

Session 20-15, a Regular Meeting of the Planning Commission was called to order by Chair Smith at 6:40 p.m. on November 4, 2020 at Cowles Council Chambers in City Hall located at 491 E. Pioneer Avenue, Homer, Alaska via Zoom Webinar. One seat vacant due to resignation.

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

STAFF: CITY PLANNER ABBODD
DEPUTY CITY CLERK KRAUSE

The Planning Commission met for a worksession at 5:30 p.m. prior to the regular meeting for a discussion facilitated by Deputy City Planner Engebretsen on revision to the Community Design Manual. The Commission also held a brief discussion on the Medical District Building Height.

APPROVAL OF THE AGENDA

Chair Smith requested a motion to approve the agenda.

HIGHLAND/BENTZ– 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. Minutes of the October 21, 2020 Planning Commission Regular Meeting
- B. Utility easement vacation request at Tract E-1-A Carl Sholin Subdivision SBS 1996 Addition No. 2
- C. Decisions and Findings for Conditional Use Permit 20-16 at 4424 Starboard Way

Chair Smith requested a motion to approve the consent agenda as presented.

HIGHLAND/BENTZ – MOVED TO APPROVE THE CONSENT AGENDA.

There was no discussion.

VOTE. NON-OBJECTION. UNANIMOUS CONSENT.

Motion carried.

VISITORS/PRESENTATIONS

REPORTS

A. Staff Report 20-68, City Planner's Report

City Planner Abboud provided a summary review of Staff Report 20-68 for the Commission. He noted the following points:

- City entering Code Orange
- Only one more meeting for the year
- Staffing the Planning Department

Commissioner Petska-Rubalcava confirmed the process to report to the Council meeting with Chair Smith and Commissioner Venuti. She then asked about the vacancy and qualifications to fill that vacancy.

PUBLIC HEARING(S)

PLAT CONSIDERATION

A. Staff Report 20-69 Wintergreen Subdivision 2020 Replat Preliminary Plat

Chair Smith introduced the item by reading the title into the record.

City Planner Abboud reviewed Staff Report 20-69 for the Commission.

There was no applicant present.

Chair Smith opened the public comment period and having no public present at the meeting he closed the public comment period.

Chair Smith opened the floor to questions and comments of the Commission. Hearing none he requested a motion.

PETSKA-RUBALCAVA/HIGHLAND MOVED TO ADOPT STAFF REPORT 20-69 AND RECOMMEND APPROVAL OF WINTERGREEN SUBDIVISION 2020 REPLAT PRELIMINARY PLAT.

There was no discussion.

VOTE. NON—OBJECTION. UNANIMOUS CONSENT.

Motion carried.

PENDING BUSINESS

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

Chair Smith introduced the item by reading of the title.

City Planner Abboud provided input that the Commission discussed this during the worksession and asked if there were any additional changes to the proposed memorandum.

HIGHLAND/BARNWELL RECOMMENDED TO STRIKE THE LAST SENTENCE, LINE 39, BEGINNING WITH "COMMISSION STANDS BY THEIR EARLIER RECOMMENDATION TO ALLOW BUILDINGS UP TO 65 FEET BY CONDITIONAL USE IN THE WHOLE DISTRICT.

Discussion ensued by the Commission on consideration of adding clarification on supporting a building height district wide and maybe proposing another building height such as 45 feet; push back on the building height of 65 feet and that there is no pending or immediate interest in increasing the building height that the issue could be revisited at a later time; the existing height of Homer High School auditorium.

VOTE. YES. BENTZ, BARNWELL, SMITH, PETSKA-RUBALCAVA, HIGHLAND
NO. VENUTI

Motion carried.

Commissioner Petska-Rubalcava brought forward discussion on establishing a building height of 45 feet and since they currently do not have a building department and there is concern on slope stability and requested the opinion from the other commissioners.

Commissioner Highland was not supportive of anything over 35 feet at this time and definitely until they received the stability information.

Commissioner Bentz provided comment that she did not support zoning around one entity.

Commissioner Barnwell believed it was too premature and that there was no indication that Homer was needing taller buildings at this time.

Chair Smith inquired if the Commission wanted to discuss the impact to view shed that taller buildings would have.

Commissioner Bentz pointed out that it would be difficult to regulate view and view sheds and commented on the discussion at the Borough level.

Commissioner Bentz brought discussion forward on implementing a subarea within the district for taller buildings noting that Commissioner Petska-Rubalcava and herself have previously expressed that they did not support that and would like input from the rest of the Commission.

Commissioners Highland and Barnwell each commented that they would not support creating a subarea within the district for taller buildings.

PETSKA-RUBALCAVA/BENTZ MOVED TO AMEND LINE 39 THAT THE COMMISSION WOULD ALLOW BUILDINGS UP TO 45 FEET BY CONDITIONAL USE PERMIT IN HEIGHT IN THE MEDICAL DISTRICT.

Discussion ensued by the Commission on allowing buildings up to 45 feet would show that the city is open to business, many areas in the district above Fairview are not available but there are several areas below Fairview open to development; this height would allow for better roof lines; slope stability can be addressed by the Commission when a CUP is before them; this would allow for development of multi-use buildings; consideration of sustainability justifies more compact development, but as a subject is outside this discussion and can be brought forward for a future agenda. It was further noted that Council amended the ordinance to the 35 feet height requirement and was only interested in establishing a sub area within the district. It was noted that the taller buildings did provide some issues as far as the Fire Department is only capable of 30 foot heights.

VOTE. NO, BENTZ, BARNWELL, HIGHLAND

VOTE. YES, VENUTI, SMITH, PETSKA-RUBALCAVA

Motion failed.

Commissioner Highland commented on amending the memorandum to express to City Council that the Commission does not want to allow a sub-area within the district for taller buildings and that was due to the limited property owners that could accommodate development of taller buildings.

Chair Smith requested a motion.

BENTZ/HIGHLAND MOVED TO AMEND LINE 18 AND 19 THAT THE COMMISSION IS IN AGREEMENT TO NOT LIMIT LOCATION OF TALLER BUILDINGS TO A SUB-AREA WITHIN THE DISTRICT.

There was no further discussion.

VOTE. NON-OBJECTION. UNANIMOUS CONSENT.

Motion carried.

NEW BUSINESS

A. City Clerk Memorandum, Meeting Schedule for 2021

Chair Smith introduced the item by reading of the title.

City Planner Abboud commented on the standard meeting schedule noting that there was only one meeting for July, November and December. He further commented that meetings can be canceled or scheduled as needed.

HIGHLAND/BENTZ MOVED TO APPROVE THE 2021 REGULAR MEETING SCHEDULE AS PRESENTED AND FORWARD TO CITY COUNCIL FOR APPROVAL.

There was a brief discussion on a reduced meeting schedule with comments on the other advisory bodies having only one meeting per month and the planning commission meeting more frequently to process permits in a timely fashion.

VOTE. NON-OBJECTION. UNANIMOUS CONSENT.

Motion carried.

B. Staff Report 20-71, Revisions to the Community Design Manual

Chair Smith introduced the item by reading of the title.

City Planner Abboud noted that they had a good discussion at the worksession and Deputy City Planner Engebretsen will bring back further sections for review and revisions. He then commented on creating a better design requirements for the community.

City Planner Abboud stated in response to a question from Commissioner Highland that this revision will be presented for comment from the Economic Development Advisory Commission as he feels that they can provide additional perspectives to the issues.

INFORMATIONAL MATERIALS

- A. City Manager's Report for the October 26, 2020 City Council Meetings
- B. Kenai Peninsula Borough Planning Commission Notice of Decision for Cheryl Lane Right-of-Way Vacation

COMMENTS OF THE AUDIENCE

COMMENTS OF THE STAFF

COMMENTS OF THE COMMISSION

Commissioner Petska-Rubalcava commented on the great job the Community did for Halloween. The efforts by the community were great and brought some normalcy back.

Commissioner Bentz appreciated the approach in the revision process for the Community Design Manual and advocated that there is a part in the manual that addresses the hazards that are faced by Alaskans.

Commissioner Highland commented that she would appreciate a discussion on sustainability, and if there is adequate availability for growth in development and population.

Commissioner Venuti wished City Planner Abboud a restful vacation. He complimented Chair Smith on a great job.

Commissioner Barnwell appreciated the presentation by Deputy City Planner Engebretsen on the Community Design Manual and commented his appreciation for her comparison of a small town becoming a big town very fast. He believed the CDM is very granular and if it could focus more on the Alaskanization or “Homerization” of a place the better. That the CDM provides guidelines to not only the big box stores but the Wild Honey Bistros as well. He enjoyed the discussions held.

Chair Smith commented on the quality of the discussions and comments and missed meeting in person. He noted that he may not be in attendance at the December meeting as his father is in ill health but will advise as time goes on.

ADJOURN

There being no further business to come before the Commission, the meeting adjourned at 7:37 p.m. The next Regular Meeting is scheduled for Wednesday, December 2, 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: _____