

Session 20-07 a Regular Meeting of the Economic Development Advisory Commission was called to order by Chair Karin Marks at 6:00 p.m. on November 10, 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, BROWN, RICHARDSON, SPEAKMAN, JOHNSON, MINK, AREVALO

STAFF: DEPUTY CITY PLANNER ENGBRETSSEN
DEPUTY CITY CLERK TUSSEY

Chair Marks welcomed new commissioner Debbie Speakman to the Economic Development Advisory Commission, who was in attendance for the meeting.

AGENDA APPROVAL

Chair Marks called for a motion to approve the agenda.

BROWN/SPEAKMAN 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. September 8, 2020 Regular Meeting Minutes
- B. October 13, 2020 Regular Meeting Minutes

Chair Marks pointed out a correction to the October 13, 2020 meeting minutes. On page three of the minutes, second sentence in the second paragraph, it should read "...the timeframe/deadline for working on local efforts is December 2020 to March 2021..." instead of June.¹

AREVALO/JOHNSON MOVED TO APPROVE THE MINUTES FROM SEPTEMBER AND OCTOBER.

¹ Deputy City Clerk Tussey confirmed that during the October 13th meeting Chair Marks had said June 2021, not December-March 2021. It was clarified with the Chair that the context of that date was in reference to the public input timeframe. The October 13, 2020 meeting minutes were corrected to state: "...the timeframe for working on public input is through the end of June 2021..."

There was no discussion.

VOTE: NON OBJECTION: UNANIMOUS CONSENT.

Motion carried.

VISITORS/PRESENTATIONS

STAFF & COUNCIL REPORT/COMMITTEE REPORTS

A. Deputy City Planner Staff Report

Deputy City Planner Engebretsen introduced herself as the new staff person for EDC and shared her background with the City, economic development, and her expertise as an “economic geographer”. She explained how she will respond to questions in her written staff report and that it is there for the commissioners to read; they can discuss any questions during that time but she won’t be reading through the staff report during the meetings.

Commissioner Johnson commented on the info she provided regarding “zoom towns” and how it related to their efforts to promote workers. In response to Chair Marks asking if that subject fit Homer, Mr. Johnson opined that Homer can be that kind of place given its beauty, people’s desire to live here over Anchorage, and as long as the internet is good.

B. Chamber Director Report

Brad Anderson, Chamber Director, provided a verbal report highlighting the following topics:

- Renovating their website and membership program to be much more competitive, and help local businesses recover from a poor year due to COVID.
- Update on AK Cares Program; provided statistics from borough and state grant programs on how many applications have been approved and the amount of funding coming into Homer.
- Food trucks will be in Homer this weekend as part of the Food Network’s Great Food Truck Race show; the network TV coverage of Homer is invaluable and will air in March 2021.
- Planning Chamber events for next year with COVID-19 in mind.
- Airport is close to opening up; they were asked to remove all their printed materials to limit touch points and are looking to set up monitors or other alternatives to share info.
- Using their committees to do more legislative work in the economic development sector.

C. Homer Marine Trades Association Report

Chair Marks noted the HMTA meeting minutes in the packet.

D. Pioneer Avenue Task Force Report

Chair Marks reported that the peony planting packages have been picked up by various Pioneer avenue businesses and are all planned out. Not much going to happen with the PATF until February.

E. Kenai Peninsula Economic Development District Report

Chair Marks commented that more would be discussed later in the meeting.

PUBLIC HEARINGS

PENDING BUSINESS

A. EDC Strategic Plan/Goals Update
i. EDC 2020-2021 Strategic Plan/Goals

Chair Marks introduced the item by reading the title and deferred to Deputy City Planner Engebretsen.

Ms. Engebretsen spoke to the EDC's near term goals and whose responsibility it is to complete those tasks: the commissions or staffs. Extra lines were added to make it easy for commissioners to review the goals and see exactly what they can do to move a certain goal forward. She facilitated discussion with the commission, taking in feedback, on the following near term goals:

- Goal #1 – The commission supported the idea of having field trips to the green space areas in town to become more familiar with the concept, and potential future green space areas.
- Goal #2 – Staff hopes to have the Planning Commission and EDC work closer together. Chair Marks noted there were comments made about zoning in the 2017 BR&E that the commission hasn't fully looked into.
- Goal #3 – Commissioners can bring new ideas on how to outreach to specific groups of people.
- Goal #4 – How would EDC like to implement this goal? Suggestions given include:
 - A simple online survey
 - Have a spot on the agenda under reports where commissioners can give their updates
 - Having 3-4 commissioners visit business groups to get an initial (Ms. Brown visit B&B's, Ms. Marks visit Pioneer Avenue businesses, Ms. Arevalo visit restaurants, Mr. Johnson visit college/nonprofits, Ms. Speakman visit marine trades)
 - Asking businesses open-ended questions to get a feel for any attainable needs; Mr. Richardson will provide draft questions to Ms. Engebretsen for distribution.
- Goal #5 – Clarification on what commissioners meant by "boots on the ground" projects. EDC wishes to engage with the other commissions/boards and would like the staff person to make the commission aware of opportunities where they can assist other advisory bodies.

B. Comprehensive Economic Development Strategy (CEDS) Update
i. Public Outreach Ideas & Ways to Gather Input

Chair Marks introduced the item by reading the title and deferred to Deputy City Planner Engebretsen.

Ms. Engebretsen spoke to the public outreach ideas she compiled into a list, and requested if there were any digital outreach ideas the commission has come across that have worked/not worked.

Discussion ensued on the following subjects:

- Sharing experiences with certain online meeting features particularly the issues with Zoom Webinars
- Tourism messaging via Instagram and YouTube with locally made ads
- Using focus groups in addition to online surveys
- The City's social media policies and if the EDC could have their own Facebook account
- Ways to connect with public on economic development topics, primarily through the Chamber of Commerce and the KPEDD's consultant outreach

Chair Marks noted for the next meeting in December she will have more details on what KPEDD is doing and Ms. Engebretsen should have additional specifics as well.

NEW BUSINESS

- A. Economic Development Advisory Commission 2021 Meeting Schedule
i. DRAFT Resolution 20-XX Approving the 2021 Public Meeting Schedule

Chair Marks introduced the item by reading the title. She spoke to how in the past they have removed regular meetings from the schedule or left them on, and opened the floor for discussion.

RICHARDSON/BROWN MOVED TO APPROVE THE 2021 MEETINGS EXCEPT JULY.

Commissioner Speakman suggested they not cancel the July meeting. She noted they can always cancel the meeting if it's not needed, but should keep it scheduled in case they need an opportunity to work with other advisory bodies. Commissioner Brown pointed out that the May meeting needed to be changed to the 11th.

VOTE: YES: MARKS, RICHARDSON
NO: AREVALO, BROWN, SPEAKMAN, JOHNSON
ABSTAIN: MINK

Motion failed.

BROWN/AREVALO MOVED TO APPROVE THE MEETINGS FOR 2021.

There was no discussion.

VOTE: YES: RICHARDSON, BROWN, JOHNSON, SPEAKMAN, AREVALO, MARKS
ABSTAIN: MINK

Motion carried.

- B. Request for Wayfinding & Streetscape Project to Move Forward in 2021
i. Resolution 20-050

- ii. Ordinance 19-54 (S-2)(A-2)
- iii. Memorandum 19-161
- iv. Memorandum 19-148

Chair Marks introduced the item by reading the title and deferred to Deputy City Planner Engebretsen.

Ms. Engebretsen gave background information on City Council's decision in May to pause most major projects with the expectation that COVID-19 would have a negative impact on City tax revenues. Since May, Council has approved several projects that use HART funds, which is sales tax specifically used for roads and trails projects. The Wayfinding and Streetscape project will utilize this funding source, so if the commission would like to see this project move forward in 2021, they would need to make a recommendation to Council to re-approve the funding. She further explained how the funding is good for three years; if the funds aren't used by 2021 then they would have to ask for funding again.

BROWN/JOHNSON MOVED TO REQUEST THAT CITY COUNCIL ALLOW THE WAYFINDING AND STREETSCAPE PROJECT CONTINUE IN 2021.

There was no discussion.

VOTE: YES: AREVALO, MARKS, SPEAKMAN, RICHARDSON, JOHNSON, BROWN
ABSTAIN: MINK

Motion carried.

Chair Marks requested that staff confirm if this will be an ordinance or resolution and at what City Council meeting it will be at.

- C. Revisions to Community Design Manual
 - i. Staff Report PL 20-71 to Planning Commission Re: Revisions to the Community Design Manual

Chair Marks introduced the item by reading the title and deferred Deputy City Planner Engebretsen.

Ms. Engebretsen explained how the Planning Commission is working on the Community Design Manual, primarily design standards concerning commercial development and all things that require a Conditional Use Permit. They would like to condense the 35 page document into 5-7 pages that are the most important design requirements; what are hard and fast rules and what aren't. She hopes to have the Planning Commission's draft to EDC by their January meeting to get the commission's input on.

There was brief discussion on the in-depth design details the manual oversees, and the Planning Commission's responsibility to review those details. Ms. Engebretsen responded to Commissioner Brown's questions regarding the use of Gig Harbor's design manual for the template. Chair Marks noted how the outdoor furniture design sounded like Streetscape Design, and inquired with Ms. Engebretsen if Public Works would be overseeing that aspect.

D. Green Infrastructure in Homer (10 Minute Time Limit)

Chair Marks introduced the item by reading the title and deferred to Deputy City Planner Engebretsen.

Ms. Engebretsen explained how she had been in communication with Jan Keiser, Public Works Director, who is interested in meeting the commission to discuss Green Infrastructure. Public Works recently installed story maps on green infrastructure at rain gardens, such as the ones near the college, City Hall, and the new police station. Ms. Engebretsen encouraged the commission to request additional info on the subject and future meetings.

INFORMATIONAL MATERIALS

- A. Memo 20-158 Appointment of Debbie Speakman to the Economic Development Advisory Commission
- B. Ordinance 20-64(A) Amending HCC 2.76 Duties of EDC
- C. EDC Bylaws – Adopted September 28, 2020
- D. City Manager’s Report for October 12, 2020
- E. City Manager’s Report for October 26, 2020
- F. EDC 2020 Meeting Calendar
- G. Commissioner Attendance at 2020 City Council Meetings

Chair Marks noted the informational materials provided. Chair Marks thanked Commissioner Mink for his time and participation in the EDC. Ms. Marks requested any commissioners who have additions to the EDC calendar’s Annual Topics/Events column to make those suggestions for the next meeting, and for commissioners to attend the next City Council meeting to report.

COMMENTS OF THE AUDIENCE

COMMENTS OF CITY STAFF

Deputy City Clerk Tussey thanked Commissioner Mink and wished him well in his future endeavors.

Deputy City Planner Engebretsen thanked the commission as their new staff person. She welcomed Commissioner Speakman and thanked Commissioner Mink for serving.

COMMENTS OF THE COUNCILMEMBER

COMMENTS OF THE CHAIR

Chair Marks thanked Ms. Engebretsen for the information provided in the packet. She thanked Commissioner Mink and welcomed Commissioner Speakman.

COMMENTS OF THE COMMISSION

Commissioner Johnson thanked Commissioner Mink and thanked Deputy City Planner Engebretsen for her work and being their new staff person.

Commissioner Arevalo thanked Deputy City Planner Engebretsen for including the information on the Community Design Manual and Green Infrastructure. She looks forward to additional materials on the subjects. Ms. Arevalo notified the commission Alaska Food Policy Council's Alaska Food Conference just happened this past weekend via Zoom; it was an interesting conference on Alaska's food sovereignty and presentation recordings are available for anyone interested in checking them out. She also noted the Homer Center of Environmental Conservation District and the Natural Resource Conservation Service are teaming up again to host "Know Your Land" talks; free opportunities for anyone interested in topics that may affect land.

Commissioner Mink commented it was a pleasure to serve on the commission and thanked everyone. He commented that the Kevin Bell Arena was now open.

Commissioner Speakman thanked everyone for the warm welcome and her goal for serving.

Commissioners Richardson and Brown had no additional comments.

ADJOURN

There being no further business to come before the Commission, Chair Marks adjourned the meeting at 7:42 p.m. The next Regular Meeting is Tuesday, December 8, 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.

RACHEL TUSSEY, DEPUTY CITY CLERK I

Approved: _____