

The Economic Development Advisory Commission held a Worksession on April 11, 2023 from 5:00 p.m. to 5:32 p.m. for EDC annual training, facilitated by City Clerk Melissa Jacobsen.

1. CALL TO ORDER

Session 23-04 a Regular Meeting of the Economic Development Advisory Commission was called to order by Chair Karin Marks at 6:01 p.m. on April 11, 2023 at the City Hall Cowles Council Chambers located at 491 E. Pioneer Avenue, Homer, Alaska and via Zoom Webinar, and opened with the Pledge of Allegiance. One seat is vacant from the resignation of Commissioner Jay Cherok on March 15, 2023.

PRESENT: COMMISSIONERS MARKS, PITZMAN, AREVALO, BROWN, PEREZ

ABSENT: COMMISSIONER GAMBLE (excused) & STUDENT REPRESENTATIVE PEARSON

STAFF: ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT MANAGER ENGBRETSSEN & DEPUTY CITY CLERK TUSSEY

2. AGENDA APPROVAL

AREVALO/BROWN MOVED TO APPROVE THE AGENDA.

There was no discussion.

VOTE: NON OBJECTION: UNANIMOUS CONSENT.

Motion carried.

3. PUBLIC COMMENTS UPON MATTERS ALREADY ON THE AGENDA

4. RECONSIDERATION

5. 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.)

5.A. Unapproved March 14, 2023 EDC Minutes

Deputy City Clerk Tussey read the Consent Agenda. Chair Marks requested a motion.

AREVALO/PITZMAN MOVED TO APPROVE THE CONSENT AGENDA.

There was no discussion.

VOTE: NON OBJECTION: UNANIMOUS CONSENT.

Motion carried.

6. VISITORS/PRESENTATIONS

7. STAFF & COUNCIL REPORT/COMMITTEE REPORTS

7.A. EDC Staff Report for April

Economic Development Manager Engebretsen spoke to her written report, highlighting the many City jobs that are currently open, staff transitions happening in the Planning office, and the purchase status

of the street banners. In response to questions from commissioners, Ms. Engebretsen provided more information on the new group in Homer “Guiding Homer’s Growth”. There was brief discussion on commissioners reaching out to them.

7.B. Chamber of Commerce Report

Economic Development Manager Engebretsen verbally reported on the last Chamber meeting. They have a newly-elected board and are in the process of divvying up into different subcommittees. She shared her involvement with the legislative government issues subcommittee and how it can help with bringing awareness to the things the Chamber and City are both working on, and the two groups working together as they communicate with legislators or the public.

7.C. Homer Marine Trades Association (HMTA) Report

7.D. Kenai Peninsula Economic Development District (KPEDD) Report

8. PUBLIC HEARING

9. PENDING BUSINESS

9.A. Housing Update
Action Item Report EDC 23-017

Chair Marks introduced the agenda item by reading the title. She provided a recap of the Homer Housing Conversation event that took place March 25th and spoke to the live survey links that are available online. This coalition is primarily going to help interest groups learn what next steps to take. The report generated from that event will soon be publicly available and a presentation will take place at City Council.

There was discussion on some of the statistics and facts realized at the event, what will be included in the report, and the commission’s desire for housing/rental fact-checking/data collection and vetting.

9.B. EDC Mission Statement
Action Item Report EDC 23-018

Chair Marks introduced the agenda item by reading the title and deferred to Commissioner Perez.

Commissioner Perez recapped the characteristics and components of a mission statement, provided examples, and facilitated discussion with the commission on what components the EDC can agree on to help craft the statement. There was unanimous support for the vision statement corrections that had been finalized at the March meeting.

The commission discussed the nine mission statement components drafted out on page 12 of the regular meeting packet:

1. Customers – agree; Homer and surrounding area residents and businesses
2. Products or services – agree; interface between citizens and City government
3. Markets – agree; Homer and surrounding area, and Lower Kenai Peninsula
4. Technology – remove the suggested ones, add use of surveys
5. Concern for survival and growth – suggested word changes; revisions to the statement can happen at next meeting

6. Philosophy – agree; directly from the vision statement
7. Distinctive competence – suggested word change “broad” for “unique”
8. Concern for public image – agree; ensure priorities provide value to the City, and dedicated to our community
9. Concern for employees – n/a

Commissioner Perez confirmed he will bring a draft mission statement to the May meeting.

- 9.C. EDC & Homer Chamber of Commerce Conversation Re: Economic Development in Homer
Action Item Report EDC 23-019

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

Ms. Engebretsen recapped some of the changes the Homer Chamber of Commerce has made to their marketing plan, and the results of their joint worksession. She suggested certain changes to the EDC’s Strength, Weaknesses, Opportunities, and Threats (SWOT) analysis concerning Chamber marketing if they want this document to remain current.

PEREZ/PITZMAN MOVED TO REMOVE THE WORDING “RETHINK CHAMBER MARKETING” FROM THE SWOT ANALYSIS.

There was discussion on how the Chamber’s actions should not be in their SWOT analysis, how the amendment potentially changes the intent of the section, and there may need to be more wordsmithing on it to make the goal reflect the efforts of the joint EDC/Chamber worksession.

There was mutual agreement to remove the wording but bring a revised version back to the next meeting. Commissioner Arevalo volunteered to craft a new phrase to bring back to the May meeting.

VOTE: NO: AREVALO, BROWN, PITZMAN, MARKS, PEREZ

Motion failed.

Chair Marks spoke to scheduling an annual worksession and having it on their EDC calendar and opened the floor for discussion.

Discussion ensued with the commission mutually agreeing to have the joint Chamber worksession be a standing annual item under February.

- 9.D. Land Allocation Plan, Part 2 & Large City Projects Update
Action Item Report EDC 23-020
Presentation Slides

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

Ms. Engebretsen shared a presentation she had given to the Port and Harbor Advisory Commission at their last meeting on how the Land Allocation Plan, Comprehensive Plan, and Zoning Codes fit together, and gave an update on where those document revision projects are at with the Council and City staff. She summarized other City projects that are in the works including a port business plan and where the public can sign up for updates on the City’s website for Harbor Expansion Project.

In response to her request for a commissioner to join her for the presentation to Council, Commissioner Perez volunteered to be present.

There was discussion on Mayor Castner's veto of the Comprehensive Plan contract, and the line item reduction to conduct a planning and zoning code rewrite but not the Comprehensive Plan.

10. NEW BUSINESS

10.A. Alaska Small Business Development Center (AKSBDC) Budget Request Action Item Report EDC 23-021

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

Ms. Engebretsen explained the Alaska Small Business Development Center's request to budget the Homer Business Advisor position in the upcoming budget cycle. In the past the amount has been higher, but the Kenai Peninsula Borough was able to increase their funding level specifically for this Homer position so that the City would not have to pay as much. Chair Marks spoke to the number of councilmembers that have been sponsors of this funding in the past, and then asked for a motion.

PITZMAN/PEREZ MOVED TO RECOMMEND TO CITY COUNCIL FUNDING FOR THE ALASKA SMALL BUSINESS DEVELOPMENT CENTER HOMER BUSINESS ADVISOR POSITION IN THE AMOUNT OF \$15,000 FOR FY24 AND \$15,000 FOR FY25.

Commissioner Brown confirmed with Ms. Engebretsen that this request would add it to the upcoming budget where it was not initially included.

Commissioner Perez commented on the information provided and his support for the funding request. He spoke to the value of this position's service in our community.

Commissioner Arevalo opined having the position be a little bit more mobile in terms of finding things out for people with particular types of businesses for our area is good.

VOTE: NON OBJECTION: UNANIMOUS CONSENT.

Motion carried.

10.B. Port Expansion Update Action Item Report EDC 23-022

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

Ms. Engebretsen reported on the three different resolutions about the harbor expansion project that were discussed at last night's City Council meeting. She requested feedback from the commission on what their level of interest is on this subject, and if there is an interest, if it should be a running agenda item or a type of report.

Commissioners each voiced their support for regular updates and the importance of staying abreast of the harbor expansion investigation study and project as they interact with the community. There was mutual agreement that as updates come up a written report in their meeting packet would suffice.

11. INFORMATIONAL MATERIALS

- 11.A. City of Homer Newsletter – April 2023 Issue
- 11.B. City Manager’s Reports
CM March 28, 2023 Report
CM April 10, 2023 Report
- 11.C. EDC 2022-23 Strategic Plan
- 11.D. EDC Meeting & City Council Report Calendar

Chair Marks noted the informational materials. She reminded Commissioner Perez he will be giving the EDC report at the April 24th Council meeting, and requested someone consider volunteering for the May meeting since Commissioner Cherok is no longer on the commission.

12. COMMENTS OF THE AUDIENCE

13. COMMENTS OF THE CITY STAFF

Deputy City Clerk Tussey announced she has given her notice with the City and her last day is April 21st. She thanked the commission for all their work, for helping her become a seasoned clerk, and that she will still be in Homer so hopes to see them out in the community. At Chair Marks’ request, she noted EDC Election of Officers will be on their May agenda.

Economic Development Manager Engebretsen thanked Ms. Tussey for her work, Commissioner Perez for his work on the mission statement, and the commission for a good meeting.

14. COMMENTS OF THE COMMISSION

Commissioner Perez thanked everyone for participating. He shared he enjoys the direction they are heading and looks forward to what else they get to do.

Commissioner Arevalo shared she is sad to see Ms. Tussey go. She reported on the local food security/food system gatherings that have taken place. One was a collaboration between Homer Soil and Water and the Alaska Food Policy Council to help inform staff at the college as part of their new sustainable agriculture program. The second gathering was a broader invite to the community to discuss if a working group existed that focused on local food security and food system issues, what different issues should they focus on.

Commissioner Brown wished Ms. Tussey luck and noted it’s going to be hard to replace her. She commented on the joint worksession between EDC and the Chamber of Commerce; she was unable to attend but listened to the recording. She agreed with the majority of the discussion but wanted to share her thoughts on the higher-than-national-average cost of living and suggested that be an area they explore further, along with property taxes.

Commissioner Pitzman shared he’s sad to see Ms. Tussey go; she is really good at her job and has been very helpful for him getting going as a new commissioner. He voiced his appreciation for everybody’s input and thought it was a great meeting.

Chair Marks shared she will miss Ms. Tussey, how she keeps her on track, and that she's known her since she was young so is glad she isn't leaving Homer. She noted it was a good meeting and is looking forward to the second half of the year and their other plans.

15. ADJOURNMENT

There being no further business to come before the Commission, Chair Marks adjourned the meeting at 7:31 p.m. The next regular meeting is Tuesday, May 9, 2023 at 6:00 p.m. All meetings are scheduled to be held in the City Hall Cowles Council Chambers and via Zoom Webinar.

 for

RACHEL TUSSEY, CMC, DEPUTY CITY CLERK II

Approved: May 9, 2023