

Session 22-08 a Regular Meeting of the Economic Development Advisory Commission was called to order by Chair Karin Marks at 6:02 p.m. on September 13, 2022 at the Cowles Council Chambers, City Hall located at 491 E. Pioneer Avenue, Homer, Alaska and via Zoom Webinar, and opened with the Pledge of Allegiance.

**PRESENT:** COMMISSIONERS MARKS, BROWN, CHEROK, PERSON

**ABSENT:** COMMISSIONERS AREVALO (not excused), GAMBLE (not excused), PEREZ (excused), AND STUDENT REPRESENTATIVE PEARSON

**STAFF:** ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT MANAGER ENGBRETSSEN  
DEPUTY CITY CLERK TUSSEY  
SPECIAL PROJECTS COORDINATOR FOSTER  
PUBLIC WORKS DIRECTOR KEISER

#### **AGENDA APPROVAL**

PERSON/BROWN MOVED TO APPROVE THE AGENDA.

There was no discussion.

VOTE: NON OBJECTION: UNANIMOUS CONSENT.

Motion carried.

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

#### **RECONSIDERATION**

**CONSENT AGENDA** (Items listed below are considered routine and non-controversial by the Commission and are approved in one motion. If a separate discussion is desired on an item, a Commissioner may request that item be removed from the Consent Agenda and placed on the Regular Agenda under New Business.)

A. August 23, 2022 Special Meeting Minutes

Chair Marks read the Consent Agenda and requested a motion.

PERSON/CHEROK MOVED TO APPROVE THE CONSENT AGENDA AS PRESENTED.

There was no discussion.

VOTE: NON OBJECTION: UNANIMOUS CONSENT.

Motion carried.

#### **VISITORS/PRESENTATIONS**

A. Alaska Small Business Development Center (AK SBDC) Update – Robert Green, Homer Business Advisor

Chair Marks introduced Robert Green and Cliff Cochran of the Alaska Small Business Development Center (SBDC).

Mr. Green's presentation provided an overview of the no-cost confidential business advising his position provides to Homer, the metrics of the services offered, and the budget breakdown of the position's cost compared to the value it provides the community.

Mr. Green and Cliff Cochran, SBDC Kenai Peninsula Center Director, responded to questions from the commission.

B. Short Term Rentals – Ryan Foster Special Projects Coordinator & Julie Engebretsen, Economic Development Manager

Chair Marks introduced Special Projects Coordinator Ryan Foster and Economic Development Manager Julie Engebretsen.

Ms. Engebretsen presented on considerations on short term rentals (STR) in the City of Homer. She gave an overview of the history of short-term rentals in Homer, how they are defined, the purposes of STR's in the community, and the positive/negative impacts of them.

Mr. Foster spoke to the overall feeling in the community that short-term rentals have a significant negative impact on the availability of long-term housing in Homer. He explained how the research was conducted and calculated that analyzes that concern, the number of potential displacement of year-round residents, and the estimated revenue from STR's for the community and the unrealized revenue in tax for the City. He reviewed the case studies used for regulation comparisons among similar communities and the findings of that research; many communities that have or are implementing STR regulations have seen several benefits.

Ms. Engebretsen and Mr. Foster answered questions from commissioners and facilitated feedback/critiques on the presentation itself. A similar, updated presentation on the topic will be given at a City Council worksession on October 10, 2022.

C. Public Works Update – Jan Keiser, Public Works Director

Chair Marks introduced Public Works Director Jan Keiser.

Ms. Keiser spoke to her written report, responded to questions from commissioners, and facilitated discussion on current Public Works projects and the condition of Homer's infrastructure.

**STAFF & COUNCIL REPORT/COMMITTEE REPORTS**

A. EDC Staff Report

Economic Development Manager Engebretsen provided an overview of her written report. She shared information on Nine Star Education and Employment Services, a local organization that helps disenfranchised youth between the ages of 16 and 24 who offers services such as helping them get their GED, learn job skills, and provide wages and Workers Comp insurance for them to work for local businesses/individuals. These services are of interest to the City and she looks forward to discussing potential partnerships with them in the future.

B. Homer Chamber of Commerce Report

Economic Development Manager Engebretsen reported the first Chamber luncheon of the season will be next week.

- C. Homer Marine Trades Association (HMTA) Report
- D. Kenai Peninsula Economic Development District (KPEDD) Report

**PUBLIC HEARING**

**PENDING BUSINESS**

- A. Balance of Quality of Life, Change, & Community Growth Discussion
  - i. Final Draft SWOT Plan & Graphic

Chair Marks introduced the agenda item by reading the title and deferred to Economic Development Manager Engebretsen.

Ms. Engebretsen requested edits from commissioners and facilitated discussion on the final draft of the EDC's Homer Quality of Life Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities, and Threats Analysis document.

MARKS/PERSON MOVED TO ADD BEFORE THE SECOND TO LAST SENTENCE IN THE BACKGROUND SECTION TO READ "AS THE COMMISSION DISCOVERED: IT'S THE PEOPLE WHO MAKE HOMER, HOMER."

Chair Marks explained how through all the discussions they have had on the topic, this was an important enough of a point that needed to be emphasized for all the other people who have not sat through the discussions.

Commissioner Brown inquired if it should read to incorporate that it's the small town community feel that we have that makes Homer, Homer. Chair Marks noted that small town community is the people, and she was just trying to find a way to identify that.

Commissioner Person opined we should not wordsmith the document too much but would be in support of the edit if it's something Chair Marks feels strongly about.

VOTE: NON OBJECTION: UNANIMOUS CONSENT.

Motion carried.

PERSON/MARKS MOVED TO AMEND THE LANGUAGE UNDER BUILT ENVIRONMENT, THREATS AND WEAKNESSES, BOX #4 TO BE MORE NEUTRAL LANGUAGE THAT SAYS "LOW DENSITY CAN CAUSE SPRAWL; COST OF UTILITIES AND INFRASTRUCTURE INCREASES AS A RESULT."

Commissioner Person commented how there are some places where higher-density areas might be more appropriate, and not to have a predetermined value statement about density is too low. However, when we do have low density the cost of infrastructure increases as a result and that's the threat and weakness they have identified.

VOTE: NON OBJECTION: UNANIMOUS CONSENT.

Motion carried.

MARKS/PERSON MOVED TO AMEND THE WORDING UNDER SOCIAL CLIMATE, OPPORTUNITIES, BLOCK #4 TO ADD LANDSCAPING AFTER ART/MURALS.

Chair Marks commented it's evident that they are working on all kinds of things having to do with art, murals, and landscaping throughout downtown, so wanted to make sure it was included.

VOTE: NON OBJECTION: UNANIMOUS CONSENT.

Motion carried.

BROWN/MARKS MOVED TO AMEND THE LANGUAGE UNDER SOCIAL CLIMATE, THREATS AND WEAKNESSES, TO READ “RESIDENTS” INSTEAD OF “PEOPLE”.

Discussion ensued on it remaining the same to be more inclusive of all people who come to Homer. The term residents excludes visitors, tourists, and people who live outside of City limits.

VOTE: OBJECTION: UNANIMOUS CONSENT.

Motion failed.

Chair Marks asked for a motion to adopt the document.

PERSON/CHEROK MOVED TO ADOPT THE EDC’S HOMER QUALITY OF LIFE STRENGTHS, WEAKNESSES, OPPORTUNITIES, AND THREATS ANALYSIS DOCUMENT.

VOTE: NON OBJECTION: UNANIMOUS CONSENT.

Motion carried.

Chair Marks thanked the commission for all their hard work. She noted that she and Ms. Engebretsen will be giving a presentation on this document to City Council and requested commissioners attend the presentation in person once it’s scheduled.

B. Housing Staff Report

Chair Marks introduced the agenda item by reading the title. She thanked Economic Development Manager Engebretsen for her and Special Projects Coordinator Foster’s work on the Short Term Rentals presentation and deferred to her for comments.

Ms. Engebretsen had no further comments and thanked the commission for their time, efforts, and attention.

Chair Marks noted that these efforts do fulfill one of the EDC’s 2022 primary strategic plan goals, and suggested that when the commission reviews their strategic plan and goals for 2023 that they consider housing as an area to work on for short-term goals.

**NEW BUSINESS**

**INFORMATIONAL MATERIALS**

- A. EDC 2021-2022 Strategic Plan/Goals
- B. City Manager’s Report for August 22, 2022
- C. EDC 2022 Calendar

Chair Marks opened the floor for discussion on informational materials. In response to Commissioner Person’s questions regarding HART funds in the budget, Economic Development Manager Engebretsen offered to gather more information from the Finance Director.

**COMMENTS OF THE AUDIENCE**

**COMMENTS OF THE CITY STAFF**

Economic Development Manager Engebretsen thanked Commissioner Person for her service. She is sorry to see her go and will let her know when topics of interest come up so she can attend as a visitor.

Deputy City Clerk Tussey had no further comments.

**COMMENTS OF THE COMMISSION**

Chair Marks commented on Commissioner Person’s resignation from the EDC, which was provided as a laydown. She is sorry to see her leave but understands and appreciates her great service. She asked the commission to keep a look out for a new city resident EDC member and to direct any potential members to herself and to the City Clerk’s Office for an appointment application.

Commissioner Cherok thanked everyone.

Commissioner Brown wished Commissioner Person good luck and she is sad to see her go.

Commissioner Person voiced how much she has enjoyed serving on the EDC; conflicting meeting schedules have made her refocus her efforts. She spoke to her involvement with the Homer Draw Down, their work on non-motorized transportation, and their upcoming meeting on September 22<sup>nd</sup>. She shared her appreciation for all the diverse viewpoints on the EDC and the significance of some of the topics they discuss, such as short-term-rentals.

There was brief discussion on the Homer Draw Down and where commissioners can find more information on it online.

**ADJOURN**

There being no further business to come before the Commission, Chair Marks adjourned the meeting at 8:03 p.m. The next regular meeting is Tuesday, October 11, 2022 at 6:00 p.m. All meetings are scheduled to be held in the City Hall Cowles Council Chambers and via Zoom Webinar.

  
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RACHEL TUSSEY, CMC, DEPUTY CITY CLERK II

Approved: October 11, 2022