

Session 20-16, a Regular Meeting of the Planning Commission was called to order by Vice Chair Petska-Rubalcava at 6:30 p.m. on December 2, 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, PETSKA-RUBALCAVA, BARNWELL, VENUTI AND BENTZ

ABSENT: COMMISSIONER SMITH (EXCUSED)

STAFF: CITY PLANNER ABBOUD
DEPUTY CITY PLANNER ENGBRETSSEN
DEPUTY CITY CLERK KRAUSE

The Planning Commission met for a worksession at 5:30 p.m. prior to the regular meeting for a presentation and discussion facilitated by Staff and Coowe Walker, Manager and Ecologist with the Kachemak Bay Research Reserve entitled Beneath the Surface: Groundwater and Peat. This covered how water under and on the surface travels.

APPROVAL OF THE AGENDA

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

VENUTI/HIGHLAND – MOVED TO APPROVE THE AGENDA.

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 November 4, 2020 Planning Commission Regular Meeting

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

VENUTI/HIGHLAND – MOVED TO APPROVE THE CONSENT AGENDA.

There was no discussion.

VOTE. NON-OBJECTION. UNANIMOUS CONSENT.

Motion carried.

VISITORS/PRESENTATIONS

REPORTS

A. Staff Report 20-72, City Planner's Report

City Planner Abboud provided a summary review of Staff Report 20-72 for the Commission. He noted the following point:

- Public Works searching for a new campus and the Planning Commission should have input on selection and project

A brief discussion ensued between City Planner Abboud and Commissioners on the location selection for the proposed new Public Works Facility in context with the various components and considerations are going to be used in the location selection process.

PUBLIC HEARING(S)

PLAT CONSIDERATION

PENDING BUSINESS

A. Staff Report 20-73 Revisions to the Community Design Manual

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

Deputy City Planner Engebretsen provided a summary of Staff Report 20-73 noting her recommendations and requested input from the Commission.

Further discussion between staff and the commission ensued on the following:

- Loosening the language on lines 193 to 194 to encourage building towards the front of the parcel
- What is the definition of significant vegetation to provide some clarification for developers in relation to Lines 272 to 274
 - The reference is related to removal and topping trees
 - This only applies to specific permits that come before the Commission
 - Focuses only on architectural and landscaping, esthetics
 - Current and past requirements and effects on the existing vegetation
 - Native vegetation over time is not size appropriate for the lot or aesthetically appealing
 - This language came from the Vancouver WA CDM which is not relevant to Homer

- Removing the language would not provide a better document since they do not want a developer to just clear every lot and then installing inappropriate landscape materials
- Providing alternative landscape materials that developers can use if existing vegetation must be removed
- Wayfinding Plan is in the process will contain a list of preferred plants to be used
- Most recent projects – Aspen Hotel and Police Station present the best scenarios of landscaping design and plant use as examples
- Environmental impacts and mitigations that can be addressed by landscaping
- Lines 350 to 352 only applies when a project requires a conditional use permit and having this in the CDM does not prevent someone from clearing a lot.
- Fencing recommendations from Commissioner Richardson with the EDC are appreciated and provided some good pricing information.
 - It was interesting the opinions on a subject depending on which Advisory Body was viewing the requirements was noted.

NEW BUSINESS

INFORMATIONAL MATERIALS

- A. City Manager's Report for the November 9 and November 23, 2020 City Council Meetings
- B. HPC Memorandum to Homer City Council re: Building Height in the Medical District

Vice Chair Petska-Rubalcava noted the information contained in the City Manager's reports provided and asked for any questions or comments from the Commission.

There was a brief discussion on the de-escalation training and the memorandum to Council and their response.

COMMENTS OF THE AUDIENCE

COMMENTS OF THE STAFF

City Planner Abboud commented on the city moving into Red Status and that the Clerk's Office was working with one Clerk in office and the Planning Department has moved to two staff members in office and if needed they could move to one person but he believed it would have too great an effect on the efficiency of their department. Staff will keep working on the tasks at hand and we will see how things develop over the next 6 weeks or so. Looking forward to getting the permitting software and such.

Deputy City Planner Engebretsen commented it was a good meeting and appreciated the comments and will plan to have a presentation for the next meeting so it will not be as tedious.

Deputy City Clerk Krause commented that she thought the worksession content was very informative and interesting and noted that she found the discussion very interesting regarding the landscaping requirements and recommendations since she owned and operated a lawn and landscape installation company for 14 years in Florida. She complimented Vice Chair Petska-Rubalcava on conducting a great meeting.

COMMENTS OF THE COMMISSION

Commissioner Venuti complimented deputy City Planner Engebretsen and Vice Chair Petska-Rubalcava on doing a great job. He noted that this was the last meeting of the year before the holidays and wished everyone a happy, safe and healthy Christmas.

Commissioner Highland wished everyone a Happy New Year.

Commissioner Barnwell complimented Vice Chair Petska-Rubalcava on a great job and wished everyone Happy Holidays. He commented it was a good amendment to the CDM on Lines 243 to 250 to stress the usefulness of plants versus the aesthetics and expressed his desire that the Planning Commission has some input on the Public Works Facility project.

Commissioner Bentz commented that the meeting was great and it's exciting to see applications of research and monitoring being useful to local government, appreciated the contributions from the various individuals in the community and believes it makes them more resilient. She also commented on the benefit of having worksessions and suggested having the CDM revisions as a worksession, that it may assist in getting through it more efficiently.

Vice Chair Petska-Rubalcava thanked everyone and their patience and wished everyone a Merry Christmas and Happy New Year and to stay safe and healthy.

ADJOURN

There being no further business to come before the Commission, the meeting adjourned at 7:35 p.m. The next Regular Meeting is scheduled for Wednesday, January 6, 2021 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: _____