

Session 15-12 a Regular Meeting of the Parks and Recreation Advisory Commission was called to order on October 15, 2015 at 5:38 pm by Chair Matt Steffy at the Cowles Council Chambers City Hall located at 491 E. Pioneer Avenue, Homer, Alaska.

PRESENT: COMMISSIONERS ARCHIBALD, LOWNEY, ROEDL, STEFFY, ASHMUN AND HART

ABSENT: COMMISSIONER BRANN (EXCUSED)

STAFF: JULIE ENGBRETSSEN, DEPUTY CITY PLANNER
MIKE ILLG, COMMUNITY RECREATION
RENEE KRAUSE, DEPUTY CITY CLERK

APPROVAL OF THE AGENDA

Chair Steffy called for a motion to approve the agenda.

ARCHIBALD/LOWNEY – MOVED TO APPROVE THE AGENDA.

There was no discussion.

VOTE: NON OBJECTION: UNANIMOUS CONSENT.

PUBLIC COMMENT ON ITEMS ALREADY ON THE AGENDA

VISITORS

Kate Crowley, ReCreate Rec

Chair Steffy reported that Ms. Crowley was unable to attend and will potentially reschedule for November meeting. Chair Steffy will confirm with the Clerk.

RECONSIDERATION

ADOPTION OF THE CONSENT AGENDA

A. Minutes for the regular meeting of August 20, 2015

Chair Steffy called for a motion to adopt the consent agenda.

LOWNEY/ARCHIBALD - MOVED TO ADOPT THE CONSENT AGENDA.

There was no discussion.

VOTE: NON OBJECTION: UNANIMOUS CONSENT

Motion carried.

STAFF & COUNCIL REPORTS/COMMITTEE REPORTS/BOROUGH REPORTS

A. Staff Report – Julie Engebretsen, Deputy City Planner

Deputy City Planner Engebretsen noted that the staff report for the September meeting has been recycled for this month and added that a dog waste bag dispensers and will be ordering more for placement around town.

Commissioner Lowney requested that consideration be given to purchase trash cans for placement along the Spit Trail and a variety of other areas. Deputy City Planner did not want to discuss budget at this time but depending on the budget outcome will determine if there will be staff to empty trash cans.

B. Parks & Recreation Annual Conference Report – Matt Steffy, Mike Illg, Julie Engebretsen, Robert Archibald

Chair Steffy provided a brief summary on the success of the conference and some of the stress in putting together a conference of this magnitude. It was very well attended and typically they hold the conference in a small town every other year and this year was a surprising number of attendees who registered after the deadline date for the cheaper rate.

Chair Steffy provided highlights on various seminars and the welcome party greeters, Commissioners Archibald and Brann. He added in the accolades received from the Governor and First Lady Walker. He is still receiving emails from people who have attended the conference, noting many arrived the weekend before to explore and enjoy the amenities that Homer can provide and would really like to figure the economic impact that conference attendees impacted the community as a whole.

Chair Steffy also reported on Mike Illg receiving the Professional of the Year Award and quite deservedly so and deserves and even bigger gold pan.

Deputy City Planner Engebretsen stated the first lady Walker stole the show and complimented Land's End on their conference amenities. People are definitely coming to Homer. She worked with Mike on presenting on the Needs Assessment. Overall great conference; she further commented on investing in the community as other communities have been doing because in 10 years just having a great view is not going to be enough. HOWL was awarded Outstanding Organization award.

They contracted with Shelly Erickson for the Trolley to transport attendees to various outlying events.

Mike Illg thanked Renee Krause for printing out the brochures and dealing with the formatting issues. He also thanked Commissioners Archibald and Brann. He believed that if Homer had a large multiuse facility they could host even more large conferences here. He recognized the Homer High School and his part time help because without their efforts behind the scenes they would not be able to get things done. Mr. Illg also mentioned that there are scholarships to attend conferences so not to let cost deter the commissioners from attending.

C. Community Recreation Report – Mike Illg

Recreation Specialist Illg provided materials on activities scheduled for the period of October 12-25, 2015, the 2015-16 Sponsorship Fee Breakdown for basketball along with the schedule of games to be held and list of teams.

Mr. Illg also provided information on the benefits of the Community Recreation program to the community along with the revenue it provides towards the expenses incurred. He also noted the potential Budget shortfall as described in the City Manager's 2016 Budget Message that was given to Council on Monday, October 12, 2015.

Mr. Illg noted that if no new revenue is found and voters do not approve any options then he will be forced to seek employment as his position along with several other fulltime, long term employees will be reduced or removed. It is a very serious situation and not a very pleasant thought to note that this could be an ongoing situation.

D. Parks Report – Angie Otteson

Ms. Otteson was not in attendance and did not provide a written report.

PUBLIC HEARING

PENDING BUSINESS

A. Strategic Plan Update and Revisions

Chair Steffy introduced the item into the record and opened the floor to Deputy City Planner Engebretsen.

Ms. Engebretsen explained that the most effective that the commission could be is talking with others within the community regarding the budget and she did not mean just the HERC building, or community recreation it is the whole picture. To lobby hard for just individual projects is missing the boat and not looking at the big picture. Within the PARC Needs Assessment it was pointed out that unless an idea or project is put before the commission with a plan and the support backing the project along with the funding to maintain that project. The city does not have the luxury or the ability to take on the responsibility any more. She also spoke on projects being taken on by private industry. Other than that she hesitated speaking any more on the plan until after the budget and recommended postponing further discussion until then.

Chair Steffy commented on some background for the benefit of the two new commissioners regarding the needs assessment and the Strategic Plan of the commission.

The commission agreed by consensus to postpone this topic to the February agenda since there is no January meeting.

NEW BUSINESS

A. Welcome New Commissioners!

Chair Steffy welcomed the new commissioners and requested that they provide a little background information on themselves along with why they wanted to serve on this commission.

Commissioner Ashmun provided a brief summary of her attendance throughout the Beach Policy meetings, her interests and previous commission work in a small town, former teacher and that she had a

love affair with the outdoors.

Commissioner Hart provided the commission with her involvement with the HERC and personally knows Mike Illg. She has worked within the entertainment industry and recently retired from the Hospital and felt that she had a lot she could give back to the community of Homer.

Chair Steffy reminded the commission that they still have an opening for a youth commissioner.

B. Merging the Parks & Recreation Commission with the Public Arts Committee

Chair Steffy provided a brief background on the idea to merge the Library Advisory Board, Parks & Recreation Commission and the Public Arts Committee which included recreational aspects, funding, sharing resources and common goals, and minimizing staff overtime. Chair Steffy noted that many other communities do include the Library within the recreation commissions or boards. He acknowledged the questions posed from members of the Library Advisory Board which were some of the same questions this commission had too.

Chair Steffy shared that he would like to have more information and open this up for more discussion. He requested additional input from the clerk on the Public Arts Committee. He further offered that he would prefer to keep things as they are and not offer reducing commissions, committees until they were faced with that.

Commissioner Ashmun commented that she did not feel that it would be effective since they are to be advisory to Council and with such a broad range of topics and issues that there would not be a way to be as effective.

Commissioner Archibald commented that at first he could not see how the Library Board's work is so different but after the ARPA conference and speaking with some of the attendees it is possible but would prefer waiting to see if it will have to seriously be considered.

Ms. Krause offered further input on the complexity of the issue having a large commission that would address multiple varied issues, citing some of the lengthy meetings that are addressed by this commission wherein they had a number of items on the agenda or such as the recent Beach Policy meetings and that at this time would support postponement until it was really necessary.

The commissioners agreed by consensus to postpone the issue until a later date.

C. Elections

Chair Steffy opened the floor for Vice Chair noting the position is currently held by Commissioner Brann who has had to conduct two meetings in his absence during the past year.

Commissioner Lowney nominated Commissioner Brann for Vice Chair. Commissioner Roedl seconded the motion.

There was a brief discussion on his absence. Commissioner Lowney called for the vote.

Chair Steffy asked for additional nominations. There were none forthcoming.

Commissioner Brann was re-elected as Vice Chair unanimously.

Chair Steffy called for nominations for Chair.

Commissioner Lowney nominated Commissioner Steffy. Commissioner Archibald seconded the motion.

There were no additional nominations for chair. The floor was closed.

Commissioner Steffy was re-elected as Chair unanimously.

Commissioner Steffy accepted the re-election as Chair.

D. Scheduling a Fall Park Walk Through

Chair Steffy provided a brief description of how the commission normally conducted the annual park walk through and the reasons the walk through was conducted. He noted the recommendation from Deputy City Planner Engebretsen on each commissioner selecting a park or two to visit on their own schedule and taking note of anything good and/or bad that was needed at that park. It can be an item on the November agenda under reports.

E. It's Training Time! Robert's Rules Refresher Course

Chair Steffy stated he has learned a little bit in the last couple of years and suggested watching C-Span for an idea on how they conduct meetings. He acknowledged that they tend to conduct meetings in a more conversational tone and do sometimes get carried away with the discussion; admitting losing track of where they were with the motion, trying to track all the amendments instead of making a motion and voting it down.

Chair Steffy provided anecdotal information on watching YouTube Videos and practicing on his kids with requesting a second for a desire to have popcorn which his kids did not find as humorous as he did.

Deputy City Clerk Krause explained that she is remiss in limiting the commissioner's number of responses to rebuttals or points on motions made and that she needs to be more diligent in reminding the commission.

The commissioners reviewed the information provided and made mock motions on allowing airplanes to land on Bishops Beach.

Deputy City Planner Engebretsen explained that it was not necessary and sometimes counterproductive to making every vote as consensus. Ms. Engebretsen further elaborated that sometimes it is better to vote a motion down and make a new motion than amending one on the floor already.

The commission was provided an explanation on when additional items or materials or rebuttal can be brought up during the comments at the end of the meeting.

Chair Steffy thanked the staff for the training and providing the materials and how timely it was with two new commissioners in attendance.

INFORMATIONAL MATERIALS

A. Commission Annual Calendar 2015

Chair Steffy noted that they moved some items were moved from September to October. He questioned

if there was any information on Church on the Rock performing the Karen Hornaday Fall Clean-up. Staff did not have any information. It was noted by the commissioners that they usually performed the clean-up in the spring.

Deputy City Clerk stated that the 2016 Meeting Schedule Resolution will probably be on the November agenda. She explained that they have been overtaken by elections this past month or so and it was overlooked.

B. Commissioner Attendance at City Council Meetings 2015

Chair Steffy noted that he will be in Juneau for the October 26th Council meeting. Commissioner Lowney will attend and Commissioner Archibald will be her backup in case she cannot attend.

Chair Steffy provided a brief explanation and purpose for the commission report and presence at Council meetings for the new commissioners.

Staff noted that the December Council meeting has been changed to December 7, 2015.

COMMENTS OF THE AUDIENCE

Kathy Hill, resident, congratulated Mike on his honor and that it was a nice honor that they attributed him with; she was there tonight to speak to commission first before she went on the road with her agenda. The City of Homer has just been presented with two budgets. In Budget B the HERC is proposed to be mothballed for a savings of \$31,000. Ms. Hill was present tonight to suggest a pro-active means of saving the lower section of the building and making it self-sustaining for the time being. She felt that it could greatly pay for itself by expanding its use and following a good business plan. Why have it be an albatross around the city's neck when it could be part of its revenue stream? There are three perfectly good spaces that could be utilized right now; they are under-utilized. The public safety building is not going to be built and up and running for the next few years so let's use the HERC to its maximum. First off she recommended that the Fire Marshall come back out and fairly evaluate all three spaces, the gym has been set at 45 capacity. She questions why the capacity for the gym was set at 45 and how that number was reached. Probably 100 people were in that gym to attend a game or performance when it was used as a high school years ago. Nothing has changed other than the removal of bleachers. The capacity of that gym needs to be expanded. The other two rooms that are used have not been rated. These are good sized rooms that could be used well.

Secondly, Ms. Hill recommended that these three spaces be opened up to more users. Up until now the user group number has been frozen. They should allow more community recreation groups, non-profits, other schools and other groups in there and individuals to use the facilities. She could envision birthday parties, dances, classes and meetings, etc., happening. The city allows other spaces to be used by outside groups and individuals. Opening up the HERC will require that it be marketed. The public will need to hear that it is truly available for their use for a fee. I know that other groups have approached Mike with requests to use the facility. She continued by stating \$31,000 is an approachable amount, pickle ball in just the last year contributed close to \$7,000 to the budget. A fee schedule, perhaps including a deposit and cleaning fee would have to be drawn up for the groups and individuals using the facility. For the current activities in the Homer Community Recreation program, she suggested a hike in fees. She feels that they would be missing the boat if they don't give this a try. Homer does not need another empty building, let alone one that will still have to have the heat left on. This is our chance to revitalize an underused building while adding to the revenue stream. Talk about a win-win situation.

Beth Cumming, city resident, expressed her appreciation for the commission and the two new commissioners for volunteering. She stated that these advisory commissions open up her perspective a bit.

Holly Van Pelt, city resident, avid pickleball players, thanked the commissioners for volunteering their time, she opened by stating a year and half ago the HERC was a happening place, there was a lot going on there, now about the only thing is pickleball. She said the commission may have more information on the reasoning why this is, she has heard stories. She commented that it seems a horrible waste of resources. She referenced the mission statement for the Community Recreation Program and what really stands out is that you will maximize usage of all community facilities and resources. To let the gym go empty while still heating it while it could be used is a crime. She is here to request the commissioners to advocate for its use. She asked that they put this item on the agenda and get it moving forward. The HERC needs to be utilized again. On a personal note she just got done with her annual exam and her resting heart rate has dropped from 70 to 50 since playing pickle ball. She cannot say how much she enjoys this sport. If they lose the gym and the opportunity play this sport she is not sure what to do. She plans to speak with the councilmembers and feels that it would be such a loss to totally shut this building down in place of a Public Safety Building.

COMMENTS OF THE CITY STAFF

Deputy City Clerk Krause commented that it was a good meeting.

Deputy City Planner Engebretsen announced that the town hall will be conducted after certifying the election on November 9th at 5:30 p.m. In various parts of Homer we talk about silos and we actually did it to ourselves tonight during the discussion about combining the commission committee and board and it is not necessarily a healthy thing. She is not aware that they are getting as much as they could since there are other communities that do have combined efforts. This city has more commissions and committees than any other on the peninsula. It may work better and provide a stronger front for lobbying and advocating on issues if these groups joined together. The library has done a great job instead of having 50 people talk about their particular individual issue.

Budget B contains huge losses to parks and recreation but they leverage a lot from what they have but Budget B also mean they lose another police officer and 2 seasonal positions with the fire department, library will lose 1.2 full time employees and close for 12 more hours, the Clerk's office will lose .4 positions, half of Mike's job, mothballing the HERC, no lobbyist, cutting the advertising, cutting ½ winter equipment operator hours and temporary park maintenance, the Homer Foundation, Chamber and Pratt would also see funding cuts of 70%. For another \$467,600 plus will be cut in addition to the \$725,000. This also doesn't cover the depreciation accounts. Talk to your friends and neighbors about taxation and other possible avenues. This is more than cutting \$10,000 but \$1,000,000. It took us longer than a year to get here and it will not be fixed in one budget cycle either. The city needs additional revenue in order to provide the current services or they need to cut services.

Ms. Engebretsen responded to questions about the special election and what that meant to the HART fund. She stated that respective of the year they normally have between 1.1 and 1.2 million deposited into the fund. It is an under-utilized fund. Currently there was over \$7 million in the road portion. The trail portion is used annually.

Ms. Krause noted that the HART fund is used to fund road improvements and within the last several

months there have been 3-4 applications for road and paving improvements. Due to the high costs of road construction in general this amount can be used up quickly depending on the project.

Ms. Engebretsen noted that there is a tradeoff in everything. The fund is used as a match for Waddell Way; if there Town Center ever got developed it could be used. She provided confirmation that existing funds and projects would remain and be covered.

There was a brief discussion on the future of the HART fund and other exemptions that are enjoyed by residents may disappear due to the fiscal state of the State which trickles down to the municipalities.

COMMENTS OF THE COUNCILMEMBER *(If one is present)*

COMMENTS OF THE COMMISSION

Commissioner Lowney stated it was 180 from where she has been, lots to wrap her head around, great informational meeting. She stated that she heard only a hesitation to see where the chips fall and that they need more information on how if they had to. Great to have the two new commissioners.

Commissioner Hart was glad to be on the commission and needs to attend more meetings to get a more rounded vision.

Commissioner Archibald thanked Julie and Renee. No news is good news. If budget dictates it then they will all be making other decisions. He commented on demographics of the other towns on the Peninsula being high with the exception of Seward.

Commissioner Roedl stated it was a good meeting. He thanked Kathy Hill for her comments. He requested the HERC building and possible revenues for the next agenda. He thinks that whatever they can do to make the revenue stream secure the use of that facility for recreation would be a better use than for a Public Safety building. He welcomed the new commissioners.

Commissioner Ashmun stated that she is part of the white tsunami. She turned 65 this year and has received her Medicare card. They lived in Alaska until 1999, spent 15 years outside and returned to Homer to retire. This is an amazingly cool place to live where there are a lot of cool people like them who are just beginning retirement. Her husband and she have discussed the senior exemption issue being that it is the reason they were able to live here in Homer is part of the reason they can afford to live here. The options for recreation are many here in Homer also. As they hit 80 they are going to be more changes. All of Alaska talking about the revenue side, she believed it will be very hard.

COMMENTS OF THE CHAIR

Chair Steffy thanked the new commissioners, glad to have them on board. He made comments at the conference and many people were coming up to him hugging him and that was his other family. He commented on the energy that the commission has had the last few years and facing the tough budget decisions. Chair Steffy commented on how different communities structured recreation funding so differently throughout the state, how important the industry is to the state, and his sense of chucking water balloons at the forest fire is abated somewhat. Looking at the budget and how it will affect non-profits and other issues creates nervous energy. He noted that Councilmember Aderhold is a strong

supporter of parks and recreation and Council woman Reynolds will be bringing forth the new ordinance on the Beach policy and he believed that they need to address the signs issue with regard to the Beach Policy. He encouraged everyone to review their recommendations and to talk to a Council member.

A more depressing thought is, speaking of the white tsunami; his generation will not be able to retire. Great meeting; He appreciated the discussions and encouraged them to try to recruit a student commissioner.

ADJOURNMENT

There being no further business to come before the Commission, Chair Steffy adjourned the meeting at 7:35 p.m. The next **REGULAR MEETING IS SCHEDULED FOR THURSDAY, NOVEMBER 19, 2015** at 5:30 p.m. at City Hall Cowles Council Chambers 491 E. Pioneer Avenue, Homer, Alaska.

Renee Krause, CMC, Deputy City Clerk

Approved: _____