

Session 21-03 a Regular Meeting of the Economic Development Advisory Commission was called to order by Chair Karin Marks at 6:00 p.m. on March 9, 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, RICHARDSON, AREVALO, SPEAKMAN, CHEROK, JOHNSON

STAFF: DEPUTY CITY PLANNER ENGBRETSSEN
DEPUTY CITY CLERK TUSSEY
PUBLIC WORKS DIRECTOR KEISER

AGENDA APPROVAL

Chair Marks called for a motion to approve the agenda.

BROWN/AREVALO 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. February 9, 2021 Regular Meeting Minutes

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

BROWN/AREVALO MOVED TO APPROVE THE MINUTES.

There was no discussion.

VOTE: NON OBJECTION: UNANIMOUS CONSENT.

Motion carried.

VISITORS/PRESENTATIONS

A. Jan Keiser, Public Works Director – Quarterly Public Works Update

- i. Memo Re: Mariner Lagoon “Dredging”
- ii. Memo Re: Proposed Road Financial Plan

Chair Marks introduced visitor Jan Keiser, Public Works Director.

Ms. Keiser spoke to her written report concerning dredging of the Mariner Lagoon, the history behind it, and the upcoming work Public Works has planned to reopen the storm berm that drains into the existing lagoon. She also spoke to Public Works’ proposed road financial plan, explaining what it is they are doing with this plan and her intentions of bringing it before the Planning Commission and City Council.

Commissioner Richardson commented that one of the road issues that impact our local schools are the buses having difficulty on certain roads, causing students to be late. It may be worth it to reach out to the school principals to see which bus routes are commonly late.

Commissioner Arevalo inquired if the small amount of water into the Mariner Lagoon area is sufficient for habitat area. Ms. Keiser referenced a 2009 study done by Dames and Moore that provided the history on the lagoon, and explained how allowing some water in there attracts some birds. It’s not an all-or-nothing situation; allowing some water in there provides a balance between having some wildlife there and keeping the area cleared because of the nearby airport. She offered to provide Ms. Arevalo a copy of the plan.

In response to questions from Chair Marks, Ms. Keiser explained how roads that aren’t needed to be improved in the next five years wouldn’t be included in the plan. She also spoke to fleet replacement and Public Works’ budget spending plan in regards to roads, trails, and other projects.

STAFF & COUNCIL REPORT/COMMITTEE REPORTS

- A. EDC Staff Report
 - i. 2013-2020 Planning & Zoning Permit Statistics

Deputy City Planner Engebretsen spoke to her written report, noting the following:

- Wayfinding-Streetscape Plan Request for Proposals is now open and being advertised; exciting to see interested proposers signing up already.
- Additional COVID-19 relief funding was approved by federal legislation; City Staff is monitoring the situation to ensure we can sign up for more funding where applicable.
- Vaccine eligibility has expanded; anyone living or working in Alaska can get the vaccine.
- Update on Planning Commission activity; gearing up for seasonal activity and building plans.
- Chamber of Commerce meeting attendance.
- Review of Planning and Zoning permit statistics.
- City Council formed a Sidewalk Trail Pedestrian Connectivity subcommittee, and if that is something relevant to the Wayfinding-Streetscape Plan efforts.

- B. Chamber Director Report

Brad Anderson provided his verbal staff report, updating the commission on the following topics:

- Chamber and HMTA have been merging efforts to support cooperative marine marketing
- Legislative report
- Promising signs of what the upcoming tourist season will be like
- Majority of Chamber events will be able to take place this year with some adjustments
- New events: Food Truck Festival; Peony Celebration
- Efforts to be more supportive to local businesses/members
- Branding Homer and upcoming concepts for logo redesign
- Chamber boat raffle tickets are now available for purchase
- Using SimpleView to redesign the Chamber's website

C. Homer Marine Trades Association Report

Chair Marks noted the HMTA minutes in the packet.

D. Pioneer Avenue Task Force Report

Chair Marks reported that the group has turned into the Peony Celebration Planning Task Force and provided an update on their work so far.

E. Kenai Peninsula Economic Development District Report

Chair Marks stated that KPEDD and CEDS updates will be addressed later in the agenda.

PUBLIC HEARINGS

PENDING BUSINESS

A. Comprehensive Economic Development Strategy (CEDS) Update

Chair Marks thanked Commissioner Arevalo, Deputy City Planner Engebretsen, and Special Projects and Communications Coordinator Carroll for all their work on getting the CEDS survey info out.

Deputy City Planner Engebretsen commented that KPEDD's draft plan will be out in April with the final plan submittal in June. She will let EDC know when there's an opportunity to comment.

Commissioners who had distributed survey flyers around town shared their experiences and what kind of in-person feedback they received while delivering flyers.

NEW BUSINESS

A. Helping Businesses Create an Online Presence

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

Commissioner Arevalo reiterated her interest in working with staff to see how the EDC website can be improved to provide better business resources and a curated list of trainings/resources that other entities have already put together. Ms. Engebretsen agreed to coordinate with Ms. Arevalo after the meeting.

Chair Marks inquired on the potential of more COVID funding being available. Ms. Engebretsen responded that the City has not yet received any details on the \$1.9 trillion funding bill that was passed by the federal government, but it's reasonable to say that our Council would support using those funds to support local businesses. She asked commissioners to let her know of any ideas they have on where some of that funding can go.

Discussion ensued on utilizing those funds for projects such as assisting businesses with their online presence (workforce development website). The commission requested if staff could contact Robert Green with the Small Business Development Center and see if he'd be interested in giving a presentation to the EDC.

- B. Economic Development Budget
- i. 2020/21 Adopted Operating Budget – Economic Development Section
 - ii. Proposed Budget Development Schedule for FY 2022 & 2023

Chair Marks introduced the item by reading the title, gave a brief explanation as to why she felt the Economic Development Budget should be on the agenda, and deferred to Deputy City Planner Engebretsen to provide further information.

Ms. Engebretsen gave a historical breakdown of the economic development budget's use, and explained the following areas:

- Disconnection between the budget and EDC given the commission doesn't have its own budget.
- Recent changes the City has made, including implementing a new fiscal year.
- The City's budget process and how the commission can make requests.
- Work currently being done by staff to create the 2022 budget.

Ms. Engebretsen's facilitated discussion and answered questions regarding the budget and her talking points. Commissioners requested to have the budget on their agenda annually for review/discussion and to encourage more EDC participation in the budgeting process.

- C. April KPEDD Comprehensive Economic Development Strategy (CEDS) Forum

Chair Marks introduced the item by reading the title and provided an update on KPEDD's upcoming outreach efforts. Executive Director Tim Dillon will be in Homer the week of April 12th to give presentations to City Council, Kachemak City, and hold a KPEDD workshop on the CEDS and new workforce development website. The workshop will be held at the Chamber of Commerce and is a joint Chamber/KPEDD event.

Deputy City Planner Engebretsen noted that an economic development forum is not something the City can currently host due to COVID restrictions. She spoke to what the EDC could be doing to be a part of the workshop, including attending the Zoom workshop themselves and/or getting the word out to local businesses about the workshop.

Chair Marks inquired if the Zoom event could also be an EDC hosted event. Ms. Engebretsen reiterated how the City currently cannot participate in that capacity, but that can change in the future depending on if COVID restrictions are adjusted. The Chamber would be providing the materials. She noted that EDC members can sign up to attend the Zoom workshop as public members. Ms. Engebretsen and Deputy City Clerk Tussey explained the reasoning for wanting to know how many commissioners plan to attend is to ensure the City complies with Open Meeting Act regulations, and would need to advertise it if more than three members intend to be at the event.

There was discussion on having the workshop info posted to the City's website and suggestions to have KPEDD speak at the Flex school. In response to Commissioner Arevalo's suggestion to post flyers, Brad Anderson with the Chamber of Commerce agreed that they will be advertising accordingly.

- D. Karen Hornaday Park Improvement Plan
 - i. Concept Maps

Chair Marks introduced the item by reading the title and deferred to Public Works Director Keiser.

Ms. Keiser spoke to her memo, and the current status of implementing the Karen Hornaday Park Refurbishment Plan. She explained how the plan's B-2 concept design is still feasible, and according to a recent topography survey it can still be constructed. Public Works staff has demolished and removed the derelict bathrooms and prepared the groundwork for new construction. She explained how the funding is available from various funds, and would like EDC's support before she brings this proposal to Council.

The commission directed questions to Ms. Keiser and held discussion on the park improvement plan, noting the following:

- Location of the pedestrian train on the premises.
- There aren't exact costs yet; if the Public Works Director had to give a rough estimate it would be in the \$300,000-400,000 range.
- If this park can be a viable event venue with amenities; issues in the past with the parking and access road.
- Improvements to the park sites above the park are being planned as well to include better amenities for RV's and possible expansion to include more campsites; those improvements could bring additional revenue to Parks.
- Suggestion to check with the orthopedic office before the moving of some of the playground equipment to see if any of it should instead be replaced.
- Request to leave the campground as wooded as possible while balancing the removal of underbrush for maintenance and view reasons.

Chair Marks asked for a motion.

SPEAKMAN/CHEROK MOVED TO SUPPORT PUBLIC WORK'S PLAN FOR FUNDING THE REFURBISHMENT OF THE PARK AS SHOWN IN THE B-2 ALTERNATIVE OF THE KAREN HORNADAY MASTER PLAN, AND RECOMMEND APPROVAL BY CITY COUNCIL.

There was no further discussion.

VOTE: YES: MARKS, BROWN, RICHARDSON, AREVALO, SPEAKMAN, CHEROK, JOHNSON

Motion carried.

INFORMATIONAL MATERIALS

- A. Request for Proposals for Development of Homer Wayfinding-Streetscape Plan Packet
- B. City Manager's Report for February 22, 2021
- C. City Manager's Report for March 8, 2021
- D. EDC 2021 Calendar

COMMENTS OF THE AUDIENCE

COMMENTS OF CITY STAFF

Deputy City Clerk Tussey thanked Commissioners Richardson and Johnson for serving on the EDC. In response to Chair Marks asking if Commissioner Arevalo intends to serve again, Ms. Arevalo announced that she did just decide to renew and intends to submit her reappointment application soon.

Deputy City Planner Engebretsen thanked Public Works staff and Ms. Keiser for their efforts in continued improvements to Karen Hornaday Park. She also thanked Commissioners Richardson and Johnson for their service.

COMMENTS OF THE COUNCILMEMBER

COMMENTS OF THE CHAIR

Chair Marks commented that it's marvelous we're making plans, and feels the Wayfinding-Streetscape Plan will help with that. She thanked Commissioners Johnson and Richardson for all the work they did for the EDC. Chair Marks spoke to the importance of keeping quorum and encouraged commissioners to find people to serve.

COMMENTS OF THE COMMISSION

Commissioner Brown thanked Public Works Director Keiser, echoing Deputy City Planner Engebretsen's comments regarding the Karen Hornaday Park. She thanked Commissioners Richardson and Johnson.

Commissioner Cherok noted it was a good meeting and that it was great working with Commissioners Richardson and Johnson.

Commissioner Richardson thanked the commission and that he won't be a stranger.

Commissioner Arevalo thanked Public Works Director Keiser and all three staff members for being straight-up rock stars. She commented that Commissioners Richardson and Johnson will be missed.


Commissioner Johnson thanked the commission. He commented that as a newcomer to the community, serving on the EDC has been very helpful with understanding how the City works, and who the people are who make it work. He voiced his appreciation for all the staff for the great job.

Commissioner Speakman voiced her appreciation for City staff, and the quality of life we get from their efforts. She is excited to see the Wayfinding-Streetscape Plan and Karen Hornaday Park improvements move forward, and the increase in website traffic that's reflecting a promising summer season.

Chair Marks held brief discussion with Deputy City Clerk Tussey on the upcoming worksession time and April meeting events.

ADJOURN

There being no further business to come before the Commission, Chair Marks adjourned the meeting at 7:55 p.m. The next Regular Meeting is Tuesday, April 13, 2021 at 6:00 p.m. A Worksession is scheduled for Tuesday, April 13, 2021 at 5:30 p.m. All meetings scheduled to be held via Zoom Webinar in the City Hall Cowles Council Chambers located at 491 E. Pioneer Avenue, Homer, Alaska.



RACHEL TUSSEY, CMC, DEPUTY CITY CLERK I

Approved: April 13, 2021