

ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT ADVISORY COMMISSION  
REGULAR MEETING  
JANUARY 14, 2020

Session 20-01 a Regular Meeting of the Economic Development Advisory Commission was called to order by Chair Karin Marks at 6:05 p.m. on January 14, 2020 at the Cowles Council Chambers, City Hall located at 491 E. Pioneer Avenue, Homer, Alaska, and opened with the Pledge of Allegiance.

PRESENT: COMMISSIONERS MARKS, BROWN, AREVALO, MINK, AND STUDENT REPRESENTATIVE BROWN

ABSENT: COMMISSIONERS JOHNSON & RICHARDSON (both excused)<sup>1</sup>

STAFF: SPECIAL PROJECTS & COMMUNICATIONS COORDINATOR CARROLL  
DEPUTY CITY CLERK TUSSEY

**AGENDA APPROVAL**

Chair Marks called for a motion to approve the agenda.

AREVALO/BROWN MOVED TO APPROVE THE AGENDA.

There was no discussion.

VOTE: NON OBJECTION: UNANIMOUS CONSENT.

Motion carried.

**PUBLIC COMMENTS UPON MATTERS ALREADY ON THE AGENDA**

**RECONSIDERATION**

**APPROVAL OF MINUTES**

A. EDC Regular Meeting Minutes for November 12, 2019

Chair Marks asked for a motion to approve the minutes from the last meeting.

MINK/BROWN MOVED TO APPROVE THE LAST MEETING MINUTES.

There was no discussion.

VOTE: NON OBJECTION: UNANIMOUS CONSENT.

Motion carried.

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<sup>1</sup> Both absences were determined to be excused by Chair Marks shortly after the meeting ended. The minutes were corrected at the March 10, 2020 regular meeting.

## **VISITORS/PRESENTATIONS**

### **STAFF & COUNCIL REPORT/COMMITTEE REPORTS**

#### A. Special Projects & Communications Coordinator Staff Report

Special Projects and Communications Coordinator Carroll provided a verbal report. She shared information regarding hers and Chair Marks' attendance at the annual KPEDD Industry Outlook Forum in Seward, AK, including on the 2020 Census. Ms. Carroll encouraged everyone to participate in the census as it will determine \$3.2 billion federal fund allocation to the State of Alaska for roads, schools, education, healthcare, etc.

There was brief discussion regarding the 2020 census, and a local food system study that Commissioner Arevalo had worked on, which was presented alongside an agriculture lease program at the outlook forum.

#### B. Chamber Director Report

Jan Knudson, Visitor Center Director, provided a verbal report on the following topics:

- New Executive Director for the Chamber of Commerce: Brad Anderson
- Success with the Homer Bucks program
- Winter Carnival Parade; scheduled for Saturday, February 8, 2020
- Tourism scholarships from Alaska Travel Association for high school and college students interested in tourism careers
- Two open positions at the Chamber
- Annual Chamber meeting scheduled for January 21<sup>st</sup>, now held in the evening at Islands and Oceans Visitor Center
- Brainstorming new ideas to bring businesses/people to Homer: food truck festival in the Elks Lodge parking lot

#### C. Homer Marine Trades Association Report

#### D. Pioneer Avenue Task Force Report

## **PUBLIC HEARINGS**

### **PENDING BUSINESS**

- #### A. Ordinance 19-47(S) & the Restructuring of Economic Development City Code
- i. Memo to City Council Re: Recommendations from EDC for Ordinance 19-47 to Repeal HCC 2.76 Economic Development Advisory Commission
  - ii. Ordinance 19-47(S)

Chair Marks introduced the agenda item and noted that a revised Ordinance 19-47(S) was provided as a lay-down with the amendments marked in red.

ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT ADVISORY COMMISSION  
REGULAR MEETING  
JANUARY 14, 2020

Special Projects and Communications Coordinator Carroll explained the reasoning for the changes to Section 5 of the draft ordinance. Discussions with the City Manager, councilmember sponsors, and Tim Dillon, KPEDD, led to revisions that included KPEDD rules on boardmember composition and Resolution 19-048 which lays out the policies for appointing City representatives to outside boards. She noted that changing the verbiage to a City of Homer representative provides flexibility on who the Mayor and City Council appoints.

There was discussion on making a motion of support for the ordinance, including verbiage to use and what version of the ordinance will be presented at City Council's February 10, 2020 regular meeting.

MARKS/AREVALO MOVE THAT THE ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT COMMISSION SUPPORT ORDINANCE 19-47(S) AS PROPOSED BY COUNCILMEMBERS LORD AND VENUTI AT THE FEBRUARY 10<sup>TH</sup> CITY COUNCIL MEETING.

Commissioner Arevalo commented that the proposal in Ordinance 19-47(S) seemed complete, well done, and most of her preliminary questions were already addressed by Ms. Carroll.

Commissioner Mink commented that the ordinance looked clean, comprehensive, and organized in a way that makes sense for all parties involved. He stated his support for it.

Commissioner Brown thanked Ms. Carroll for all her work. Ms. Brown stated that she is still not on board with disbanding the EDC and listed her reasons why:

- She feels the commission brings significant enough value to the City, City Council, the community, and future commissioners.
- Two councilmembers began on the EDC; it provides an excellent entry point for getting involved in City government.
- She thinks there's a lot of economic development issues that are worthy of being heard at the commission level; whether it's being taken seriously, not given enough guidance, or a lack of buy-in by Council is a different, greater issue.
- She believes the way that EDC and City Council work together is what should be addressed; they are only as good as what they're given to work with [by Council] and the support given by Council.
- She noted Councilmembers Lord and Erickson's opinion that the EDC wasn't very productive when they served on the EDC, yet it provided the grooming to go on to be council members.
- The EDC was viewed historically as having problems, was disbanded, but then was brought back; she voiced her concerns that the commission was brought back but the primary problems weren't fixed, causing a repeat, and at what point will the EDC be brought back again?

Ms. Brown feels the ideas presented in the ordinance are good, but could be done with the EDC in place. She does not believe that option was explored enough before deciding to disband the commission.

At the request for clarification from Commissioner Arevalo, Ms. Carroll provided an interpretation of the "whereas" on Line 51 regarding focusing limited City resources, and noted that the verbiage could be better clarified.

ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT ADVISORY COMMISSION  
REGULAR MEETING  
JANUARY 14, 2020

Student Representative Brown commented, noting similar opinions voiced by Commissioner Brown and it being a good start for City involvement.

Chair Marks commented that the process is more important to her than the structure. She pointed out that the ordinance creates a new structure and explained how the changes still accomplish economic development goals:

- Brings a variety of stakeholders and groups together once a year.
- Has a requirement that City Council look at certain economic issues annually in a worksession.
- Has a process that sets the top three priorities, which will mean the Council has to buy in and addresses that previous problem.
- Develops strategies for working on issues: task forces and/or committees can be put together from groups of citizens, Council can then give actionable items for that group to focus on, and they are then better able to provide Council with deliverables.

Chair Marks opined that if we can get more action (through task forces or committees) in certain areas rather than talking about it, we are better serving. She reiterated that the change still requires the subject of economic development to be addressed annually; it may not be every month with the EDC but it does highlight important aspects. She stated she is willing to give the new structure a shot since the old way has not been workable.

Commissioner Arevalo reiterated Chair Marks comments and spoke to Ms. Brown's concerns: she noted that these change suggestions to the structure (outlined in the ordinance) were developed at their behest. She pointed out that the EDC had voiced issue with disbanding the commission without a plan to fill the wake. The commission had agreed that if the existing structure is not feasible for City resources or efficient with staff and commissioner time, then there needs to be key elements of what the EDC was meant to do imbedded in code.

Ms. Arevalo explained that these changes essentially mandate, in code, that City Council shares the "Economic Vitality" chapter with the listed user groups for public input, engaging them, and addresses economic issues on an annual basis. The code will ensure that economic development issues are being tasked to Council to address, the public is engaged, and any task forces/committees created to focus on key issues will have to provide deliverables. She thought the ordinance addressed Ms. Brown's concerns and meets Council in the middle.

Commissioner Brown thanked Ms. Arevalo and Chair Marks for their comments. She thought the attempt at what is being proposed in the ordinance was good, but that the changes (or variation of) can be done in conjunction with continuing to keep the EDC intact. She suggested either incorporating the commission into some of the proposed processes, or that it stays as-is in addition to implementing some of the changes. She pointed out that the EDC doesn't have a department, therefore the EDC is worth supporting for that reason, and reiterated her concerns with disbanding the commission. She felt the ordinance addresses the issues with process and getting results, but that we continue with the existing body.

VOTE: YES: MARKS, MINK, AREVALO

ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT ADVISORY COMMISSION  
REGULAR MEETING  
JANUARY 14, 2020

NO: BROWN

Motion failed.

There was discussion regarding the failed motion due to lack of the commission's majority being present and what that meant going forward. Deputy City Clerk Tussey noted that another motion could be made; the agenda item currently on the table is Ordinance 19-47(S) and that staff recommended the EDC either make a statement of support or other recommended City Council action.

Special Projects and Communications Coordinator Carroll explained that the sponsoring councilmembers brought Ordinance 19-47 before the commission, in good faith, to work with the EDC and collaboratively craft something that would be acceptable for all. That is the reason staff made the recommendation that they did and it is up to the commission to make the decision.

Ms. Carroll reiterated that the commissioners previously agreed (at their October 8, 2019 meeting) that they did not want to see the EDC just go away without having something else in place, and requested to work with Council on coming up with suggestions. At their November 12, 2019 meeting, the commissioners authored a memo of support for the option reflected in Ordinance 19-47(S), which included disbanding the EDC and creating a restructured economic development strategy for the City. Ms. Carroll asked the commission that if that opinion has changed, then they need to make a different kind of motion to let City Council know where they stand. Staff is only trying to facilitate the commission's decision.

Commissioner Brown voiced her request to take more time and that the Council postpone introduction of the ordinance. She understands there was a lot of time put into the current proposal but she is pulling back. She reiterated her concerns with disbanding the commission.

Commissioner Mink noted that since they cannot read the minds of those commissioners who are absent, and the meeting minutes will show 3:1 for yes and two absent, they should leave it up to City Council to determine what they want to do next. He opined that submitting a recommendation while two members are absent is presumptuous.

Commissioner Arevalo pointed out that the councilmembers who brought this ordinance up will likely move forward on February 10<sup>th</sup>, but they will read that there was a 3 to 1 vote for support of the ordinance and discontent about disbanding EDC. She noted that there will be another opportunity to speak on the issue at the Council meeting when it is introduced.

There was discussion on using the EDC meeting minutes as backup material to the ordinance.

AREVALO/BROWN MOVE THAT THE EDC RECOMMEND TO THE CITY CLERK AND CITY COUNCIL THAT THE UNAPPROVED MEETING MINUTES FROM TONIGHT'S MEETING BE CONSIDERED AS BACKUP FOR DELIBERATIONS ON ORDINANCE 19-47(S) AT THE CITY COUNCIL MEETING.

There was no further discussion.

VOTE: YES: MINK, AREVALO, BROWN, MARKS

Motion carried.

## **NEW BUSINESS**

- A. EDC Economic Development Priorities for City Council Recommendation
  - i. Comprehensive Plan: Chapter 7 – Economic Vitality

Chair Marks introduced the agenda item and explained the reasoning for having it before the commission. If City Council adopts Ordinance 19-47(S), it will create a process designed for Council to select the top three economic development priorities/recommendations for the upcoming year at an Economic Development Priorities worksession. Chair Marks noted that one of the ordinance sponsors suggested the EDC select their top three priorities so that if the ordinance is adopted, their recommendation could initiate the first worksession in time to still take place this year, rather than waiting until next year to implement the new process.

Chair Marks initiated discussion on what three priorities they would like to recommend.

Commissioner Arevalo pointed out that staff is suggesting they select the broader goals, not necessarily a specific project, that are outlined in Chapter 7 of the Comprehensive Plan.

Special Projects and Communications Coordinator Carroll reminded the commission that until the ordinance has passed, this process/structure is still tentative. Ms. Carroll explained in what ways she was trying to help the commission approach the task. She asked the commission to review just the goal statements and their associated objectives (rather than looking at the implementation table), select the goals/objectives that resonate with the commission, and then determine the means by which the City could address them in an effective manner.

Commissioner Arevalo stated what resonated with her the most was Goal #1: Define and encourage economic development that meets the desires and interests of Homer residents and supports the unique character of the community. She listed out the implementation strategies for Goal #1 and noted that they are do-able action items, some of which the City is currently doing and should be more strongly encouraged. Ms. Arevalo emphasized that we have a unique town/character, and that should be taken into consideration when looking at economic development; that part of the goal, unique, is integral in keeping Homer “Homer”.

Commissioner Brown voiced her agreement with Ms. Arevalo, primarily with the concept of keeping Homer’s unique character in mind when developing the city.

Commissioner Mink stated his support for renewable energy, which coincides with Goal #4. He spoke to HEA getting a new battery to stabilize their grid, the community being very forthcoming in investing in renewable energy systems, and it being a win-win for everyone from both an economic and environmental standpoint. He shared his concern that City Council was not in support of putting panels on City Hall during the roof replacement, despite the long-term benefits. In response to Ms. Arevalo,

ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT ADVISORY COMMISSION  
REGULAR MEETING  
JANUARY 14, 2020

Mr. Mink agreed to support Goal #4 with an emphasis on what the City can do to support renewable energy. He further stated his opinion on the subject and that the City should be a leader on this front, not a follower.

Ms. Carroll gathered clarification from the commissioners on what they are suggesting. There was brief discussion on the specific objectives being referenced.

Chair Marks shared her thoughts on the process and goals, specifically on workforce development to make sure the community has what they need for better jobs and identifying industries that are a good fit in Homer.

Discussion ensued on looking at workforce development for year-round jobs in Homer, both in local and remote jobs. Commissioner Brown requested to include the effects of fishery limitations on the community to the subject of workforce development. She explained the recent fishery changes taking place that will affect charter and commercial catches, prompting further discussion on how those limitations will trickle down and affect a variety of other industries in the community including local retail and tourism.

There was discussion on what components/goals could be included in a motion and how they should be phrased.

Student Representative Brown agreed with Ms. Arevalo in regards to Goal #1 and noted that many of the others listed fall into the broader goal of #1. When asked by the commissioners which goal meant the most to her from a youth's perspective, Ms. Brown felt strongly about Goal #5: Strengthen Homer as a tourism destination. She explained that much of the community's youth makes their seasonal money through tourism jobs and named Chamber of Commerce volunteers, kayak guides, working on charter boats, as examples.

There was further discussion on formulating a motion and what the three recommendations should be. Chair Marks went around the dais and asked for each commissioner to state their top three picks out of the five subjects discussed:

1. Economic ramifications for halibut on local businesses
2. Renewable resources and energy
3. Workforce development that could include getting industries to come to the community
4. Tourism
5. Encourage economic development opportunities in Homer that fits with the unique character of the community; local agriculture, local bidding preference, local sourcing, and supporting the chamber

MINK/BROWN MOVED TO RECOMMEND TO CITY COUNCIL THE FOLLOWING LIST OF EDC PRIORITIES: GOAL #1) DEFINE AND ENCOURAGE ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT THAT MEETS THE DESIRES AND INTERESTS OF HOMER RESIDENTS AND SUPPORTS THE UNIQUE CHARACTER OF THE COMMUNITY TO INCLUDE LOCAL AGRICULTURE, LOCAL BIDDER PREFERENCE, SOURCE LOCAL, AND CHAMBER BY LOCAL CAMPAIGN; GOAL #2) WORKFORCE DEVELOPMENT THAT SUPPORTS ALL YEAR-ROUND JOBS FOR ALL

ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT ADVISORY COMMISSION  
REGULAR MEETING  
JANUARY 14, 2020

INDUSTRIES, EITHER LOCAL OR REMOTE, FOR ALL AGE GROUPS; GOAL #3) TRICKLEDOWN EFFECT OF REDUCED FISHERIES, SPECIFICALLY HALIBUT, AND STRATEGIC PLAN FOR RESPONSE.

There was no further discussion.

VOTE: NON OBJECTION: UNANIMOUS CONSENT.

Motion carried.

**INFORMATIONAL MATERIALS**

- A. Ordinance 19-54(S-2)(A-2), Developing a Wayfinding-Streetscape Plan
- B. Memo 19-161, Additional Info on WF-SS Plan Scope & Proposed Task Force
- C. City Manager's Report for November 25, 2019
- D. City Manager's Report for December 9, 2019
- E. EDC 2020 Meeting Calendar
- F. Commissioner Attendance at 2020 City Council Meetings

Chair Marks spoke to Ordinance 19-54(S-2)(A-2) and Memo 19-161. She commended the commissioners for their work, noting that Goal 5-B-2 of the Economic Vitality chapter has been completed. Chair Marks asked commissioners to keep a look out for the citizens group that will come together to work on the Wayfinding and Streetscape Plan.

Deputy City Clerk Tussey inquired on if the commission would like to cancel their February meeting based on the suggestion by Chair Marks. Discussion ensued on the current situation regarding City Council's upcoming decision to disband the commission and there not being any pending business until a decision is made. The commission voiced unanimous consent to cancel their February 11, 2020 regular meeting.

There was discussion on who could attend the January 27<sup>th</sup> City Council meeting, with Commissioner Mink agreeing to attend.

**COMMENTS OF THE AUDIENCE**

**COMMENTS OF CITY STAFF**

Special Projects and Communications Coordinator Carroll and Deputy City Clerk Tussey had no further comments.

**COMMENTS OF THE COUNCILMEMBER**

**COMMENTS OF THE CHAIR**

Chair Marks shared her sentiments on serving on the EDC, future opportunities to work together, and it being a privilege to work with this group of people.



**COMMENTS OF THE COMMISSION**

Student Representative Brown commented that she has learned a lot and thanked the commission for the opportunity.

Commissioner Brown thanked Chair Marks for getting her to join the EDC. She also thanked staff for their work and dedication to the commission. She voiced her wish that her push would keep the EDC in force, otherwise it has been a great experience.

Commissioner Mink thanked staff for their patience and everyone on the commission. He reflected that sometimes something new can come about from something ending, and hoped he helped in some capacity; he will help in some other way and not stop.

Commissioner Arevalo commented that when she saw the EDC Economic Development Priorities for City Council item on their agenda, she acknowledged that it was potentially their last chance to throw in their two cents as a commission. She conveyed her happiness with how much they came up with and commended the commission for coming up with what they did and having a great last meeting. She also thanked staff for the great packets they provide each month.

**ADJOURN**

There being no further business to come before the Commission, Chair Marks adjourned the meeting at 8:25 p.m. The next regular meeting is scheduled for Tuesday, March 10, 2020 at 6:00 p.m. at the City Hall Cowles Council Chambers located at 491 E. Pioneer Avenue, Homer, Alaska.

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RACHEL TUSSEY, DEPUTY CITY CLERK I

Approved: \_\_\_\_\_