



MEMORANDUM

Economic Development Advisory Commission Recommendation for Proposed Location of a New Community Recreation Center

Item Type: Informational Memorandum
Prepared For: Mayor Lord and Homer City Council
Meeting Date: June 23, 2025
From: Economic Development Advisory Commission

Background

The City Council requested the Economic Development Advisory Commission (EDC) to review a potential location for a new Community Recreation Facility on a City owned lot south of Pioneer Avenue. The EDC discussed the location at their May 13th and June 10th meetings. The Commission was asked to consider three questions:

1. Do you support this location as the preferred location for a future community recreation facility?
2. What are the existing concerns against using this location for this project?
3. What are the potential positive attributes for using this location for this project?

Response: The EDC does not support the Town Center location for a recreation center. However, the Commission is interested in the HEA and other alternatives as potentially viable and site appropriate locations.

Comments:

- The proposed location of this centrally located commercial property is too valuable for this land use. The City's accounting method for site selection has not considered the opportunity costs and lost opportunities associated with long term use of the City lands and Town Center.
- Commissioners expressed strong opposition to the idea, citing concerns about using prime real estate for a non-revenue generating facility.
- They felt the land would be better utilized for dense housing or businesses to generate tax revenue and improve walkability.
- Some members suggested alternative locations such as near existing schools or along the bypass.
- This site has greenspace, storm water management, urban forest value and trail value for the future of Homer.

Attachments: Minutes for May 13, 2025 and June 10, 2025 regular meetings

CALL TO ORDER

Session 24-09 a Regular Meeting of the Economic Development Advisory Commission was called to order by Chair Karin Marks at 6:08 p.m. on May 13, 2025 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 AREVALO, ISAAK, NOOMAH, YOUNG, MARKS, DICKINSON, ZUBEK

STAFF: COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT DIRECTOR ENGBRETSSEN, DEPUTY CITY CLERK APPEL
COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT ASSOCIATE MCDONOUGH

CONSULTING: RACHEL LORD, MAYOR

AGENDA APPROVAL

Chair Marks requested a motion and second to approve the agenda as presented.

ISAAK/AREVALO MOVED TO APPROVE THE AGENDA AS PRESENTED.

There was no discussion.

VOTE: NON-OBJECTION: UNANIMOUS CONSENT.

Motion carried.

PUBLIC COMMENTS UPON MATTERS ALREADY ON THE AGENDA

RECONSIDERATION

CONSENT AGENDA

A. EDC Unapproved Minutes of March 11th & April 08, 2025 Regular Meeting

Chair Marks requested a motion and second to approve the meeting minutes.

ISAAK/NOOMAH MOVED TO APPROVE THE MARCH 11TH & APRIL 08TH MEETING MINUTES.

There was no discussion.

VOTE: NON-OBJECTION: UNANIMOUS CONSENT.

Motion carried.

VISITORS/PRESENTATIONS

STAFF & COUNCIL REPORT/COMMITTEE REPORTS

A. EDC Staff Report

Community Development Associate McDonough reported on the following:

- Attended the Kenai Peninsula Economic Development District Industry Overview Forum in Kenai
- Comprehensive Plan update
- Zoning Code update

- KPEDD is updating their Comprehensive Economic Development Strategy
- Volunteered at the Kenai Peninsula Sport Rec and Trade Show
- Completed a grant application for Bridge Creek Watershed

B. Chamber Director Report

There was no report provided.

C. Homer Marine Trades Association Report

Meeting minutes were provided. There was no discussion.

D. Kenai Peninsula Economic Development District Report

Chair Marks stated the Executive Director went before City Council and presented a full report and data. She encouraged Commissioners to access the KPEDD website and look at the data that was presented.

E. HERC Update

Community Development Director Engebretsen stated there is a public meeting scheduled next week. Contractors will be doing soil and lead testing in the big building. The State of Alaska will be supporting the City further when looking into remediating the building. There is more focus being put on the smaller building as it's currently unsafe for public use.

F. Housing/Guiding Growth Update

Commissioner Noomah spoke about the following topics discussed during a community meeting on April 29th:

- Balancing the needs to preserve open spaces while still meeting needs for housing
- Brief presentation on GIS technology
- Use of technology in planning and preserving spaces
- Benefits of density in town core areas
- Need for more public open spaces in town

G. Planning Update

There was no update provided.

PUBLIC HEARING

PENDING BUSINESS

NEW BUSINESS

A. Commission Priorities Discussion with Mayor Lord

Mayor Lord spoke on the following topics:

- Making good use of time and resources
- Utilizing current plans and action items as a touchstone
- Every Advisory Body should be using an economic business lens
- Other Advisory Bodies have direct ties to their designated scope- LAB for Library, Port and Harbor for Port and Harbor, etc.
- Condensing and identifying priorities to advise Council
- Strategic planning list
- Communication between Council and Commission, Council Member Liaison
- Joint session bringing all advisory bodies and Council together in one room
- Important points/recommendations should come to Council in a memo from Staff Liaison

B. New Community Center Discussion

Community Development Director Engebretsen introduced the discussion topic regarding the preferred location for the new Community Rec Center. The Commission brought up points including the following:

- Clarifying why this location is considered 'preferred'
- Possible use as a long term catalyst for spurring other development
- Utility set up cost
- Environmental Groups- Current wetlands in that location
- Staying above the tsunami line
- Proposed programming, amenities, etc.
- Land could serve a better/different purpose
- Doesn't allow for more development downtown for businesses

C. Annual Bylaw Review

The Commission determined there were no needed changes to the Bylaws.

D. Election of Chair & Vice Chair

ISAAK/DICKINSON MOVED TO VOTE VERBALLY.

There was no discussion.

VOTE: NON-OBJECTION: UNANIMOUS CONSENT.

Motion carried.

ISAAK NOMINATED COMMISSIONER YOUNG FOR VICE CHAIR.

There was no discussion.

VOTE: NON-OBJECTION: UNANIMOUS CONSENT.

Motion carried.

COMMISSIONER MARKS NOMINATED HERSELF FOR CHAIR.

There was no discussion.

VOTE: NON-OBJECTION: UNANIMOUS CONSENT.

Motion carried.

INFORMATIONAL MATERIALS

A. City Manager's Report

March 24, 2025 City Council Meeting

Chair Marks noted the informational materials. Chair Marks volunteered to deliver the May report to City Council.

COMMENTS OF THE AUDIENCE

COMMENTS OF THE CITY STAFF

Community Development Director Engebretsen said it was a great meeting and she appreciates everyone's open and honest comments, whether the Commission agrees or not.

Deputy City Clerk Appel thanked the Commission for the meeting and stated the June 10th meeting would be her last time clerking for the EDC.

COMMENTS OF THE MAYOR/COUNCIL MEMBER (If Present)

COMMENTS OF THE COMMISSION

Commissioner Dickinson stated she is resigning from the Commission due to time constraints.

Commissioner Young thanked the Clerk and Commissioner Dickinson for their service. He also thanked Commissioner Isaak for the nomination and stated he is grateful for the opportunity to serve as Vice Chair.

Commissioner Isaak thanked the Clerk and Commissioner Dickinson for their service. She stated she is excited for Commissioner Young to serve as Vice Chair. She also commented that she is really appreciative of the comments everyone contributes during the meetings.

Commissioner Arevalo commented that she likes the robust conversations and the Commission will miss Commissioner Dickinson.

Commissioner Zubek commented that she is leaving this meeting reinvigorated and excited to be part of the Commission. She congratulated Commissioners Young and Marks on their appointments to Vice Chair and Chair and stated that she will miss Commissioner Dickinson.

Commissioner Noomah stated he is grateful to everyone and that he also wanted to bring up that he thinks Homer has a little bit of a land hoarding problem and he thinks that adjusting incentives in the future is going to be really important for getting people to let go of some land they've just been sitting on.

Chair Marks commented that Commissioner Noomah's observation was interesting and she thinks if Homer can get a lion's share of people to say that it's ok to be in favor of some economic growth in a responsible way, then the city can focus on development and promoting a positive view.

ADJOURNMENT

There being no further business to come before the Commission, Chair Marks adjourned the meeting at 8:20 p.m. The next regular meeting is Tuesday, June 10, 2025 at 6:00 p.m. All meetings are scheduled to be held in the City Hall Cowles Council Chambers and via Zoom Webinar.

ASHLEY APPEL, DEPUTY CITY CLERK I

Approved:_____

NEW BUSINESS

A. New Rec Center Location

The Commission discussed the following topics in regard to the proposed location:

- Property is considered a wetland and possible effects on storm water runoff management
- Based on location- HEA lot is a better choice
- Size of lot actually needed- potential size of Rec Center, potential size of parking lot needed
- Will this investment in infrastructure actually spark private businesses to invest as well
- Possible restrictions in Code for building itself
- Surrounding business owners weren't present to provide opinions
- Using this land would result in opportunity costs and lost opportunities associated with long term use.

AREVALO/DICKINSON MOVED TO FORWARD A MEMO TO CITY COUNCIL IN OPPOSITION OF THE PROPOSED LOCATION BUT WOULD LIKE TO DISCUSS ALTERNATIVE SITES.

There was no discussion.

VOTE: YES: ISAAK, NOOMAH, ZUBEK, AREVALO, DICKINSON

VOTE: NO: MARKS

Motion carried.