

Session 20-14, a Regular Meeting of the Planning Commission was called to order by Chair Smith at 6:31 p.m. on October 21, 2020 at Cowles Council Chambers in City Hall located at 491 E. Pioneer Avenue, Homer, Alaska via Zoom Webinar.

PRESENT: COMMISSIONERS HIGHLAND, SMITH, PETSKA-RUBALCAVA, BARNWELL, VENUTI

ABSENT: COMMISSIONER BENTZ

STAFF: CITY PLANNER ABBOD
DEPUTY CITY CLERK KRAUSE

The Planning Commission had a worksession at 5:30 p.m. prior to the meeting with a presentation & introduction from Public Works Director, Jan Keiser, who presented her plans and goals regarding Green Infrastructure and what comes next.

Chair Smith experienced internet connection issues throughout the meeting but Vice Chair Petska-Rubalcava was able to smoothly transition each instance to conduct the meeting.

APPROVAL OF THE AGENDA

Vice Chair Petska-Rubalcava requested a motion to approve the agenda.

HIGHLAND/VENUTI– SO MOVED.

There was no discussion.

VOTE. NON-OBJECTION. UNANIMOUS CONSENT.

Motion carried.

PUBLIC COMMENT ON ITEMS ALREADY ON THE AGENDA

RECONSIDERATION

ADOPTION OF CONSENT AGENDA

- A. Decisions and Findings for Conditional Use Permit 20-15 to allow reconstruction of Wild Honey Bistro restaurant at 106 W Bunnell Avenue (*will be a laydown item*)
- B. Minutes of the October 7, 2020 Planning Commission Regular Meeting (*will be laydown item*)

Vice Chair Petska-Rubalcava inquired if everyone was able to review the minutes and the Decisions and Findings that were provided prior to the meeting or if additional time was desired.

Commissioner Highland requested five minutes for review.

Vice Chair Petska-Rubalcava recessed the meeting at 6:36 p.m. The meeting was called back to order at 6:45 p.m.

Vice Chair Petska-Rubalcava requested a motion to approve the consent agenda as presented.

HIGHLAND/BARNWELL – MOVED TO APPROVE THE CONSENT AGENDA.

Commissioner Highland requested a correction to the minutes on under Public Hearing, Applicant presentation, second sentence, strike the extra words “to be”.

Vice Chair Petska-Rubalcava restated the motion and requested any additional comments or changes.

VOTE. NON-OBJECTION. UNANIMOUS CONSENT.

Motion carried.

Vice Chair Petska-Rubalcava turned the meeting over to Chair Smith.

Chair Smith apologized for his disappearance but he was booted from the meeting and not sure what happened. He thanked Vice Chair Petska-Rubalcava for covering for him.

VISITORS/PRESENTATIONS

Chair Smith noted that there were no Visitors or Presentations for this meeting.

Commissioner Barnwell requested additional correction to the minutes stating that during Mr. Meyer’s presentation he requested an explanation of the potential \$20 million dollar savings to the city regarding implementing Green Infrastructure and felt that there were a large number of people in the community that would be very interested in reading Mr. Meyer’s response.

Deputy City Clerk Krause explained that they provide summary minutes and that if a person was interested they could listen to the audio which was posted and available on the city webpage for the meeting.

Commissioner Barnwell advocated and opined that there was value to have that explanation reflected in the minutes.

Deputy City Clerk Krause conceded to the Commission’s request and will do her best to summarize the approximately six minute portion of Mr. Meyer’s response to Commissioner Barnwell’s question.

REPORTS

A. Staff Report 20-62, City Planner's Report

City Planner Abboud provided a summary review of Staff Report 20-62 for the Commission. He noted the following points:

- Staff changes on the EDC and PARC Advisory Commissions
- Information provided to the EDC from the City Manager
- Reviewing Permitting Software
 - o One software can be used in the field when needing to perform inspection
- Software being implemented to have city staff perform video recorded reports, instructions, etc. This option would allow people to watch at their time not be required to attend. The public will be able to comment and post questions also.

He then requested volunteers to attend and provide report at the City Council meetings advocating that a presence before Council is more effective than just submitting a written report.

A brief discussion ensued regarding volunteers reporting at Council meetings and it was determined that Vice Chair Petska-Rubalcava was able to report for the Special meeting on November 9, 2020.

Vice Chair Petska-Rubalcava took over the meeting once more as Chair Smith lost connection at 7:01 p.m.

There was further discussion on having someone report at the upcoming meetings but there were no Commissioners able to commit for the upcoming meetings on October 26th, November 23rd or December 14th at this time.

PUBLIC HEARING(S)

- ### **A. Staff Report 20-65, Conditional Use Permit 20-16 to add a single family home to a lot with an existing duplex at 4424 Starboard Way.**

Vice-Chair Petska-Rubalcava introduced the item by reading of the title into the record.

City Planner Abboud provided a summary of Staff report 20-65 for the Commission.

There was no applicant present.

Vice Chair Petska Rubalcava opened the public hearing seeing no public present to provide testimony she closed the public hearing and opened the floor to the Commission for questions or comments from the Commission

The Commission did not offer any comments or have any questions for the City Planner.

HIGHLAND/VENUTI MOVED TO ADOPT STAFF REPORT 20-65 AND APPROVE CUP 20-16 WITH FINDINGS 1-10 AND CONDITION 1 THAT OUTDOOR LIGHTING BE DOWNWARD DIRECTIONAL AND MUST NOT PRODUCE LIGHT TRESSPASS OR GLARE PER THE COMMUNITY DESIGN MANUAL AND HOMER CITY CODE 21.59.030.

There was no discussion.

VOTE. NON-OBJECTION. UNANIMOUS CONSENT.

Motion carried.

PLAT CONSIDERATION

PENDING BUSINESS

A. Staff Report 20-66, Building Height in the Medical Zoning District

Vice Chair Petska-Rubalcava introduced the item by reading of the title and invited City Planner Abboud to provide his report.

City Planner Abboud provided a summary of Staff Report 20-66 commenting on the action taken by the City Council at the meeting regarding the building height. Currently the district was approved but with the regular 35 foot height limitation.

Discussion ensued between the Commissioners and City Planner on the merits and many discussions previously entertained by the Commission on the increased height, the lack of a full quorum and that one commissioner present would not support the increased height; information received from DGS and additional information on soil stability in the district to support taller buildings; there was no indication of support for a sub area within the district; getting feedback from South Peninsula Hospital support for the taller buildings up by CUP and that it would be beneficial to continue this to a future meeting when the additional information could be obtained and presented for review and a full commission is present.

Vice Chair Petska-Rubalcava requested this item to be on the November agenda.

NEW BUSINESS

A. Staff Report 20-67, Revision of the Community Design Manual and Large Retail Standards

Vice Chair Petska-Rubalcava introduced the item by reading of the tile and invited City Planner Abboud to provide his report for the Commission.

City Planner Abboud reported that this item has been on the department radar for a while. There are many recommendations from the Community Design Manual (CDM) that have been incorporated into city code. He believes that this would be an item of interest to the EDC also.

City Planner Abboud stressed that they are not interested in changing the requirements for big box stores. He highlighted the following points:

- The CDM is a long confusing document
- New Application document that assists the applicant
- Some items are redundant
- Some are stylistic and they come and go, many options available and one of the main things people like about Homer is the eclectic appearance
- There are items that are not relevant and should be removed
- Remove those items that are codified
- Codify some items that are typically required
- Updating siding and trim materials
- Some recommendations work great for a new project but are not relevant for smaller remodels
- Landscaping parking lots in remodels and expansions

City Planner Abboud will introduce this to the EDC and get them involved too. He will try to provide some study materials for a future meeting.

Vice Chair Petska-Rubalcava thanked the City Planner commented that she enjoyed the caveat regarding box stores and that they do not have to go down that rabbit hole. She requested comments from the Commission.

Commissioner Highland commented that she has reviewed the CDM and she read a paragraph from the CDM into the record regarding the scenic beauty of Kachemak Bay as an Alaska National treasure and this design manual has been adapted in order to maintain and improve the overall quality of the built environment and the way it fits into this blended natural setting. Ms. Highland commented that is what she tries to follow, referring to her desire not to have clear cutting of trees on property. There are a few items that she is interested in so looks forward to discussing the CDM.

Commissioner Venuti recalled his arrival to Homer and how over time the necessity of additional parking at Safeway and how it is necessary for them to park refrigerated trucks in the parking lot, he would like to see a partnership developed between local businesses and expansion of that parking lot into the neighboring lot they own adjacent to the store.

City Planner Abboud responded that the Planning Department has encouraged Safeway to consider a new facility with adequate storage and parking. He has also encouraged them to consider parking for trucks with boats, RV's and noted that they only have those refrigerated

trailers because they do not have the needed space to contain the inventory required noting that in regards to parking spaces Safeway is well above the maximum parking allowance.

Mr. Abboud continue noting that those are some interesting things that were not considered when restricting the parking. There is even a line in the CDM retaining all native vegetation, then it begs the consideration does that mean retention of a lot of pushki?

Mr. Abboud explained that the Commission is the ultimate authority and it has teeth through the CUP process. That some projects were developed below the threshold so that it was not have to meet all the requirements outlined.

Further discussion included points on the following:

- Inclusion of Green infrastructure in the CDM
- Natural environment retention - limits on the requirements
- Future designation of conservation lands
- How readily available it can be applied in the Central Business District
- Establishing a future worksession for discussion

INFORMATIONAL MATERIALS

A. City Manager's Report for the August 24th City Council Meetings

Vice Chair Petska-Rubalcava commented on the poster for parking in the right of ways, made her think twice about that issue and appreciated the graders over gardens line. She also noted that she heard the New Police Station is fully operational and inhabited, she noted how the City Staff adapted during COVID and is fully operational in a seamless way.

COMMENTS OF THE AUDIENCE

COMMENTS OF THE STAFF

City Planner Abboud stated that he was looking forward to the holidays and plans to take some time off

Deputy City Clerk Krause commented it was a great meeting, very informative and interesting. She alerted the Commission that Chair Smith had found a virus on his computer and plans to come to city hall for the meeting.

COMMENTS OF THE COMMISSION

Commissioner Highland commented that she appreciated meeting Jan Keiser and her experience and background is phenomenal. She opined that Ms. Keiser would be a good source for some input on the Community Design Manual.

Commissioner Barnwell agreed with Commissioner Highland regarding the Public Works Director, noting her array of skills and experience make Homer very lucky to have her. He also finds the CDM process very interesting and looks forward to the worksession on that.

Commissioner Venuti complimented Commissioner Petska Rubalcava on conducting the meeting tonight. He noted the need for Commissioners to seek out applicants so that they can have a full commission.

Commissioner Petska-Rubalcava commented that she was excited to start working on the CDM and looking forward going into the holidays she hopes that everyone will have wonderful holidays.

ADJOURN

There being no further business to come before the Commission, the meeting adjourned at 7:54 p.m. The next Regular Meeting is scheduled for Wednesday, November 4, 2020 at 6:30 p.m. A worksession is scheduled at 5:30 p.m. All meetings are scheduled to be held virtually by Zoom Webinar from the City Hall Cowles Council Chambers located at 491 E. Pioneer Avenue, Homer, Alaska

RENEE KRAUSE, MMC, DEPUTY CITY CLERK

Approved: _____