

**CALL TO ORDER**

Session 23-05 a Regular Meeting of the Economic Development Advisory Commission was called to order by Chair Karin Marks at 6:03 p.m. on May 9, 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. Commissioner Mel Kim was welcomed to the Commission by the Chair.

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

ABSENT: COMMISSIONERS GAMBLE, PEREZ (excused) & STUDENT REPRESENTATIVE PEARSON

STAFF: ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT MANAGER ENGBRETSSEN & DEPUTY CITY CLERK KRAUSE

**AGENDA APPROVAL**

Chair Marks read the Supplemental Items into the record: REPORTS, Item 7 F Port Expansion Project, Homer Harbor Expansion Design Charrette Schedule and Informational Materials, Public Comment Received on Budgetary Requests for Parks and Recreation and requested a motion.

AREVALO/BROWN MOVED TO APPROVE THE AGENDA AS AMENDED.

There was no discussion.

VOTE: NON OBJECTION: UNANIMOUS CONSENT.

Motion carried.

**PUBLIC COMMENTS UPON 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.)

5.A. Unapproved April 11, 2023 EDC Minutes

Deputy City Clerk Krause read the Consent Agenda.

AREVALO/BROWN MOVED TO APPROVE THE CONSENT AGENDA AS READ.

There was no discussion.

VOTE: NON OBJECTION: UNANIMOUS CONSENT.

Motion carried.

**VISITORS/PRESENTATIONS**

6. A. Trails as Economic Drivers for the Community, Cameale Johnson, Homer Trails Alliance

Ms. Johnson provided an overview of how outdoor recreation, specifically trails is beneficial to the overall economic vitality of a community. She briefly reviewed work that is performed by the Homer Trails Alliance, the organization's goals, organizations that they partner with to accomplish the

selected projects and maintenance of the trails that are created and where the organization obtains the materials to construct their projects. Ms. Johnson presented highlights of their vision for the area known as Diamond Creek Recreation Area and referenced the strategic planning that was adopted in the management plan by the City of Homer in 2013. The Homer Trails Alliance has applied for the available grant funding known as Transportation Alternatives Program (TAP) to connect Rogers Loop to Diamond Creek State Recreation Site to establish pedestrian connectivity by constructing off road parking at the Rogers Loop Trailhead, a multi-plate tunnel under the Sterling Highway, which would connect to the proposed detached pathway from Green Timbers Trailhead at MP 167.9 and the Department of Transportation Trailhead at MP 168.9 to Rogers Loop Trailhead on Rogers Loop Road. This would then connect to the existing sidewalk along the Sterling Highway at Milepost 169.9.

Ms. Johnson facilitated discussion on the following:

- RTP Grant is separate from the TAP grant application
- RTP Grant is to fund the pedestrian crossing
  - o Federal Grant
  - o SCORP
  - o LWCF grants have clear criteria
- TAP grant requires 9.6% match requirement
  - o City of Homer has adopted a Resolution supporting the application
  - o City will be constructing the Rogers Loop Trailhead parking
- Communities such as Anchorage have organizations that Homer does not
- It is a very realistic project but very competitive process

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

### **7.A. EDC Staff Report for May**

Economic Development Manager Engebretsen provided a verbal report on the following:

- Upcoming personnel changes in the Planning Department
- Agenda Changes
- Water & Sewer Rates
  - o Water/Sewer service for Jack Gist Park
- Guiding Growth in Homer
  - o Housing Interest
  - o Port Expansion Project
- Comprehensive Plan Funding in the FY24-FY25 Biennial Budget
  - o Including Town Center
- Numerous Permit Applications
  - o Many construction projects being started

Ms. Engebretsen facilitated discussion on the following:

- parking issues at Jack Gist Park
- Traffic flow onto East End Road

### **7.B. HERC Update**

Economic Development Manager Engebretsen provided a verbal report on the following:

- Testing for PCB was conducted on May 1-2, 2023 and results should be received by mid-June. These results will determine the next steps forward in the process.
- Drafting of a Business Plan using existing user groups to quantify their demand and determine which programs are expected to increase.
- Council approved the budget for recreational software to be able to provide some of the required data for the Business Plan
- Right sizing the new facility
- Flyers posted on a monthly basis on the city website
- Worksession conducted by City Council in March with additional worksessions scheduled for August and September.
  - The August worksession will cover what amount Council would be willing to bond to construct a building.
- Construction Bond, operations maintenance these costs go together and factor into what the City can afford to construct for the community.

#### 7. C. Chamber of Commerce Report

Economic Development Manager Engebretsen verbally reported on the last Chamber meeting. She noted that the Chamber has done the following:

- Conducting mixers on a monthly basis
- hired an events person

Ms. Engebretsen reported that City Council did include them in the FY24-25 Biennial Budget, but did not approve the additional funding requested for the Small Business person in the amount of \$15,000.

Ms. Engebretsen facilitated discussion on how the Commissioners could advocate to Council to include that amount in the budget.

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

Chair Marks noted that the minutes from the April 5, 2023 meeting that was included in the packet. There was no one present to provide further information from the Homer Marine Trades Association.

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

Chair Marks reported that she attended the April 20, 2023 meeting. She reported on the following:

- funding source outside the areas of interest
- Southern Kenai Peninsula Transit Coalition
- Support for the Homer All Ages and Abilities Pathways
- HEA Studying geothermal and wind energy on oil platforms
- Mariculture grant
- KPEDD 2023 update for the CEDS on their website

#### 7. E. Port Expansion Project

Chair Marks introduce the item by reading of the title and deferred to Ms. Engebretsen.

Ms. Engebretsen noted that this will be a monthly item under reports possibly the Consent Agenda and noted the Charrette schedule provided in the supplemental packet.

**PUBLIC HEARING**

**PENDING BUSINESS**

9.A. Housing Update  
Action Item Report EDC 23-023

Chair Marks introduced the agenda item by reading the title. She provided a recap of the Homer Housing Conversation event that took place March 25<sup>th</sup> and spoke to the live survey links that are available online. This coalition is primarily going to help interested 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 Budget Requests FY24 & FY25  
Agenda Item Report EDC 23-024

Chair Marks introduced the agenda item by reading the title and deferred to Commissioner Pitzman and noted the email from Janie Leask requesting the Commission support the PARC Advisory Commission budget request for the recreational software and additional staffing. At the Council meeting last night the Council approved funding for a part time staff person and the recreation software.

Ms. Engebretsen noted that Council did not approve the funding request by the Chamber of Commerce for the staff person and noted that it was unlikely to change as it is not included in the Budget going forward. She further commented on the hesitation to include the funding for the continued Wayfinding and Streetscape Plan implementation, but they did approve that request. She noted the following:

- With the funding approved, consideration of banners for the Port & Harbor and the banners identifying the City of Homer
- The budget request will be included in the next staff report for June so that the Commission can see the individuals components included for the wayfinding.
  - o budget request did not include the major neighborhood signs
  - o This is just a start to the complete wayfinding and streetscape plan which amounts to approximately \$300,000

Commissioner Pitzman stated his appreciation that Council funded the staff and software budget requests for Community Recreation. He noted the cumbersome process of using paper and pencil and the benefits to having a good data collection system.

Ms. Engebretsen stated that the best method would be to have the person providing the report at the next Council meeting, express the Commission support. That is if the Commission agrees by consensus on the funding of the permanent part time staff person and recreation software budgets requested.

The Commissioners agreed by consensus that they supported those budget requests.

Ms. Engebretsen facilitated discussion on the funding of the Small Business Staff position at the Chamber of Commerce by the City and the benefits to the business community and the city as a whole

on having that resource available and the reasons that Council was not supportive of the funding through the budget process. it was determined to address the subject under their strategic planning document.

9.C. EDC Mission Statement  
Agenda Item Report EDC 23-025

Chair Marks introduced the item and noted that Commissioner Perez was to provide information on this item and seeing that he was not in attendance for this meeting with the Commission's approval this item will be postponed to the June regular meeting.

Deputy City Clerk Krause reported that she did receive an email from Commissioner Perez requesting excusal due to illness and expressed his apologies for the late notification.

The Commission agreed by consensus to postpone the item to the June meeting.

9. D. Revision to SWOT Analysis  
Agenda Item Report EDC 23-026

Chair Marks introduced the item and deferred to Commissioner Arevalo.

Commissioner Arevalo for the benefit of the newest member, Commissioner Kim, provided a brief summary of the Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities and Threats (SWOT) Analysis that was performed by the Commission in 2021-2022. A worksession was conducted with the Chamber of Commerce in February and the Commission found that the Chamber was performing much more to support and promote small businesses than they thought in the beginning. In review of the strategic plan, it was discovered that the verbiage in the SWOT was not applicable. Ms. Arevalo then read into the record the proposed new language which she believed would encapsulate what is being done.

“Collaborate with the Homer Chamber of Commerce to help maintain attention towards building up our local small businesses across sectors”

Commissioner Arevalo expressed that she felt this verbiage covered the initial intent and what the Chamber is currently doing to help focus on the small business community in Homer.

Commissioner Pitzman suggested amending the statement to “maintain focus” and stated that he supported it either way it was written.

Chair Marks hearing no further comments, questions or amendments being considered requested a motion and second.

BROWN/KIM MOVED TO ADOPT THE REVISION TO THE SWOT ANALYSIS UNDER CHAMBER MARKETING TO THE LANGUAGE PROPOSED BY COMMISSIONER AREVALO, “COLLABORATE WITH THE HOMER CHAMBER OF COMMERCE TO HELP MAINTAIN FOCUS TOWARDS BUILDING UP OUR LOCAL SMALL BUSINESSES ACROSS SECTORS”

There was no further discussion.

VOTE. NON-OBJECTION. UNANIMOUS CONSENT.

Motion carried.

Ms. Engebretsen noted that she will be participating on a subcommittee of the Chamber's Board and one of the interests is an economic sector analysis.

There was brief discussion on the benefits to perform that analysis to obtain data on what is the Homer economy beyond tourism and how can they capture breadth of the really small businesses that do not maintain a store front. It was believed that it would also benefit in the updates to the Chamber's website. It was unknown if they were focusing on just membership or outside as well. There may be some businesses that can be approached and the website can be used as contact information since phone books are a thing of the past.

### **NEW BUSINESS**

#### 10.A. Election of EDC Officers Agenda Item Report EDC 23-027

Chair Marks introduced the item and clarified the methods to vote for Chair and Vice Chair. She indicated to the Commission that she was willing to serve as Chair once again. Ms. Marks called for nominations of Vice Chair after confirming if Vice Chair Brown would consent to serve again.

Commissioner Brown stated that if there was no interest in serving a Vice Chair by another Commissioner she would serve another term.

There were no further nominations and Commissioner Brown was re-elected as Vice Chair.

Chair Marks then turned the gavel over to Vice Chair Brown.

Vice Chair Brown called for nominations for the office of Chair.

Commissioner Arevalo nominated Commissioner Marks.

Vice Chair Brown hearing no further nominations conducted the vote for the Office of Chair and congratulated Chair Marks on her re-election handing the gavel back to Ms. Marks.

#### 10. B. EDC Bylaws Review Agenda Item Report EDC 12-028

Chair Marks introduced the item by reading of title and reviewed the report provided by Deputy City Clerk Krause. She noted the proposed amendments and process and requested a motion and second to amend the bylaws as noted.

AREVALO/BROWN MOVED TO AMEND THE BYLAWS TO REFLECT THE UPDATED TITLE OF THE STAFF LIAISON AND FORMAT OF THE MEETING AGENDA AND BRING THE AMENDED BYLAWS FOR ADOPTION AT THE JUNE REGULAR MEETING.

There was no discussion.

VOTE: NON-OBJECTION. UNANIMOUS CONSENT.

Motion carried.

### **INFORMATIONAL MATERIALS**

11.A. City of Homer Newsletter – May 2023 Issue

11.B. City Manager's Reports  
CM April 24, 2023 Report  
CM May 8, 2023 Report

11.C. EDC 2022-23 Strategic Plan

11.D. EDC Meeting & City Council Report Calendar

Chair Marks noted the informational materials and thanked Commissioner Pitzman for requesting an item to be on the agenda, noting that the Commission can contact Ms. Engebretsen or herself to have an item added to the agenda. She welcomed the newest Commissioner, Mel Kim. Ms. Marks then noted that a volunteer was needed to provide the report to City Council at the next meeting on May 22, 2023 at 6:00 p.m. She noted that Commissioner Pitzman was scheduled for August and September. There were no immediate volunteers. After a brief moment of quiet, Commissioner Pitzman asked Ms. Engebretsen to send him the "cliff notes" and he will make the report to Council. Chair Marks expressed her appreciation for Commissioner Pitzman stepping forward.

### **COMMENTS OF THE AUDIENCE**

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

Deputy City Clerk Krause expressed her appreciation for the Commission's patience with the packet materials, supplemental packet explaining that there was still a lot of things happening and even being short-staffed in the Clerk's Office they haven't slowed down. She looks forward to working with the Commission for the near term.

Economic Development Manager Engebretsen welcomed Commissioner Kim and expressed her appreciation for the efforts of the Clerk and having a great meeting.

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

Commissioner Pitzman welcomed Commissioner Kim to the Commission and he was looking forward to working with him.

Commissioner Arevalo reported that there were a couple of workshops for people that are interested in growing food locally coming up really soon. One is about growing fruit in Alaska and the challenges and opportunities, and what plants need. The second one is on Lasagna Beds, but the term used could

not be recalled right at the moment. She proceeded to describe the process used in that type of planting. They will be available through the Homer Soil and Water Conservation District's website. She then requested that the Commission be notified when they have attendees present via Zoom at their meetings noting it would be helpful. It was a good meeting.

Commissioner Kim thanked everyone for the welcome and stated that he has been talking with some persons who are working out on the Spit and they have reported the conditions of the bathrooms and those conditions are a persistent issue, additionally there is a lack of parking especially in the high season. They have asked about access to parking during the summer. He acknowledged that he did not know the right avenue to direct those conversations.

Ms. Engebretsen explained that it was always best to contact staff as soon as possible regarding issues.

Chair Marks commented that this Commission operated at a 30,000 foot view whereas other Commissions were focused on specific things. She went on to reiterate that the Commission will be reviewing their Strategic Plan and later the Comprehensive Plan that they may be able to consider the issue. The Port & Harbor would be more focused on that aspect though she believed. She recommended that the Commissioners keep asking questions of the community. Chair Marks related an incident where a business owner along Pioneer complained about the speeding that was occurring, not that the Commission can do anything about the issues but they can pass it along and she believed this was a good place to start. She expressed her appreciation of Commissioner Brown for stepping up to serve as Vice Chair again and the Commissioners for allowing her to serve them in the role of Chair again, stating that the Commission has made a lot of progress. Ms. Marks reminded them that they will be taking July off again and before you know it fall will be here.

#### ADJOURNMENT

There being no further business to come before the Commission, Chair Marks adjourned the meeting at 7:56 p.m. The next regular meeting is Tuesday, June 13, 2023 at 6:00 p.m. All meetings are scheduled to be held in the City Hall Cowles Council Chambers and via Zoom Webinar.

*Renee Krause*

RENEE KRAUSE, MMC, DEPUTY CITY CLERK II

Approved: *Feb. 13, 2024*