

Session 20-08 a Regular Meeting of the Economic Development Advisory Commission was called to order by Chair Karin Marks at 6:01 p.m. on December 8, 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, AREVALO, JOHNSON, CHEROK

**STAFF:** DEPUTY CITY PLANNER ENGBRETSSEN  
DEPUTY CITY CLERK TUSSEY  
PUBLIC WORKS DIRECTOR KEISER

### **AGENDA APPROVAL**

Chair Marks called for a motion to approve the agenda.

BROWN/RICHARDSON 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. November 10, 2020 Regular Meeting Minutes

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

JOHNSON/RICHARDSON MOVED TO APPROVE THE MINUTES FROM THE LAST MEETING, AS AMENDED.

Commissioner Arevalo suggested the following corrections:

- Staff Report, Item A, clarify Commissioner Johnson's comment to specify "remote workers"
- Pending Business, Item A, revise Goal #1 to read "...with the infrastructure concept"
- Comments of the Commissioners, correct the title of Commissioner Arevalo's title of her work

There was discussion on the purpose of minutes, what they should reflect, and amending the motion to approve the minutes as amended.

VOTE: NON OBJECTION: UNANIMOUS CONSENT.

Motion carried.

### **VISITORS/PRESENTATIONS**

A. Jan Kaiser, Public Works Director – Introduction & City Green Infrastructure

Chair Marks introduced Jan Kaiser, Public Works Director.

Ms. Keiser gave a presentation on Green Infrastructure in Homer. She shared her background in engineering and her history with Homer. The information she provided noted what City plans and studies already exist, what those studies recommend and where they conflict with our current policies, and what else the City needs to do to make those changes happen. She further explained the next steps to take, which includes collaboration with the Homer Soil and Water Conservation District and developing better policy.

In response to Commissioner Brown's question, Ms. Keiser shared her experiences with applying for the job and what the City Manager was looking for when hiring her.

Commissioner Arevalo voiced her appreciation for Ms. Keiser and the work that she is doing. She commented on her support for the EDC being involved in this green infrastructure process.

Commissioner Johnson voiced his agreement with everything that has been said so far; they're built for long term and are projects that belong to the environment rather than imposed on it.

Ms. Keiser spoke to the issue with the Public Works campus being in the tsunami inundation zone, and how staff is in the process of creating a task force to study the risk level and relocation of the campus. There was discussion on application status for those wishing to serve on the task force. Ms. Keiser responded to other questions from the commission, facilitating discussion on small works drainage projects and funding.

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

A. EDC Staff Report

Deputy City Planner Engebretsen spoke to her written report, noting the following topics:

- Social Media policy revisions in the works; Chair Marks voiced the user-friendly issues with the City's website.
- Requests for speakers/presentation from commissioners are acceptable; send requests to Ms. Engebretsen for future meetings.
- Public Works Campus Task Force; contact the City Clerk's Office to submit an appointment application.

B. Chamber Director Report

C. Homer Marine Trades Association Report

D. Pioneer Avenue Task Force Report

Chair Marks noted there wouldn't be more to report with the PATF until February 2021.

E. Kenai Peninsula Economic Development District Report

Chair Marks commented that KPEDD updates would be discussed during the associated agenda items.

## **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 commented that unless the commission had additional revisions or questions regarding the near term goals, that a motion approving their updated plan would be appropriate.

AREVALO/RICHARDSON MOVED TO ACCEPT AND ENACT THE NEAR TERM GOALS FROM OUR STRATEGIC PLAN.

There was no discussion.

VOTE: YES: MARKS, CHEROK, AREVALO, BROWN, SPEAKMAN, JOHNSON, RICHARDSON

Motion carried.

- 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 noted that no action was needed at this time by the commission. She provided an update from the Kenai Peninsula Economic Development District (KPEDD) on their public outreach efforts during the Comprehensive Economic Development Strategy (CEDS) process, including two surveys they plan to send out, and how the EDC will be able to support those efforts without overlapping efforts. She will send a meeting link out for the public forum when it becomes available.

Chair Marks commented on how their work will keep the EDC busy this spring. She also clarified that the KPEDD logo will be on the CEDS as it's their business. Commissioner Arevalo clarified the KPEDD and CEDS titles and purposes for new Commissioner Cherok.

C. Wayfinding & Streetscape Plan

- i. Memo to City Council Re: Request to move forward on the Wayfinding Streetscape Capital Project

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

Ms. Engebretsen gave an update on where the EDC and staff are in the Wayfinding and Streetscape Plan process. Their request to move the plan forward was approved by City Council. She explained how she plans to utilize the EDC for the public outreach aspects while the Parks and Recreation Department will be doing the leg work. She is looking to have three or four wayfinding and streetscape meetings or worksessions in the future.

Commissioner Johnson inquired that when EDC was initially working on the plan they already discussed how they would contribute, and what did staff see the commission helping with? Ms. Engebretsen responded; much of the nuts-and-bolts decisions, such as what benches to buy, will be made by the City staff responsible for maintaining it. The consultant being hired would coordinate between staff and bounce ideas off the EDC as the “task force” for the project through remote meetings. She does not foresee this project requiring an in-depth look into details that would require a task force, which is where the EDC would come in.

Discussion ensued on logistics of where staff would provide input on design and purchasing, the commission’s desire to maintain a unique look, and staff’s efforts to run an efficient process without too much of staff’s time tied up in excess packet/agenda preparation.

Chair Marks requested the commissioners give thought to anyone or any group that they would like to see invited to a discussion on this subject, and forward them to Ms. Engebretsen so they can be invited ahead of the January meeting.

D. Revisions to Community Design Manual

- i. Staff Report PL 20-73 to Planning Commission Re: CDM Review

Chair Marks introduced the item by reading the title, thanked Commissioner Richardson for the input he provided to the Planning Commission on fences, and deferred to Deputy City Planner Engebretsen.

Ms. Engebretsen gave an update on the community design manual and where the Planning Commission is in the process of revising it. She noted that the PC likes the Green Infrastructure approach to landscaping and zoning.

Ms. Engebretsen spoke to and facilitated discussion on what the manual oversees, how it could be revised to be more accommodating to the Homer area, and how the Wayfinding and Streetscape Plan stands alone as its own document. She plans to work on the manual rewrite after the beginning of the year and will reach out to commissioners for input at that time.

**NEW BUSINESS**

- A. Land Allocation Plan
  - i. HCC 18.08.020 LAP Property available for lease
  - ii. DRAFT 2021 Land Allocation Plan

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

Ms. Engebretsen spoke to the Land Allocation Plan process, what feedback is needed from the EDC, and explained each section of the LAP.

Discussion ensued on what lands are currently available for sale or lease. At this time most leased lots located out on the Homer Spit are already leased out, there is a Request for Proposals for Airport Leases in the works, and the old library lot was not up for sale again at this time.

The commission did not have any recommended changes to the Land Allocation Plan.

- B. COVID Questionnaire for Businesses

Chair Marks introduced the item by reading the title and gave background on what was discussed at the last meeting. A set of questions regarding COVID-19 were put together by Commissioner Richardson and were listed in the packet, with commissioners wishing to identify select businesses/industries they could approach to ask these questions.

Deputy City Planner Engebretsen spoke to her memo, suggesting they take a gentle approach due to this year's hardships and the City not being sure what the future status will be on Federal aid money. She recommended EDC get a pulse of where businesses are at and if further outreach will be needed in the future. They can then make that determination at a later meeting. Travel experts say 2021 is scheduled to be a difficult year.

Commissioner Richardson commented; the point of the questions was to see if there were things businesses needed that we may not easily recognize without asking. He spoke to the drafted questions and what kind of feedback he received when he posed some of the questions to businesses.

There was discussion on the draft questions, how each one was relevant in different scenarios depending on the business, and potentially leaving all of them to provide commissioners options rather than narrowing it down to a few. Commissioner Arevalo suggested ways that some of the questions could be combined into one, for example:

- "What are the main ways that your business was affected?" and if it wasn't then they would answer accordingly.
- "Have you lowered the number of staff that you employ in 2020 from 2019 and if so, by how much?"
- "Do you have any ideas for how the City's Economic Development Commission can help you?" also implies the City can help too.

Commissioner Speakman commented on a business survey the Kenai Peninsula Economic Development District (KPEDD) sent out last April to borough businesses, and how some of the questions they have created here were included in that survey. It is possible to reach out to KPEDD and use their survey responses as backup. She also noted that due to federal stimulus funds not being available, she would be more in favor of waiting to do anything.

Discussion ensued. There was mutual agreement that the purpose of the questions was to get a feel, on a low level, for what local businesses are experiencing. Commissioners will go around and pose these questions to two to three businesses/non-profits over the course of the next month, and email their collected responses to Ms. Engebretsen.

### **INFORMATIONAL MATERIALS**

- A. Memo 20-190 Appointment of Jay Cherok to the Economic Development Advisory Commission
- B. City Manager's Report for November 23, 2020
- C. EDC 2021 Meeting Calendar
- D. Commissioner Attendance at 2020 City Council Meetings
- E. Commissioner Attendance at 2021 City Council Meetings

Chair Marks welcomed new commissioner Jay Cherok and to have a full commission again. She commented on the new 2021 meeting calendars and encouraged commissioners to volunteer to report. Commissioner Arevalo volunteered to attend the December 14<sup>th</sup> City Council meeting.

### **COMMENTS OF THE AUDIENCE**

#### **COMMENTS OF CITY STAFF**

Deputy City Planner Engebretsen welcomed Commissioner Cherok and thanked the commission for their direction on what they'll be working on for the next month or two.

Deputy City Clerk Tussey echoed Ms. Engebretsen's comments and thanked the commission for a good meeting as she was running it from home.

#### **COMMENTS OF THE COUNCILMEMBER**

#### **COMMENTS OF THE CHAIR**

Chair Marks commented that she looks forward to when they can meet in person again and all the projects they have prepared to work on in terms of economic development.

#### **COMMENTS OF THE COMMISSION**

Commissioner Richardson welcomed Commissioner Cherok and thanked everyone for a good meeting.

Commissioner Johnson welcomed Commissioner Cherok and thanked Commissioner Richardson for all his work on the Planning Commission comments and COVID-19 questions.

Commissioner Brown reiterated the same comments and noted it was a great meeting.

Commissioner Speakman commented ditto and hopes everyone enjoys the holidays.

Commissioner Cherok commented that it was exciting to be here and help out.

Commissioner Arevalo thanked City Council for being so quick to jump on the Board of Fisheries' proposal to eliminate local salmon fishery in the Upper Cook Inlet and making a recommendation to not remove it. Ms. Arevalo spoke to the year-long efforts of a 100-person group who had been going through a comprehensive book on mitigating climate change and seeing what kinds of projects might be applicable in Homer. One project that was chosen was preserving, supporting, and restoring peatlands, which are very important to the local economy here as they are the rearing grounds for our local salmon habitat. There are talks/ideas going around for citizen science opportunities and ways to financially support peatland conservation efforts through tourists that are interested in offsetting some of their carbon costs from traveling to Homer.

**ADJOURN**

There being no further business to come before the Commission, Chair Marks adjourned the meeting at 7:57 p.m. The next Regular Meeting is Tuesday, January 12, 2021 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: \_\_\_\_\_