

Session 20-06 a Regular Meeting of the Economic Development Advisory Commission was called to order by Chair Karin Marks at 6:00 p.m. on October 13, 2020 at the Cowles Council Chambers, City Hall located at 491 E. Pioneer Avenue, Homer, Alaska via Zoom webinar, and opened with the Pledge of Allegiance.

**PRESENT:** COMMISSIONERS MARKS, JOHNSON, RICHARDSON, BROWN, AREVALO

**ABSENT:** COMMISSIONERS MINK AND SPEAKMAN (both excused)

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

Chair Marks welcomed new commissioner Debbie Speakman to the Economic Development Advisory Commission.

#### **AGENDA APPROVAL**

Chair Marks called for a motion to approve the agenda.

JOHNSON/AREVALO 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**

#### **VISITORS/PRESENTATIONS**

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

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

Special Projects and Communications Coordinator Carroll provided her staff report, noting the following:

- Approved 2021-2026 CIP and the new legislative priority project list, new projects that were added to the CIP, and other notable amendments.
- COVID economic relief grants that the City has been providing.

- Resolution to clarify EDC's purpose was approved at City Council's October 12<sup>th</sup> meeting.
- Smart Growth Resources; links included in written report
- Staffing changes; Julie Engebretsen, Deputy City Planner, will be the newly assigned staff person to the EDC.

Chair Marks called on City Planner Abboud for any comments. Mr. Abboud said the EDC would get front seat on what the Planning Commission is working on. Next project he wants to work on is community design. There is lots to work on and they can further the EDC's wayfinding and streetscape goals. Commissioner Richardson inquired on when would be the appropriate time to dial in the conversation on specific topics. Mr. Abboud commented how they can put permitting and the permitting process on a future agenda.

B. Chamber Director Report

Chair Marks provided a verbal report from the Chamber of Commerce Director. They're hearing that members are getting more upfront bookings for next year. They will be updating their website to better assist members and visitors, and going to be pushing to add economic development to one of their chamber committees going forward. Homer businesses have received 40% of relief dollars that have come to the Kenai Peninsula. The peninsula has received over 16% of statewide relief dollars while having only 6% of the population. Homer has done very well collecting relief funds.

C. Homer Marine Trades Association Report

D. Pioneer Avenue Task Force Report

Chair Marks spoke to future peony planning and efforts to get planting packages out to businesses along Pioneer Avenue.

E. KPEDD Report

**PUBLIC HEARINGS**

**PENDING BUSINESS**

- A. EDC Strategic Plan/Goals Update
- i. Worksession Notes from Commissioner Arevalo
  - ii. EDC Strategic Plan/Goals, Revised August 2019

Chair Marks introduced the item by reading the title. She provided a brief background of what work the commission has already done and opened the floor for discussion.

Commissioner Johnson voiced his general agreement with the goals they came up with. He commented about partnership efforts with the college for business support, how everything is on hold at the college due to COVID and classes having to be cancelled. These goals are general and strategical, and are fine to leave as they are. Commissioner Arevalo pointed out that the Kenai Peninsula College

goal is in the midterm section so it is six months to two years off. Commissioner Johnson acknowledged that, reiterating his support for what they have with little to no changes.

Chair Marks provided her comments. The Comprehensive Economic Development Strategy (CEDS) program should be put into short term goals; the timeframe/deadline for working on local efforts is June 2021 so it's imperative that they work on that to meet the Kenai Peninsula Economic Development District (KPEDD)'s goal. Commissioner Arevalo referenced her notes in the packet how that goal is already proposed as a near term goal, but will revise her notes to better clarify it. Chair Marks agreed with the revision and continued explaining the KPEDD's work requirements and what they should be focusing on. Ms. Marks commented on evaluating downtown vitalization. She is hoping a Request for Proposals will be going out soon to hire a consultant (with the EDC participating in that process), so that goal should be integrated with Wayfinding and Streetscape as a midterm goal.

Commissioner Richardson commented on flight travel limitations that are hurting the community, and suggesting they add a near term goal to help address that. Special Projects and Communications Coordinator Carroll gave an update on Ravn Air and their return to operation after going bankrupt earlier this year. Mr. Richardson suggested that if the City needed help with any researching that EDC members could volunteer to help with that as a short term goal. Chair Marks commented that, according to what Ms. Carroll has said, that the issue of flight limitations is a moot point considering Ravn Air will be operating very soon.

Discussion ensued on various types of goals and how commissioners can work with staff on finding ways to be of use to the City, such as through business/public outreach, volunteering for researching tasks, and other flexible tasks that fall into their advisory role.

Commissioner Brown inquired on the questions included in the goal draft materials; are they planning to identify the actual gaps in the CEDS tonight or if they were just identifying that as a goal? Chair Marks, Ms. Arevalo, and Ms. Carroll clarified that those questions were brought up at the last meeting and the commission is only answering those questions to finish defining their strategic plan/goals.

There was further discussion on verbiage used and sorting of goals. Topics discussed included surveying businesses for their current needs; seeking out projects they can work on now or how they can be available to give advice; reiteration of this being an annually-reviewed, internal document that assists the commission in tracking their projects; and history behind the remote workforce concept.

Commissioner Arevalo provided an overview of the suggested changes during their discussion and clarified amendments with commissioners. She listed the proposed strategic plan/goal amendments to be agreed upon:

Ongoing Goals:

1. Be available for short-term requests from the City for assistance – boots on the ground.
2. Keep our ears to the ground and seek out areas of "lack." Confer with Julie about communicating with City Council and advising them on ways to overcome barriers- "the nexus of economic goals."

Near-term goals

1. Familiarize with smart growth principles and best practices, and also green infrastructure concepts. Have these in our toolbox when development decisions come our way for consideration.
2. Research any zoning recommendations to forward to Planning Commission.
3. Assist KPEDD in development of the Kenai Peninsula regional CEDS (public outreach, information gathering, collaborate with Chamber of Commerce, include public meeting).
4. Do some outreach to local businesses to see what immediate needs are (6+ months into COVID).
5. Ask Julie every three months if there's any boots on the ground work needed by the City that our commission can assist with.

Mid-term goals

1. Assess jobs training needs and workforce development. Communicate to KPC.
2. Do an analysis of City objectives, develop recommended priorities and identify specific alternatives if possible (from our bylaws and City's Comp. Plan Ch.7, items 1-6). If more public input is warranted, consider doing that.
3. Downtown vitalization momentum and wayfinding/streetscape plan- gain public input, offer input to RFP, etc.
4. EDC promotes our assistance and capacity in recovery from economic damages within our community due to global pandemic fallout.

Long-term goals

1. Economic resiliency planning
2. Multipurpose community center
3. BR&E

RICHARDSON/JOHNSON MOVED TO ACCEPT THE ADOPTED CHANGES AS WRITTEN FOR THE STRATEGIC GOALS AND PLANS.

No further discussion.

VOTE: NON OBJECTION: UNANIMOUS CONSENT.

Motion carried.

**NEW BUSINESS**

A. Comprehensive Economic Development Strategy (CEDS)

Chair Marks introduced the item by reading the title. She gave a verbal report from the Kenai Peninsula Economic Development District (KPEDD) board meeting she attended on their efforts to create a regional Comprehensive Economic Development Strategy (CEDS). Ms. Marks explained what information will be needed from the City, the timeframe for when public outreach will take place, and what tasks the commission will be aiding with as part of compiling the 2020 CEDS.

Ms. Marks asked the commission to visit the KPEDD's website to start familiarizing themselves with previous CEDS and reports. At the next EDC meeting, she would like to start looking at what kind of

structure can we build to handle KPEDD's needs for public input. She opined that it could be a structure that can also be applied to other projects they work on.

Commissioner Arevalo voiced her need for clarification on Ms. Marks' plan. Chair Marks explained that when you look at the 2016 CEDS, you are looking at people's goals, strategies, and actions. How do you get information from the community to give to the consultants so they can put it into a report? The first part of her recommendation is stating how the EDC needs to know KPEDD's background; the second part is figuring out how the EDC will gather public input.

Special Projects and Communications Coordinator Carroll explained the process. KPEDD is contracting with the University of Alaska Anchorage (UAA) to facilitate the public outreach aspect of the CEDS. She asked the commission how they envision their public outreach efforts to coincide with KPEDD's plans. Chair Marks responded, noting that prior public outreach included presentations to local groups such as Homer Rotary or the Chamber of Commerce. Her suggestion was to include other stakeholders outside of those groups, which she feels is very important. Homer is the only town that has an economic development commission tasked with public outreach. After she has more details in November from the next KPEDD board meeting, and commissioners have had time to read up on the KPEDD's CEDS background, Chair Marks would like to discuss the process moving forward.

Chair Marks asked commissioners to contact staff or herself if they ever have items they would like to see on future agendas.

### **INFORMATIONAL MATERIALS**

- A. Resolution 20-086 Amending EDC Bylaws
- B. UCIDA Resolution 2020-010 Economic Disaster Declaration
- C. City Manager's Report for September 14, 2020
- D. City Manager's Report for September 28, 2020
- E. EDC 2020 Meeting Calendar
- F. Commissioner Attendance at 2020 City Council Meetings

Chair Marks commented on the informational materials. There was discussion on the new bylaws and a request to have the ordinance amending City Code with EDC's revised purpose and the 2021 meeting calendar in the next agenda.

### **COMMENTS OF THE AUDIENCE**

### **COMMENTS OF CITY STAFF**

Special Projects and Communications Coordinator Carroll thanked the EDC, the economic environment in which we live and work in, and the commissioner's volunteerism.

Deputy City Clerk Tussey and City Planner Abboud had no comments.

### **COMMENTS OF THE COUNCILMEMBER**

**COMMENTS OF THE CHAIR**

Chair Marks thanked everyone and voiced her positivity with what they're working on and her hopes to soon meet in person again.

**COMMENTS OF THE COMMISSION**

Commissioner Johnson thanked Ms. Carroll for all her hard work. He also thanked Commissioner Arevalo for spearheading the strategic plan revisions.

Commissioner Brown thanked Ms. Carroll for her many hours given to the commission and wished her good luck in her future responsibilities. She also thanked Ms. Arevalo for all her work at tonight's meeting.

Commissioner Richardson thanked Ms. Carroll for her work and making a difference.

Commissioner Arevalo commented that if anyone was interested in the economic angle of agriculture and different food systems around the state, the Alaska Food Policy Council's festival and conference is coming up on November 6<sup>th</sup> and 7<sup>th</sup>. Will be held via Zoom. She thanked Ms. Carroll for all her time and work invested into EDC.

**ADJOURN**

There being no further business to come before the Commission, Chair Marks adjourned the meeting at 7:58 p.m. The next Regular Meeting is Tuesday, November 10, 2020 at 6:00 p.m. All meetings scheduled to be held via Zoom webinar in 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: \_\_\_\_\_