

Session 20-02 a Regular Meeting of the Economic Development Advisory Commission was called to order by Chair Karin Marks at 6:00 p.m. on March 10, 2020 at the Cowles Council Chambers, City Hall located at 491 E. Pioneer Avenue, Homer, Alaska, and opened with the Pledge of Allegiance. One seat remains vacant from Commissioner Evans' July 18, 2019 resignation.

PRESENT: COMMISSIONERS MARKS, RICHARDSON, AREVALO, MINK

ABSENT: COMMISSIONERS BROWN, JOHNSON, AND STUDENT REPRESENTATIVE BROWN (all excused)

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

AGENDA APPROVAL

Chair Marks called for a motion to approve the agenda.

AREVALO/MINK 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 January 14, 2020 Regular Meeting Minutes

Commissioner Richardson requested that his absence be considered excused.

Commissioner Arevalo pointed out an inaccurate description of an agriculture lease program that she had worked on, to be corrected in the minutes.

Chair Marks called for a motion to approve the minutes as amended.

MINK/AREVALO MOVED TO APPROVE THE MINUTES AS AMENDED.

There was no discussion.

VOTE: NON OBJECTION: UNANIMOUS CONSENT.

Motion carried.

VISITORS/PRESENTATIONS

STAFF & COUNCIL REPORT/COMMITTEE REPORTS

A. Special Projects & Communications Coordinator Staff Report

Special Projects & Communications Coordinator Carroll provided a verbal report and spoke to the following topics:

- Rolling out of Census 2020 and that much of their efforts were already complete by the time COVID-19 began.
- Update on the Wayfinding and Streetscape RFP, which has been started and later turned over to Deputy City Planner Engebretsen for review.
- Grant deadlines that she has been working on.
- Public Information Officer (PIO) efforts due to COVID-19.
- Coronavirus impacting the local economy.

B. Chamber Director Report

Chair Marks commented on staffing limitations at the Chamber of Commerce.

C. Homer Marine Trades Association Report

Chair Marks noted the HMTA materials provided in the packet.

D. Pioneer Avenue Task Force Report

Chair Marks stated that the PATF is in hiatus.

PUBLIC HEARINGS

PENDING BUSINESS

- #### A. Ordinance 19-47(S-2) Follow-up
- i. February 24, 2020 City Council Unapproved Minutes Excerpt

Chair Marks introduced the item by reading of the title and provided a verbal update on the failing of Ordinance 19-47(S-2) and what was decided at the City Council meeting. Councilmember Smith has agreed to work with Chair Marks on rewriting EDC code. She shared her hopes to have something presented at the next City Council meeting.

Commissioner Richardson agreed to help with those rewriting efforts.

Commissioner Arevalo questioned how Councilmember Smith's vision is different from what was presented in the ordinance. Chair Marks responded, stating that Council will still be involved but instead of forming a task force, it would be directed to the commission. The concept is that they don't want to create too much effort or use more staff time.

NEW BUSINESS

- A. EDC Bylaws
 - i. EDC Bylaws, Adopted May 13, 2019

Chair Marks introduced the agenda item by reading of the title. She gave a general estimate of what the next steps will be in relation to Councilmember Smith's work, updating code, and will then lead to bylaw amendments. Deputy City Clerk Tussey clarified that last year's bylaw amendments were revisions for improving their meeting process, and that any significant changes to their purpose or process would also require code change and therefore an ordinance. She explained that this is why any major changes to the EDC is for City Council to pursue, figure out, and decide, not the commission. Chair Marks opined that commissioners could discuss their feedback at this meeting to ensure their voice is heard during the Council process, to which Ms. Tussey explained that commissioners' feedback on the topic can be shared directly with councilmembers at any time, it does not have to be at the meeting.

There was discussion on staff's recommendation that the EDC refrain from bylaw discussion or amendments until such time as the EDC code re-write that Councilmember Smith agreed to take on is completed. Ms. Tussey reiterated that it is still too premature, that until it is determined how the EDC will function going forward, it isn't a productive use of staff's or the commission's time. She encouraged the commissioners to reach out to and continue working with Councilmember Smith to voice their opinions, and if they have concerns about the process to contact the City Clerk.

Special Projects & Communications Coordinator Carroll pointed out that their existing bylaws still allow them to function and move forward with the business they have already been tasked to do. The only thing that is considered "in limbo" is that Councilmembers are recognizing there may be better ways to do business, and that their feedback on that process can be shared with Councilmember Smith while he's actively working on that.

Commissioner Arevalo suggested that bylaw discussions be tabled until after Council's decision-making process. In response to Ms. Carroll's comments, Ms. Arevalo suggested they focus on business items that can get done in a meeting or two.

Commissioner Richardson commented that he is still planning to follow up on sign code amendments that were instituted last year. He noted that there are things to work on, they're just not happening quickly. Ms. Carroll added that sign code is still a priority of the City, and had recently been discussed at their last department head meeting, the Planning Commission, and during talks for the new City Manager transition.

Chair Marks commented on the Kenai Peninsula Economic Development District (KPEDD) upcoming rewrite of the Kenai Peninsula's Comprehensive Economic Development Strategy (CEDS), which occurs every five years, and the EDC's role in preparing CEDS. Ms. Carroll commented on the KPEDD's CEDS structure and process, noting that it is unlikely the City Council will want to create our own CEDS because of the tremendous amount of time/money that goes into preparing such a document, when there's a regional one that represents Homer. Her recommendation to the EDC is to be a part of the City's response to KPEDD when that time comes.

There was discussion on KPEDD's CEDS and the City's outdated CEDS in relation to what business the EDC can work on. It was discussed that EDC no longer needs to have that section and purpose in their bylaws. Eventually, whether or not things change at the Council level, the EDC might need to make sure they address a real purpose working with KPEDD and a regional CEDS. It was agreed that Chair Marks will bring to the next meeting a report on how KPEDD intends to gain the information from the City of Homer, as a boardmember of KPEDD.

Deputy City Clerk Tussey noted that the current discussion is not germane to bylaws and really should be discussed under strategic plan and goals, which is the next business item.

B. EDC Strategic Plan/Goals
i. EDC Strategic Plan/Goals, Revised August 2019

Chair Marks introduced the idea of what EDC could be working on while city code updates are pending. Special Projects & Communications Coordinator Carroll clarified the goal for reviewing Comprehensive Economic Development Strategy (CEDS) was based on a request from Commissioner Brown to have the EDC take time during their meetings to review sections of the CEDS to better understand them, not necessarily to review them for editing. Chair Marks asked the commission to suggest strategic plans and goals that can be added at the April meeting.

Commissioner Arevalo commented on a meeting invite she had received for skill job training on the peninsula. She explained how the training's goal was the same as their Mid-term Goal, Item 1: Job training needs of Homer businesses. If those meetings are to continue to exist, it could be of interest to the EDC as an upcoming project. They could create a short survey to send out to Homer area businesses to discern what training and skillsets that they need in their workforces.

Commissioner Mink inquired on the short-term goal of research and zoning recommendations to forward to Planning Commission. Ms. Carroll explained the background of that goal, how it came from the Business Retention and Expansion (BR&E) Survey, and current work being done on that topic by the Planning Commission, the City Planner, and Commissioner Richardson's sign code efforts. It was intended as a way that the EDC could follow up with planning/zoning concerns from the public and businesses.

Discussion ensued on current goals, suggested changes/additions, and other potential goals. Some subjects covered included:

- Seeking clarification on what zoning/permit barriers businesses were talking about.
- Reaching out to the job center to learn of job areas are in need of training/skills.

- There is a section in the BR&E Report on holes in the workforce for reference.
- Commissioner Mink willing to speak to that issue from a business owner perspective.
- More collaboration could be done with the Chamber of Commerce for workforce retention.
- “Just stay another day” program and similar projects that KPEDD has been working on that may have missed Homer.
- Having a quarterly KPEDD report included in the EDC packet.
- Request from staff on having additional information on how to hold a public hearing (referenced in the bylaws Article II, Section 4).
- Level of participation by the Chamber of Commerce within the EDC.

INFORMATIONAL MATERIALS

- A. City Manager's Report for February 24, 2020
- B. EDC 2020 Meeting Calendar
- C. Commissioner Attendance at 2020 City Council Meetings

Chair Marks spoke to the informational materials, specifically the EDC calendar, upcoming events, and who will attend the next City Council meeting. Commissioner Arevalo agreed to attend the March 23rd meeting.

COMMENTS OF THE AUDIENCE

COMMENTS OF CITY STAFF

Special Projects and Communications Coordinator Carroll had no comments.

Deputy City Clerk Tussey spoke to the vacant seat and that it can be a non-resident.

COMMENTS OF THE COUNCILMEMBER

COMMENTS OF THE CHAIR

Chair Marks voiced her appreciation of the commission and their willingness to serve on the EDC. She also spoke to the vacant seat, encouraging commissioners to find a friend to bring to a meeting and noting the revisions needed to the orientation packet for newly appointed/reappointed members. Ms. Marks suggested that commissioners sign up for the City of Homer's daily website updates.

COMMENTS OF THE COMMISSION

Commissioner Richardson thanked everyone.

Commissioner Mink noted they are still in business.

Commissioner Arevalo spoke to a workshop titled “Estimating the Local Marine Economy”, occurring next Wednesday. Ms. Carroll noted that she will be attending that workshop.

ADJOURN

There being no further business to come before the Commission, Chair Marks adjourned the meeting at 7:34 p.m. The next regular meeting is scheduled for Tuesday, April 14, 2020 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: _____