

CALL TO ORDER

Session 23-07 a Regular Meeting of the Economic Development Advisory Commission was called to order by Chair Karin Marks at 6:02 p.m. on September 12, 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.

PRESENT: COMMISSIONERS MARKS, BROWN, KIM, PITZMAN & STUDENT REPRESENTATIVE PEARSON

ABSENT: COMMISSIONERS AREVALO & GAMBLE

STAFF: ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT MANAGER ENGBRETSSEN & DEPUTY CITY CLERK PETTIT

AGENDA APPROVAL

BROWN/PITZMAN 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

CONSENT AGENDA

A. Unapproved Regular Meeting Minutes of August 8, 2023

KIM/PITZMAN MOVED TO APPROVE THE REGULAR MEETING MINUTES ON THE CONSENT AGENDA.

There was no discussion.

VOTE: NON OBJECTION: UNANIMOUS CONSENT.

Motion carried.

VISITORS/PRESENTATIONS

A. Robert Green, Alaska Small Business Development Center

Chair Marks introduced Robert Green, who works in the Homer Chamber of Commerce as the Homer Business Advisor.

Mr. Green gave a brief overview of his position and the role that it plays within the community of Homer. He proclaimed his support for Ordinance 23-50, a proposal seeking an allocation of \$10,000 in funding to support the Alaska Small Business Development Center Homer Business Advisory position. He added that a potential discontinuation of this position would be detrimental to the community of Homer, backing this claim with the fact that he advises for entrepreneurs roughly 650 hours annually. In 2019, prior to Mr. Green filling the position, businesses in Homer only received about 150 hours of advising annually. Mr. Green concluded by saying that small businesses are the lifeblood of our city, and by endorsing this ordinance we demonstrate unwavering commitment to their success.

Commissioners followed up Mr. Green's presentation with questions on the following topics: working hours and scheduling appointments, how people find out about the AKSBDC, common industries that AKSBDC works with and the metrics that the AKSBDC keeps track of.

STAFF & COUNCIL REPORT/COMMITTEE REPORTS

A. EDC Staff Report for August

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

- Vacancies throughout City employment
 - o The City is in the process of hiring a new planner, a new assistant to the City Manager, and lastly a new Director of Public Works given that current Director Jan Keiser will be stepping down from the position in January.
- Bayview Park
 - o The City has a contract with Corvus to rebuild Bayview Park, which was made possible from a grant through the State in addition to City funding and rotary.
- Karen Hornaday Park Master Plan
 - o Funding has been received from City Council to update the Karen Hornaday Park Master Plan. Topics for the park include parking, restrooms, and what to do with the campground area.

B. Chamber Director Report

Economic Development Manager Engebretsen delivered a verbal report on the relationship between the City and the Chamber of Commerce, noting that the City funds the Chamber \$75,000 per year for it to handle tasks such as staffing the visitor center, advertising Homer, and helping represent the City at various trade shows.

C. Homer Marine Trades Association Report

Chair Marks requested that Deputy City Clerk Pettit start reaching out to Homer Marine Trades Association prior to EDC meetings in hopes of getting their most current meeting minutes for the Commission to review.

D. Kenai Peninsula Economic Development District Report

Chair Marks briefed the Commissioners on the latest from the Kenai Peninsula Economic Development District. The group held a quarterly meeting on August 17th. The biggest news out of the meeting was that the group agreed to name Cassidie Cameron the new Executive Director of the group. Ms. Cameron has previously worked as the Special Projects Officer as well as the Office Manager in Seldovia. She will begin her new position on January 1st. Chair Marks concluded that KPEDD is working on two large projects: the Broadband Project and the Mariculture Project.

E. Port Expansion Project

Economic Development Manager Engebretsen noted that the next public meeting is going to be held on Saturday, September 23rd, at the college from 10 a.m. – 12:30 p.m. She added that it was discovered at the September 11th City Council work session that the project is over budget. The original plan was to have the first phase as a \$3 million phase, but there's about \$1.5 million in anticipated cost increases,

a big portion of which is geotechnical work. Ms. Engebretsen added that they want to pursue the geotechnical work now in order to avoid making assumptions that are too broad, thus resulting in an imprecise guestimate of the total project costs. She concluded her report by informing the Commission that there is a potential for a 6 – 18 month delay due to the Port missing their federal share of the \$3 million.

F. Guiding Homer’s Growth Group

Commissioner Kim delivered the report, stating that there was no meeting held in August, and that it had been postponed to a later date in September. He added that the discussion at these meetings goes beyond housing in general. In broad terms, the group is trying to figure out what the identity and the culture of the community is and how to preserve it or change it for the future. The ideas of the group are to preserve the natural beauty of Homer, to have places for the youth of Homer to live in the future, and to gather diverse opinions of the community.

Economic Development Manager Engebretsen added that there are rumors of having another panel discussion in October, but it seems unlikely at this point.

G. HERC Update

Economic Development Manager Engebretsen provided the Commission with an update on the HERC, disclosing the HAZMAT report for both buildings has been received. Some of the contaminants that were found in the HAZMAT report were asbestos, lead paint, and PCBs (polychlorinated biphenyls). Ms. Engebretsen noted that the State of Alaska doesn’t allow PCBs in their landfills, which means that the HERC would need to be barged to the Lower 48 where that kind of waste can be accepted. Ms. Engebretsen is working with Region 10 EPA for a Brownfield Grant opportunity that she expects to open up any day now that would allow the City to apply for a grant of \$800,000 - \$1 million to evaluate a couple of different properties in Homer in hopes of beginning cleanup work. Furthermore, Ms. Engebretsen said that only the initial stages of testing have been conducted in the larger building and that she expects \$100,000 more worth of testing to take place at the larger building.

PUBLIC HEARING

PENDING BUSINESS

A. Housing Update
Memorandum from Economic Development Manager

Economic Development Manager Engebretsen informed the Commission that there is a draft ordinance that staff is working on to address a short-term rentals in the Homer community, and the next step will be sharing it with City Council and the sponsors of the ordinance (Councilmember Davis and Councilmember Aderhold). Ms. Engebretsen added that probably won’t take place for another 2-3 weeks. She also said that if there is an ordinance that suggests having an Airbnb registration system, the City has talked about not singling out an industry, but instead implementing city business licenses.

B. EDC Mission Statement
Memorandum EDC 23-034 from Economic Development Manager

Commissioner Kim presented to the Commission his revision of the EDC Mission Statement that read as follows:

“The Economic Development Advisory Commission (EDC) of the City of Homer is a dedicated volunteer advisory body that bridges citizens and city government. Our core mission is to foster sustainable economic growth while safeguarding our rich cultural and natural heritage, enhancing the quality of life for Homer’s residents and businesses, and promoting our community’s well-being.

The EDC serves as a vital resource for our local community, providing a platform for informed citizen engagement in economic matters. We actively support community quality of life initiatives and offer actionable recommendations to benefit the City of Homer. Through the collaboration of diverse volunteer perspectives, we ensure our priorities bring lasting value to our city. We firmly believe that by actively engaging with our community, and facilitating discussions on sustainable economic growth, we can play a pivotal role in shaping a positive and impactful economic future for our beloved community.”

KIM/BROWN MOVED TO APPROVE THE REVISED DRAFT OF THE EDC MISSION STATEMENT.

Discussion ensued about the changes that had been made to the EDC Mission Statement.

BROWN/PITZMAN MOVED TO AMEND THE ORIGINAL MOTION AND MODIFY THE EDC MISSION STATEMENT TO READ AS FOLLOWS:

“The Economic Development Advisory Commission (EDC) of the City of Homer is a volunteer advisory body that bridges citizens and city government. Our core mission is to foster sustainable economic growth, safeguard our rich culture and natural heritage, and promote a high quality of life for Homer residents and businesses.

The EDC serves as a resource for our local community by providing a platform for engagement in economic matters. Commissioners facilitate community quality of life initiatives and offer actionable recommendations to the City of Homer. Through collaboration and a lens of diverse perspectives, we aim to bring lasting value to our city. We believe that by engaging with our community and facilitating discussions on sustainable economic growth, we can play a role in shaping a positive economic future for our community.”

There was no discussion.

VOTE (Amendment): NON OBJECTION: UNANIMOUS CONSENT.

Motion carried.

NEW BUSINESS

A. Alaska Small Business Development Center Advisor Position Funding

Chair Marks reviewed the ordinance listed in the packet, along with her comment that was included in the packet and a letter from a business owner in Homer that uses the services of AKSBDC. She also noted that in the City Council packet there was a second letter of support from Luke Gamble.

KIM/PITZMAN MOVED TO RECOMMEND THE ADOPTION OF ORDINANCE 23-50.

There was no discussion.

VOTE: NON-OBJECTION. UNANIMOUS CONSENT.

Motion carried.

- B. Looking Ahead to the 2024 Strategic Plan
Memorandum EDC 23-035 from Economic Development Manager

Chair Marks introduced the item by informing the Commission that this would be the primary discussion for the October meeting. She also thanked Economic Development Manager Engebretsen for including the business retention expansion survey in the packet. Ms. Engebretsen added that it would be worthy of the Commission to have a goal to remain engaged with the comprehensive plan update. The Commission reached a consensus to resume discussion about the 2024 Strategic Plan and goals at the next meeting since the meeting was approaching the three hour mark.

INFORMATIONAL MATERIALS

- A. City Manager's Report for August 28, 2023 and September 11, 2023
- B. City of Homer Newsletter – September 2023
- C. 2022-23 EDC Adopted Strategic Plan
- D. EDC 2023 Calendar
- E. Commissioner Attendance at 2023 City Council Meetings

Chair Marks noted the informational materials and Commissioner Kim volunteered himself to deliver the EDC report to City Council on September 25th.

COMMENTS OF THE AUDIENCE

There were no comments of the audience.

COMMENTS OF THE CITY STAFF

Deputy City Clerk Pettit thanked the Commission for a good meeting and noted that Robert Green's presentation was engaging.

Economic Development Manager Engebretsen thanked everyone for a good meeting.

COMMENTS OF THE COMMISSION

Commissioner Pearson noted that she was off the grid all summer, but she is back and intends on planning the meetings this year.

Commissioner Kim thanked the Commission for a good meeting and for walking through the mission statement with him.

Commissioner Brown thanked the Commission for a good meeting and thanked Mr. Kim for taking on the mission statement.

Chair Marks spoke briefly on the Wayfinding signs around town. She also noted that Commissioner Perez has resigned from his position and urged the Commissioners to be on the lookout for a replacement.

ADJOURNMENT

There being no further business to come before the Commission, Chair Marks adjourned the meeting at 8:30 p.m. The next regular meeting is Tuesday, October 10, 2023 at 6:00 p.m. All meetings are scheduled to be held in the City Hall Cowles Council Chambers and via Zoom Webinar.



ZACH PETTIT, DEPUTY CITY CLERK I

Approved: Oct. 10, 2023