

Session 21-06 a Regular Meeting of the Economic Development Advisory Commission was called to order by Chair Karin Marks at 6:01 p.m. on June 8, 2021 at the Cowles Council Chambers, City Hall located at 491 E. Pioneer Avenue, Homer, Alaska via Zoom Webinar, and opened with the Pledge of Allegiance.

PRESENT: COMMISSIONERS MARKS, BROWN, HALL, CHEROK, PERSON, AND AREVALO (arrived 6:06 p.m.)

ABSENT: COMMISSIONER SPEAKMAN (excused)

STAFF: DEPUTY CITY PLANNER ENGBRETSSEN
DEPUTY CITY CLERK TUSSEY

The Economic Development Advisory Commission met for a Worksession on May 25, 2021 from 7:00 p.m. to 8:20 p.m. Discussion topics for the Worksession included Wayfinding-Streetscape Plan Project Update from Deputy City Planner Engebretsen, and reviewing the draft Kenai Peninsula 2021-2026 Comprehensive Economic Development Strategy.

AGENDA APPROVAL

Chair Marks welcomed new commissioner George Hall and called for a motion to approve the agenda.

CHEROK/HALL MOVED TO APPROVE THE AGENDA.

There was no discussion.

VOTE: NON OBJECTION: UNANIMOUS CONSENT.

Motion carried.

PUBLIC COMMENTS UPON MATTERS ALREADY ON THE AGENDA

RECONSIDERATION

APPROVAL OF MINUTES

A. May 11, 2021 Regular Meeting Minutes

Commissioner Arevalo joined the meeting at 6:06 p.m.

Chair Marks asked for a motion to approve the meeting minutes.

PERSON/BROWN MOVED TO APPROVE THE MINUTES.

There was no discussion.

VOTE: NON OBJECTION: UNANIMOUS CONSENT.

Motion carried.

VISITORS/PRESENTATIONS

STAFF & COUNCIL REPORT/COMMITTEE REPORTS

A. EDC Staff Report

Deputy City Planner Engebretsen spoke to her staff report. It was clarified that Wayfinding-Streetscape Plan events would be discussed further under Pending Business.

B. Chamber Director Report

Chair Marks noted that Chamber Director Brad Anderson was not in attendance.

C. Homer Marine Trades Association Report

Chair Marks noted the HMTA minutes in the packet.

D. Kenai Peninsula Economic Development District Report

Chair Marks noted that KPEDD meets quarterly so there won't be anything to report on until August.

PUBLIC HEARINGS

PENDING BUSINESS

A. Wayfinding-Streetscape Plan Project Update
i. "Discovery Week" Event Flyer

Chair Marks introduced the item by reading the title and asked for the motion to suspend the rules to allow Peter Briggs, Corvus Designs, to participate in the discussion.

PERSON/AREVALO – SO MOVED

There was no discussion.

VOTE: NON OBJECTION: UNANIMOUS CONSENT.

Motion carried.

Peter Briggs outlined the first day of wayfinding and streetscape events, which is tomorrow, and described in detail the “Discovery Days” schedule this week. The intent is to meet at key locations throughout Homer to discuss various topics at each site, with the goal to get input from those who can attend. The public is invited to join at any of the times and places in the schedule.

Wednesday, June 9th

- 9:00-9:30am: Baycrest/Homer Overlook Rest Stop
- 9:45-10:15am: Airport
- 10:30-11:15pm: Homer Boathouse
- 1:00-1:15pm Pioneer Street (Meet at City Hall)
- 1:15-2:15pm: Central Business District Walk (City Hall to Main Street)
- 3:30-4:00pm Getting Cars from the Sterling to Homer Destinations, and Old Town (Chamber of Commerce)
- 4:30 to 6:00pm: Bishop’s Beach Pop-up (General Discussion)

Thursday, June 10th

- 10:00-11:00am: Streetscape Drop-In (at City Hall)
- 11:30-2:30pm: Open Drop-In Work Session (at City Hall)
- 6:00-7:30pm Online Open House

There was discussion on the project’s website where the meeting info can be found, and the DropBox link where Corvus Designs is collecting photographs from commissioners. EDC members were asked to attend at least one of the events to ensure there is at least one attendee at each location. Discussion ensued on who will attend which events.

Mr. Briggs spoke to the next step of the design project process, and the goals they’re hoping to walk away with after this week’s events to begin planning out signage. Discussion ensued between the commission, staff, and Mr. Briggs on meeting scheduling, project timeframe, and if the EDC can expect to review the project’s status at their August meeting. Mr. Briggs and Deputy City Planner Engebretsen agreed that would be possible.

The commission thanked Mr. Briggs for attending.

B. Draft Comprehensive Economic Development Strategy (CEDS) Review

Chair Marks introduced the item by reading the title and deferred to Deputy City Planner Engebretsen to begin discussion.

Ms. Engebretsen spoke to her memo and highlighted which areas of the CEDS have since been updated, or feedback she received, by Kenai Peninsula Economic Development District (KPEDD) since their May 25th worksession. Chair Marks noted that there will be an addendum in the CEDS that will include all of their comments, suggesting that they do not remove them. She further explained how the CEDS are updated.

There was discussion on clarifying what type of motion staff is requesting at this meeting, adding new comments to the list, explanation of what some of the goals entail (such as broadband internet), where on the bulleted list they should be, and any comments that had previously been made that were not included. Ms. Engebretsen screen-shared her revisions and facilitated comment wordsmithing and any other areas of concern in the CEDS. The commission made the following amendments/comments:

1. Very few southern peninsula activities are listed under Goal 3. The EDC may recommend a project during an annual CEDS update.
2. The Seward data for visitor counts is from 2016 and seems dated to use in this document.
3. The quality of life (and taxation rates to pay for increased government services) needs to balance with the cost of living.
4. The plan compares KPB affordability to Anchorage. While attracting new residents is positive, there also needs to be emphasis on retaining the residents who already live here. There should be more discussion of local wages and affordability.
5. What is affordable for local workers is much different than a comparison with Anchorage. There is a disconnect between local wages, housing costs, and cost of living for entry level and skilled workers.
6. Land and land development costs are high on the southern peninsula.
7. Worker housing is expensive.
8. Report is very thorough.
9. Broadband development is important for economic development.
10. Goal 2: add a bullet: Strengthen affordable and available workforce housing.
11. Goal 5: Advocate at the State for stable, predictable budget levels.
12. Page 42, SWOT analysis of Industries and Business Climate: Seafood and Tourism are listed as strengths, however, the weaknesses list makes no mention of threats to both terrestrial and marine habitat due to human development or climate change. Human development that does not take into account the impact to salmon rearing habitat (watershed-level view) and to other wildlife habitat that draws visitors and drives industries like the seafood industry, can negatively impact these listed strengths.
13. High quality plan, well done. (for memo) Also use goals and SWOT comments in the memo.
14. SWOT Analysis: Healthcare sector; area would benefit from more specialists. This can be viewed as weakness in the healthcare sector as an opportunity for new growth.
15. Page 63: VI Action Plan: under Strategies and Actions for 0.1: Sustain and fund local arts and culture opportunities.
16. Under 0.2 also under Strategies and Actions: Fund and Develop connected trail systems and recreational opportunities.
17. Development of a robust, well-managed and maintained trails not only is important for quality of life in general sense, but also can have strong positive effect on economic drivers on the Peninsula. People currently access the backcountry via ATV's and Snowmachines. However, it is important that we protect sensitive fish and wildlife habitat by discouraging off-trail ATV usage and constructing and maintaining bridges, boardwalks, and trail pathways. As the population grows and more people access the backcountry using motorized vehicles, strategic development of trails in these areas will increase in importance.

AREVALO/PERSON MOVED THAT THE ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT ADVISORY COMMISSION SUPPORTS THE KPEDD CEDS WITH THE FOLLOWING COMMENTS AND RECOMMENDATIONS.

There was no discussion.

VOTE: NON OBJECTION: UNANIMOUS CONSENT.

Motion carried.

NEW BUSINESS

INFORMATIONAL MATERIALS

- A. HCC Property Tax Exemptions Excerpts
- B. Memo 21-078 George Hall EDC Appointment Information
- C. City Manager's Report for May 24, 2021
- D. EDC 2021 Calendar

Chair Marks commented that she cancelled the July regular meeting and that she plans to attend the June 14th City Council meeting to give the EDC report. She spoke to the informational materials and reiterated the request for additional information on why the HERC was included in Public Work's 5-year Plan. Deputy City Planner Engebretsen responded, providing clarification to Commissioner Person's question.

In response to Chair Marks' inquiry on Commissioner Hall's background, Mr. Hall spoke to a recent project in Seward he had been working on with KPEDD's Director Tim Dillon. Chair Marks thanked Mr. Hall for joining the EDC.

Deputy City Planner Engebretsen noted that the calendar agenda items usually held at the July meeting will be moved to the August meeting accordingly.

COMMENTS OF THE AUDIENCE

COMMENTS OF CITY STAFF

Deputy City Clerk Tussey and Deputy City Planner Engebretsen had no further comments.

COMMENTS OF THE COUNCILMEMBER

COMMENTS OF THE CHAIR

Chair Marks shared her excitement on having a full commission. She voiced her appreciation for everyone being on the EDC and attending the wayfinding-streetscape project events in the upcoming days.

COMMENTS OF THE COMMISSION

Commissioner Person commented on a group called the Homer Trails Alliance who advocate for hiking trails, upcoming art shows that are taking place around town, and welcomed Commissioner Hall.

Commissioner Arevalo voiced her interest in the upcoming wayfinding-streetscape “Discovery Days” events and welcomed Commissioner Hall.

Commissioners Cherok, Brown, and Hall had no further comments.

ADJOURN

There being no further business to come before the Commission, Chair Marks adjourned the meeting at 7:36 p.m. The next Regular Meeting is Tuesday, August 10, 2021 at 6:00 p.m. All meetings scheduled to be held in the City Hall Cowles Council Chambers located at 491 E. Pioneer Avenue, Homer, Alaska.



RACHEL TUSSEY, CMC, DEPUTY CITY CLERK I

Approved: August 10, 2021