up on Homer Hockey Association Request for Financial Support

Acting Chair Evans opened the floor for discussion. Commissioner Johnson shared his thoughts on how Commissioner Marks' comments at the last meeting would be sufficient action.

JOHNSON/BROWN MOVED TO SUPPORT ACTIONS MADE AT THE LAST MEETING WAS A SUFFICIENT RESPONSE.

Councilmember Smith shared his comments on pro-recreation in the community and his issues with supporting the budget item. Discussion ensued on:

- The pros and cons of supporting foundations;
- How to respond to HHA, the motion on the table, and if another recommendation is needed;
- What should be included in the letter to HHA if they amend the original motion;

- Mutual agreement that EDC recommends HHA submit an application to Homer Foundation;
- A letter of support for HHA's grant could still be an option if they submit an application to the Homer Foundation.

JOHNSON MOVED TO AMEND MAIN MOTION TO ADD DIRECTING STAFF TO WRITE A LETTER TO HHA PROVIDING FEEDBACK AND RECOMMENDATION ON WHAT THEY SHOULD DO.

Failed for lack of second.

Discussion continued on points reiterated earlier and detailed out what type of verbiage/points to make with Ms. Carroll to include in a letter to HHA.

VOTE (main motion): YES: AREVALO, EVANS, BROWN, JOHNSON, RICHARDSON

Motion carried.

AREVALO/BROWN MOVED DIRECTING STAFF TO WRITE A LETTER TO HHA AND INCLUDE THANKING THEM FOR THEIR PRESENTATIONS; ACKNOWLEDGE THEIR ECONOMIC CONTRIBUTION TO THE COMMUNITY DURING THE SHOULDER/WINTER SEASON; ENCOURAGE THEM TO APPLY TO THE CITY OF HOMER FUND AT THE HOMER FOUNDATION; AND RECOMMEND THAT AFTER THEY FINALIZE A MORE SPECIFIC FINANCIAL REQUEST TO THE HOMER FOUNDATION, THAT THEY SHARE IT WITH THE EDC WHO MAY BE AMENABLE TO WRITING A LETTER OF SUPPORT TO THE HOMER FOUNDATION.

There was no further discussion.

VOTE: NON OBJECTION: UNANIMOUS CONSENT.

Motion carried.

INFORMATIONAL ITEMS

- A. City Manager's Report for February 11, 2019
- B. City Manager's Report for February 25, 2019
- C. Commissioner Attendance at 2019 City Council Meetings

Acting Chair Evans noted the informational items in the packet.

COMMENTS OF THE AUDIENCE

COMMENTS OF CITY STAFF

Special Projects and Communication Coordinator Carroll reminded the commission of the Tsunami Awareness Week events coming up, where they can find additional information on it, and of a collaborated fun run event with the Kachemak Bay Running Club on March 30th.

Deputy City Clerk Tussey had no comments.

COMMENTS OF THE COUNCILMEMBER

Councilmember Smith thanked the EDC for their efforts and applauded the commission for leaving the Pledge of Allegiance in their bylaws.

COMMENTS OF THE CHAIR

Acting Chair Evans quipped about the length of meeting correlating with him being chair.

COMMENTS OF THE COMMISSION

Commissioner Arevalo commented on the Alaska Food Festival and Conference she had attended recently, and noted the importance of the food system/farming studies that came from it and how they're relevant to Homer.

There were no comments from Commissioners Brown, Richardson, and Johnson.

ADJOURN

There being no further business to come before the Commission, Acting Chair Evans adjourned the meeting at 9:00 p.m. The next regular meeting is scheduled for Tuesday, April 9, 2019 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: _____