

REGULAR MEETING  
NOVEMBER 16, 2023

**CALL TO ORDER**

Session 23-09, a Regular Meeting of the Parks, Art, Recreation and Culture Advisory Commission was called to order by Acting Chair Robert Archibald at 5:35 p.m. on November 16, 2023 from the City Hall Cowles Council Chambers located at 491 E. Pioneer Avenue, Homer, Alaska and via Zoom Webinar. The Commission has one vacancy. A worksession was scheduled at 4:30 p.m. to conduct the Annual Training but a Quorum of the body was not obtained and canceled.

**PRESENT:** COMMISSIONERS ARCHIBALD, FAIR, GALBRAITH, ROEDL AND

**ABSENT:** COMMISSIONERS HARRALD AND LEWIS, STUDENT COMMISSIONER WALKER (EXCUSED)

**STAFF:** DEPUTY CITY CLERK KRAUSE PUBLIC WORKS DIRECTOR KEISER, RECREATION MANAGER ILLG AND PARKS MAINTENANCE COORDINATOR FELICE

**AGENDA APPROVAL**

Acting Chair Archibald read the supplemental items into the record and requested a motion to approve the agenda as amended.

FAIR/GALBRAITH 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**

Michael Hawfield, city resident, commented in support of the proposed South Slope Trail stating that he was a property owner and residents of the area have been discussing for some time now about a way to ensure that South Slope Drive does not continue south to Nelson due to the belief that it would create nightmare traffic issues and make it difficult for the neighborhood as there are a lot of people who use Nelson to go out to East End Road or up towards the hospital. Mr. Hawfield stated that it would provide for a very nice trail if it was improved and maintained.

**VISITORS/PRESENTATIONS****RECONSIDERATION****CONSENT AGENDA**

A. Unapproved Minutes for the Regular Meeting of October 19, 2023

Acting Chair Archibald requested a motion and second to approve the Consent Agenda.

REGULAR MEETING  
NOVEMBER 16, 2023

FAIR/GALBRAITH MOVED TO APPROVE THE CONSENT AGENDA AS PRESENTED.

There was no discussion.

VOTE: NON-OBJECTION. UNANIMOUS CONSENT.

Motion carried.

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

#### A. Staff Report City Council Actions since the October Commission Meeting

Acting Chair Archibald introduced the item by reading of the title and deferred to Recreation Manager Illg

Recreation Manager Illg provided a summary review of the information provided.

There was no discussion or comments from the Commission.

#### B. Spit Campground 2023 Report: Analysis, Revenues, & Expenditures

Acting Chair Archibald introduced the item by reading of the title and deferred to Recreation Manager Illg.

Recreation Manager Illg reported that he extended an invitation to Matt Clarke, Port Director and he declined to attend but stated that he would provide the recent report he gave to the Port & Harbor Advisory Commission on November 8, 2023 for this meeting that is provided in the packet. Mr. Illg stated that he would be unable to answer any questions about the information contained in the report and believed that there were still some issues to be ironed out between the Harbor & Public Works as indicated in the report but believes that financially it worked out well with the Harbor taking over operations of the campgrounds on the Homer Spit.

Public Works Director Keiser provided clarification that Matt Clarke was the Harbormaster, Bryan Hawkins is the Port Director. She then provided a status update regarding a meeting this afternoon that Parks Maintenance Felice and she had with Harbormaster Clarke regarding the operations of the spit campgrounds. She reported the following:

- Public Works strongly supports the Harbor continuing the operations of the campgrounds for the following reasons:
  - o The Harbor is better equipped to address:
    - the parking enforcement
    - collections of camp fees
  - o Portion of the revenue funds one custodial position to ensure that there is consistent janitorial services performed for city facilities on the spit.
  - o Services such as mowing, building maintenance and trash collection are shared by divisions within the Public Works and Harbor
- There are still areas that require further definition on responsibility such as Mariner Park has a campground and day use area, the Fishing Lagoon/Water Trail Pavilion is next to the Pier One Campground

REGULAR MEETING  
NOVEMBER 16, 2023

- Harbormaster Clarke is responsible to providing reports for the Port & Harbor Advisory Commission and is reluctant to take on additional obligations to report to another Commission.
  - o He was encouraged to continue providing information to the PARC Advisory Commission since the commission has a vested interest in parks and camping facilities and to maintain open communication. The Harbormaster would take that under advisement and speak with his superiors.
- The Port & Harbor is aware of needing to make some investment both capital and operating to the campgrounds
- Revenues for camping goes into the Port & Harbor Enterprise Fund where before the revenue went into the general fund.
- Public Works will be reviewing capital needs for the campgrounds and creating a list for the next budget cycle.
- Making the change to have the Port take over campground operations did not have adverse effects on parks maintenance but allowed Parks Maintenance staff to address some long deferred maintenance at several parks and the playground at Karen Hornaday and provided the necessary funding for additional needed janitorial support.
- Parks Maintenance Coordinator Felice will be meeting again over the winter to refine the process and roles with parks/campgrounds on the spit.

C. Community Recreation Report: October/November 2023 – Recreation Manager Illg

Acting Chair Archibald introduced the item by reading of the title and deferred to Recreation Manager Illg

Recreation Manager Illg reported that it was difficult to just do a written report and spend only 5 minutes talking about all that they have done since the last meeting. He hopes the Commission reviews the calendar and that they see the amount of interaction that is had with the public every single day. He is incredibly busy and cannot express enough the benefits the additional staffing has brought. He reported that Community Recreation is working behind the scenes on the new Community Recreation Center project. Mr. Illg reported spending substantial time in training to learn the new Recreation software which is schedule to rollout in January. He provided some benefits that the software will bring such as accepting online payments, volunteer management, calendaring, etc. He has also been working with SPARC to organize a teen night for Fridays.

Recreation Manager Illg facilitated brief discussions on the following:

- collection of credit card and online payments for recreation fees
- SPARC new floor
- Working with the After School Resilience Group to bring back Boys & Girls Club
  - o Creating a similar program here that was created in Iceland for at risk youth regarding athletic and after school programs

D. Parks Monthly Report: November 2023 – Parks Maintenance Coordinator Felice

Acting Chair Archibald introduced the item and deferred to Parks Maintenance Coordinator Felice.

Parks Maintenance Coordinator Felice provided a summary of his written report and responded to questions regarding the following:

REGULAR MEETING  
NOVEMBER 16, 2023

- Jack Gist Park sewer stub in was completed yesterday, there is no timetable for the water

E. Public Works Monthly Report

Acting Chair Archibald invited Public Works Director Keiser to provide her report.

Public Works Director Keiser provided a verbal report on the following topics:

- This will be her last month of employment with the city, the New Public Works Director was in town and was scheduled to start on Monday but called back to Florida due to a personal emergency. No timeline was provided by the City Manager as to when he is expected to return.
  - o There is a list of approximately 90 items that are in or scheduled to be in process for the new public Works Director to manage. She has them arranged with name, project name or issue and people involved, funding involved, policies involved so people can review and know where to go and who to speak to;
  - o The City Manager and New Public Works Director will be developing the job description for a City Engineer position.
- Finalizing designs for the Ben Walters Lane Sidewalk project, it was discovered that there was a pressure reducing valve that needed replacement so an ordinance will be in the November 27<sup>th</sup> council meeting for introduction.
- Proceeding with the Svedlund Sidewalk Design which will be scheduled for construction in FY2026
- Programmed the construction of an elevated trail to replace the trail by the Islands and Ocean Visitor Center, the gravel berm section because it impedes the flow of water from the wetland area out to the salt marsh they will remove the berm and replace with an elevated walkway.
- The Property owner to the east of Ben Walters Park is interested in donating a portion of land that is approximately 8 acres with 50% wetlands. They have contracted with Seabright Surveys to do a preliminary plat which would provide the wetlands area from the uplands and then draw out some proposed elevated walkways through the wetlands.
  - o Funding is programmed in for this project in a few years.

Public Works Director Keiser expressed her heartfelt appreciation for being able to work with the Commission as the City Engineer and Public Works Director and looks forward to seeing them in the future.

Acting Chair Archibald commented that Ms. Keiser has had a good run and she has definitely shaken things up in this town to its benefit.

Ms. Keiser facilitated brief discussions on the following:

- Elevated Walkway project location
- Floating dock replacement
- Utility Right of Way location for the elevated walkway project
- Beluga Lake access for recreation and Float Planes airway

Mr. Illg expressed that he tips his hat to Ms. Keiser as during his 21 years with the City she has accomplished more than any Public Works Director that he has seen and then commented that her skill level is such they need to hire two people to replace her.

**PUBLIC HEARING(S)**

REGULAR MEETING  
NOVEMBER 16, 2023

**PENDING BUSINESS**

**NEW BUSINESS**

- A. Portable Restrooms for City Parks  
Memorandum PARC-23-027 from Parks Maintenance Coordinator as backup

Acting Chair Archibald introduced the item by reading the title and deferred to Parks Coordinator Felice.

Parks Maintenance Coordinator Felice reviewed his memorandum for the Commission. He provided additional comments on the proposed units being used by many communities in Alaska and also in the Lower 48, noting in particular the cost savings to the City.

Parks Maintenance Coordinator Felice facilitated discussion on the following:

- Shipping Costs to Seward from Washington was \$5000 for two units
- The unit could be connected directly to water and sewer services
- The unit would be removed and stored under cover in the winter
  - o Location of storage will need to be determined, additional covered storage may need to be constructed.
  - o They can be constructed for year round use as they do come equipped with a heater. He reported that communities in Idaho use them year round and they have harsh winters.
- Each unit will have two standard toilet rooms and one ADA toilet room, all rooms will be equipped with porcelain commodes and sinks, can be easily hosed down and cleaned. There will be a ramp with handrails to access the ADA unit.
  - o Each trailer will be lowered hydraulically to minimize the height from the ground
  - o Wheels & axles remain attached to the unit
  - o Unit will be open during park times only and locked by janitorial staff after cleaning. Parks maintenance staff or Building Maintenance will unlock units at the beginning of each day.
- Cost of two units is 50% or less of one brick and mortar restroom facility
- Each unit can be constructed in seven days cost is \$60,666.75 per unit as shown
  - o Units can be constructed with holding tanks and could serve as replacements for Portable Toilets on the Spit in various locations including Mariner Park
- Units have been used by other communities for as long as 14 years with scheduled maintenance and needed repairs.

Public Works Director Keiser explained that they are prepared to submit an ordinance to be introduced at the November 27<sup>th</sup> regular meeting and will have public hearing and adopted at the January 8<sup>th</sup> meeting. They will request that City Council move the funds allocated in the FY25 Budget to FY24 Budget so they can get this done. If Council approves then restrooms would be received and installed in time for baseball season.

Parks Maintenance Coordinator reported that he met with the Adult Softball Association and Little League and both organization support this project. Little League had proposed constructing a two story Refreshment and Scoreboard with restrooms and storage facility but they do not have the funding and the city would not be able to get the funding for constructing something like that for quite some time.

REGULAR MEETING  
NOVEMBER 16, 2023

FAIR/ROEDL MOVED THAT THE PARKS, ART, RECREATION AND CULTURE ADVISORY COMMISSION RECOMMENDS CITY COUNCIL FUND THE PURCHASE OF TWO BATHROOM UNITS FROM COMFORTS OF HOME SERVICES FOR KAREN HORNADAY PARK AND JACK GIST PARK.

There was no discussion.

VOTE: NON-OBJECTION. UNANIMOUS CONSENT.

Motion carried.

Public Works Director Keiser stated that credit should be given to Mr. Felice as he brought back the idea and did the research after seeing the units being used in Wrangell, Alaska, when attending the annual Alaska Recreation and Park Association Conference.

- B. Amending Homer City Code to Create Departments  
Memorandum from Recreation Manager as backup

Acting Chair Archibald introduced the item and deferred to Recreation Manager Illg

Recreation Manager Illg provided a summary review of the memoranda in the packet. He noted the following:

- City Manager brought forward the ordinance to create the Community Development Department and relocate the Divisions of Economic Development, Planning and Community Recreation from the Administrative Department to within the new Community Development Department, this department will also have the future Building & Code Enforcement Division; transition IT and the Library Divisions into Departments.
- There has been a lot of discussion and public comment, which has been provided for the Commission in the packet, and Council postponed the ordinance to January 8<sup>th</sup> regarding the concerns received from the public to create and Parks & Recreation Department.
- Council appears to be on board for creating the Library and IT Departments.
- Council asked the City Manager if the Parks, Art, Recreation & Culture Advisory Commission has weighed in on this issue, noting that the Library Board, EDC and Planning Commissions have provided comment.
- Separate but related issue regarding this is the potential to have a soon to be created Parks & Recreation Department.
- Questioned if Community Recreation Division is the right fit for the Community Development Department, or should stay where it is until the Parks and Recreation Department is created instead of jumping around.
- Acknowledged some cross over with Economic Development such as special events because Community Recreation holds a number of events which relate to or work with economic development.

Mr. Illg specifically asked the Commission to comment on what they thought about moving the Community Recreation division under Community Development Department.

Acting Chair Archibald commented on the numerous entities in that planning, parks and rec section of the Ordinance 23-49.

REGULAR MEETING  
NOVEMBER 16, 2023

Recreation Manager Illg interjected that it was only the Community Recreation division that will be relocated under Community Development.

Gaining the floor, Public Works Director Keiser referred to page 87 of the packet, line 230, of the paragraph describing the proposed Homer City Code 2.57.010 Department of Community Development stated that it does include parks. She further added that the city has a new Associate Parks & Trails Planner position that was filled by Matt Steffy and he works under Economic Development Division which will move under the Community Development Department but they are not talking about moving Parks Maintenance under Community Development that Division will stay at Public Works.

Further discussion facilitated by the Staff present touched on the following points:

- attempted to provide clarification for the Commission on the purpose of the ordinance
- the benefits or detriments to relocating Community Recreation division under Community Development Department or leaving it under Administration until a Parks & Recreation Department is created in the future;
- what the community is advocating for;
- that it was not strategically forward moving but sideways;
- The city needs a Parks and Recreation Department, it is what the community wants and where community recreation should be.
- The City Council did not expressly ask for the Commission's comments, Staff requested permission from the City Manager to put the Ordinance before the Commission.
  - o It is preferred to provide comments and questions for submittal by the January 8<sup>th</sup> meeting and since the Commission does not meet in December it is strongly recommended not to postpone submitting a response.

Public Works Director Keiser after hearing the indecision from Commissioners sitting at the table, pointedly asked each Commissioner if they could support the ordinance as written. Commissioners responded in the negative.

Commissioner Roedl expressed concerns that this would lower Community Recreation in the organizational chart, inserting a middleman instead of having direct contact with the City Manager.

Commissioner Fair expressed concerns on reorganization for the benefits of reorganizing when it does not provide benefit for the overall body. He would like to have a better understanding of the purpose of the ordinance to explain the reorganization of the departments or divisions.

Commissioner Archibald expressed being agreeable to be included with the Economic Development Division but disagreed with having Community Recreation placed with the Planning Department.

Public Works Director Keiser asked if Commissioner Harrald was in attendance.

Deputy City Clerk noted that Commissioner Harrald was having difficulty in keeping her connection to the internet where she was traveling, so she was not in attendance for the meeting and was excused.

Commissioner Galbraith echoed the concerns expressed by the other Commissioners.

REGULAR MEETING  
NOVEMBER 16, 2023

Public Works Director Keiser then summed up the following after hearing all the discussion, stating that the Commission can make a comment to City Council on the following:

- The benefits of moving the Community Recreation Division from Administration Department to Community Development Department have not been clearly defined;
- The desire and longtime goal of the Commission is for Parks and Recreation to have a higher significance within the organizational structure to reflect the importance of these attributes of the city.
- There is no connection between Community Recreation division and the other proposed divisions to be moved into the newly created Community Development Department with a small exception of Economic Development.
- The Commission fully supports the ordinance as it relates to Information Technology and the Library.

Deputy City Clerk Krause confirmed that this memorandum would be addressed to Mayor and City Council through the City Manager from the Commission. She clarified that Homer City Code does allow the Commission to submit memoranda directly to City Council but it is preferred to submit all correspondence through the City Manager.

A few additional points discussed briefly were:

- Postponing action until after the November 27<sup>th</sup> presentation to Council on Resolution 23-47(S) directive to develop a Strategic Financial Plan and Services Vision for Parks & Recreational Facilities and Services
  - o A special meeting can be scheduled in December if the Commission determines to postpone.
  - o There is no urgency to submit comment, however staff stated that it would be preferential to submit comment for the November 27<sup>th</sup> meeting.
- The Commission will have a January meeting but Ordinance 23-49 is before Council on January 8<sup>th</sup> and could be decided at that meeting so postponement was not supported by Staff.

FAIR/ROEDL MOVED THAT THE PARKS, ART RECREATION AND CULTURE ADVISORY COMMISSION SUPPORTS THE CREATION OF A LIBRARY AND INFORMATION TECHNOLOGY DEPARTMENT BUT FOR THE FOLLOWING REASONS DOES NOT FULLY SUPPORT INCLUDING COMMUNITY RECREATION WITHIN THE PROPOSED COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT DEPARTMENT:

1. THE BENEFITS ARE NOT CLEARLY DEFINED.
2. DOES NOT SUPPORT THE FUNCTION OF COMMUNITY RECREATION HIGHER IN THE ORGANIZATIONAL CHART REPORTING DIRECTLY TO THE CITY MANAGER;
3. THERE IS NO CONNECTION TO THE PLANNING, BUILDING OR CODE ENFORCEMENT DIVISIONS AND LIMITED CONNECTION TO ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT DIVISION UNDER COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT DEPARTMENT.
4. SUPPORTS THE CREATION OF A PARKS AND RECREATION DEPARTMENT TO BRING FORWARD THE IMPORTANCE AND VALUE OF COMMUNITY RECREATION AS EXPRESSED BY THE STRONG COMMUNITY SUPPORT.

There was no further discussion.

VOTE. NON-OBJECTION. UNANIMOUS CONSENT.



REGULAR MEETING

NOVEMBER 16, 2023

Motion carried.

C. South Slope Road Easement for Trails

Acting Chair Archibald introduced the item by reading of the title and deferred to Recreation Manager Illg.

Recreation Manager Illg noted that Commissioner Lewis requested this item to be on the agenda and he has provided an aerial map to reference the area of the proposed trail but turned the floor over to Parks Maintenance Coordinator Felice to facilitate the discussion.

Parks Maintenance Coordinator Felice assisted discussion on the proposed South Slope Trail noting the following:

- The proposed trail would improve an existing, informal pathway
- The proposed trail area was reviewed by Parks Maintenance Coordinator and Public Works Superintendent
  - o Previously used as a construction access road
  - o Very muddy
  - o Neighboring property owners did not want it to be a through road due to the added traffic impacts to the neighborhood
  - o It can be made into a trail but it would require side ditching and proper ground work to bring the trail to standards and then they can maintain it with equipment.
  - o Estimated costs are \$30,000 to \$35,000 and it can be added to the trail financial plan with minimal impact
    - Funding was needed to complete the elevated trails that the Public Works Director was planning
    - Volunteer labor was suggested to lower costs
    - Adopt a Trail Program introduced to neighboring property owners
- Concerns expressed by the commission were limited to vehicular access to the trail, annual maintenance, and if there was a trail easement.
  - o Trail would be built within a right of way, similar to the Fairview Avenue Trail

GALBRAITH/FAIR MOVED THE PARKS ART RECREATION & CULTURE ADVISORY COMMISSION SUPPORTS THE DEVELOPMENT OF THE SOUTH SLOPE TRAIL AS PROPOSED AND ADD IT TO THE TRAIL FINANCIAL PLAN.

There was no discussion.

VOTE. NON-OBJECTION. UNANIMIOUS CONSENT.

Motion carried.

**INFORMATIONAL MATERIALS**

A. 2023 PARC Annual Calendar

REGULAR MEETING  
NOVEMBER 16, 2023

- B. Reappointment of Commissioner Harrald
- C. City Manager's Report
  - CM Report for October 23, 2023 Council Meeting
  - CM Report for November 13, 2023 Council Meeting
- D. City Newsletter for November 2023

Acting Chair Archibald read the informational items into the record and open the floor to comments or questions from the Commission. There were none offered. He then requested a volunteer to report at the City Council meeting on November 27<sup>th</sup> at 6:00 p.m.

Commissioner Galbraith volunteered to make the report stating he will submit a written report to the Commission for review prior to the meeting to make sure he captured everything correctly.

Acting Chair Archibald informed Commissioner Galbraith to send it to the Clerk and that she will distribute it to the commission so they do not go against Open Meetings Act.

There was a brief discussion on the regulations including reply all emails and serial meetings facilitated by Deputy City Clerk Krause.

#### **COMMENTS OF THE AUDIENCE**

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

Public Works Director Keiser expressed her desire to become a member of the Commission after her retirement noting the regulations against employees being a member of the advisory body. She then expressed her disappointment that Matt Steffy was not attending the meeting as he is the Associate Planner for Parks & Trails and as such he should be there to answer questions regarding the proposed trail and such things. She understood there was conflict within the organization that prohibited his attendance and she expressed her hopes that that silo could be broken down and he can have a regular attendance at the Commission meetings which she believed was very valuable, especially in light of the bigger vision creating a broader service of parks and community recreation for the Homer community. She wished everyone the best of holidays and will see them in the coming year.

Recreation Manager Illg thanked Jan for her remarkable job while she has been the Public Works Director and believed she has accomplished more than anyone else who has filled that position. He expressed his appreciation for the staff all working together and keeping things going. He will look forward to having Jan on the Commission. He then wished everyone a Happy Holiday.

Parks Maintenance Coordinator Felice wished everyone a good holiday and expressed his thanks to the Commission.

Deputy City Clerk Krause had no comments.

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

REGULAR MEETING  
NOVEMBER 16, 2023

Commissioner Galbraith expressed his appreciation and patience of the Commission and thanked Jan for her service.

Commissioner Roedl thanked everyone for their work, and wished everyone Happy Holidays!

Commissioner Fair thanked Jan and wished everyone a Happy Thanksgiving.

Acting Chair Archibald expressed his enjoyment chairing the meeting and apologies for not being quite as snappy as he should have been. He then stated his belief that everyone should be able to have the opportunity to express their opinions but we were able to get everything taken care of even though we had to rein it in a few times. Mr. Archibald stated that he has been serving on the commission for a long time and been in Homer for a very long time. He has fought for parks numerable times in this building, does not plan to quit, and will try to get these parks into a shape they can be proud of as that is what he believes was the Commission's primary duty. He reported speaking with Dr. Bell about Jack Gist Park and every time he tries to do something out there it gets sidetracked. Mr. Archibald noted that they have some great volunteers in this town.

Mr. Archibald offered to assist Parks Maintenance Coordinator Felice with his big tractor on any projects. He further expressed his belief that they had a great commission and encourage Public Works Director Keiser to take some time off and then come back and get on the Commission.

#### **ADJOURNMENT**

There being no further business to come before the Commission the meeting adjourned at 8:00 p.m. The next regular meeting is Thursday, January 18, 2024 at 5:30 p.m. Meetings will be conducted at City Hall Cowles Council Chambers located at 491 E. Pioneer Avenue, Homer, Alaska and via Zoom webinar.

*Renee Krause*

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RENEE KRAUSE, MMC, DEPUTY CITY CLERK II

Approved: \_\_\_\_\_ January 18, 2024 \_\_\_\_\_