

CALL TO ORDER

Session 24-03, a Regular Meeting of the Parks, Art, Recreation and Culture Advisory Commission was called to order by Chair David Lewis at 5:30 p.m. on March 21, 2024 from the City Hall Cowles Council Chambers located at 491 E. Pioneer Avenue, Homer, Alaska and via Zoom Webinar. A worksession was scheduled at 4:30 p.m. On the agenda was the annual Commission training conducted by City Clerk Jacobsen. This was postponed from November 2023.

PRESENT: COMMISSIONERS ARCHIBALD, KEISER, WILLIAMS, ROEDL, FAIR, LEWIS AND STUDENT COMMISSIONER WALKER

ABSENT: COMMISSIONER HARRALD (EXCUSED)

STAFF: DEPUTY CITY CLERK KRAUSE, RECREATION MANAGER ILLG, PUBLIC WORKS DIRECTOR KORT AND PARKS MAINTENANCE COORDINATOR FELICE

AGENDA APPROVAL

Chair Lewis requested a motion and second to approve the agenda.

ARCHIBALD/FAIR MOVED TO APPROVE THE AGENDA AS PRESENTED.

There was no discussion.

VOTE: NON-OBJECTION. UNANIMOUS CONSENT.

Motion carried.

PUBLIC COMMENTS UPON MATTERS ALREADY ON THE AGENDA

VISITORS/PRESENTATIONS

Dale Banks, LoopEride, EBike Regulations

Mr. Banks presented information to the Commission on the status of regulations and use of electric bikes on trails and sidewalks in the state, the United States as a whole and the city. Nationally the federal government defines low speed e bikes as a bike powered with an electric motor of less than 750 watts and does not exceed the speed of 20 mph. This was implemented close to twenty years ago or more, but the ebike has been growing in popularity and companies wanted guidelines on maximum power. The pandemic assisted the popularity growth of the Ebike with considerable growth in the last five years. Many states have implemented Class systems and 39 states have some type of regulations with most capping it at 750 watts. The Department of the Interior and the National Park Service in 2019 adopted regulations for use of electric vehicles in

National Parks. They define ebikes as 2 or 3 wheeled cycles with fully operational pedals and electric motor of not more than 750 watts that provides propulsion assistance. Mr. Banks noted that Anchorage implemented regulations in 2016 and it's been revised since slightly defining ebikes similar to the federal government of 750 watt and under electric motor as low speed and if the motor is over 750 watts it is considered high speed with restrictions on where it can be ridden. Low speed ebikes can be ridden anywhere. In Alaska, House Bill 8 was the third try to get legislation passed in Alaska. The first died in committee at the beginning of 2020, then there was a dispute of the language and then the third try it was vetoed by the governor. Mr. Banks noted that Alaska has a one page bicycle laws with things such as riding with no hands is actually illegal.

Mr. Banks stated that he will forward the pdf document to the Clerk for distribution, but as far as he knows there has only been one good study that was done, summary from the Federal Highway Administration. It was noted that the use if E-mountain bikes on the natural surface trails did demonstrate significant difference in soil displacement between ebikes or regular bikes. However, it did depend on the trail and the respect that the rider has towards the trails.

Mr. Banks reported sitting down with the City Manager and Chief Robl a few years ago explaining the situation and the chief was not particularly interested due to the lack of capacity to enforce any regulations, advising that if the Commission was interested in pursuing the management of ebikes they review what Anchorage has in place and discuss with the Chief of Police to see what would be suitable for Homer. He then noted that there were 3-4 ebikes stores in town now and they would need to be able tell their customers where they could legally use their ebikes.

RECONSIDERATION

CONSENT AGENDA

- A. Unapproved meeting minutes for February 15, 2024

Chair Lewis requested a motion and second to approve the Consent Agenda.

MOVED TO APPROVE THE CONSENT AGENDA AS PRESENTED.

There was no discussion.

VOTE: NON-OBJECTION. UNANIMOUS CONSENT.

Motion carried.

STAFF & COUNCIL REPORT/COMMITTEE REPORTS

- A. Recreation Report for March – Mike Illg, Recreation Manager

Chair Lewis introduced the item and deferred to Recreation Manager Illg.

Recreation Manager Illg reviewed his Staff Report for the Commission. He facilitated discussion on the following:

- Hiring Jonathon Raymond as the new Temporary Seasonal person
- Hosting a one day volleyball tournament on April 14th
- High School Student Senior requirements of 40 hours of volunteer service to graduate. He has two lined up for this spring.
- Recreation Software is coming along and still ironing out the bugs
 - Clarification that Kathy Vogel is a year round part time employee
- Native Youth Olympics is not under the Community Recreation, they are on their own
- Informal Community meeting regarding the possible formation of a Friends of Recreation group which Councilmembers Aderhold and Erickson, Mike Miller with Homer Foundation and Andy Haas, local attorney and the response was not super excited but not dead set against it so he is still waiting on some communication on two persons who were interested.
- This will not be a city organization but a separate non-profit group similar to the Friends of the Homer Library.
- Follow-up on location of a recreation center was provided to the attendees
 - o Nothing more has been done and the Champions and Interim City Manager has been reached out to for a discussion on next steps.
 - o Selection of Site, Design, interest and momentum

B. Parks Maintenance Report - Chad Felice, Parks Maintenance Coordinator

Chair Lewis introduced the item by reading of the title and deferred to Maintenance Coordinator Felice

Parks Maintenance Coordinator Felice reviewed his report provided in the packet. He provided information on the following:

- Had a High School Senior who worked 40 hours with him recently
- the Tractor would allow for more trail work and ballfields
- Restroom has been order for Jack Gist and once the restroom is placed a score box will be constructed above the restroom facility
- Scheduling the improvements needed at parks will be conducted and discussions are being conducted with the Superintendent and Public Works Director
- Mariner Park was not included in the assessment and discussion will be held with the Harbormaster

Commissioner Keiser requested that Matt Steffy as Parks and Trails Associate Planner and as such it is important to have reports from him or that he attend to provide information to the Commission.

Mr. Illg reported that since Mr. Steffy is now in the Community Development Department he will bring that request to the Director of that department.

Mr. Felice responded that Public Works Roads grades the parking lot at Mariner Park, the design for Bishops Beach Park is not adopted or funded at this time and since cleaning out the Fire Hall Park it has been used more.

C. Staff Report for March - Mike Illg, Recreation Manager/Staff Liaison

Chair Lewis introduced the item by reading of the title and deferred to Recreation Manager Illg

Mr. Illg reviewed his report and provided additional information on the following:

- Commented on the Ordinance to re-appropriate the funds for the purchase of the tractor and truck and encouraged the Commissioners to attend and comment in support of the ordinance.

Deputy City Clerk Krause provided clarification to the Commission regarding the ability to make a motion in support of the Ordinance 24-17.

PUBLIC HEARING(S)

PENDING BUSINESS

A. Memorandum PARC-24-019 Update & Development of the PARCAC Strategic Plan

Chair Lewis introduced the item and deferred to Deputy City Clerk Krause

Ms. Krause provided information on Ms. Engebretsen and Karin Marks, Chair of the EDC will be attending the next meeting to provide information on conducting a SWOT and the process used by the EDC for the exercise conducted by that commission. She additionally provided Ms. Engebretsen immediate thoughts that a SWOT would be beneficial to have listed on the strategic plan. Ms. Krause continued by reviewing her memorandum pointing out that it was directed by Council to have a strategic plan and goals to keep everyone, advisory bodies and staff in sync and not perform work that is not sanctioned or directed.

Mr. Illg reported bringing the topic of a SWOT up with the former city manager noting that he was supportive of doing one, but concurred what staff has previously stated and the former city manager had suggested putting it has a mid-term goal on the strategic plan.

Chair Lewis suggested the Commissioners review and determine what they like or do not like and recommend at the next meeting or possibly they could schedule a worksession to hash out.

Commissioner Keiser opined that some of the items listed are powerful and complicated, such as developing policies for parks and community recreation programs is one of the short term goals and the Commission is supposed to complete this by the end of 2024. Ms. Keiser continued stating

that she did not feel competent to address some of the items listed without knowing what their strengths, weaknesses, opportunities are about the topics, arguing that they were not simple topics but complex and require research, public input and staff involvement. She stated that she did not care what a previous city manager's direction was, this Commission needs to decide how they are going to respond to City Council to address these topics, expressing that she did not feel capable of doing it thoroughly and comprehensively without going through some kind of assessment process such as a SWOT analysis would provide the Commission.

Discussion ensued on the ability of the Commission to perform the tasks as requested by City Council; time available to the Commission; prioritizing the topics to what is reasonable and ongoing; budget, what is included in that; Council did not direct the Commission to perform a SWOT; Discussions with members of Council on the performance of a SWOT by a Commissioner; acting a body; Council provided direction to the Commission through Resolution 24-019 and further direction is needed; more information on the conducting of a SWOT at the April meeting; Staff and Consulting members for assistance to perform the work; how to bring the questions before the Council by Memorandum to City Council through the City Manager is the preferred method, City Code does allow the Commission to direct it to City Council.

Deputy City Clerk Krause advised that the Commission can make a motion requesting staff to draft a memorandum to Council regarding the SWOT and it can be approved at the April meeting.

Commissioner Keiser volunteered to draft the memorandum to Council to submit to the Clerk to submit to the Council for the next meeting.

Chair Lewis requested a motion for Commissioner Keiser to draft the memorandum.

Commissioner Archibald expressed further concerns on the expediency of completing the items shown in the Resolution.

ARCHIBALD/KEISER MOVED TO HAVE COMMISSIONER KEISER DRAFT A MEMORANDUM TO SUBMIT TO CITY COUNCIL THROUGH THE CITY MANAGER AFTER THE APRIL MEETING.

Commissioner Roedl expressed concerns on where the Commission will start and did not believe a SWOT Analysis will assist his understanding any further expressing concerns on getting this all done and not having the knowledge or experience to do the work required.

Chair Lewis explained that the Commission will hear what the SWOT is from Ms. Engebretsen at the next meeting and if it will help them create their Strategic Plan and Commissioner Keiser will draft the memorandum that they will submit to Council.

VOTE. NON-OBJECTION. UNANIMOUS CONSENT.

Motion carried.

B. Memorandum PARC-24-018 Non-motorized Walkways - Use of e-bikes

Chair Lewis introduced the item noted that he would like to see the information on what Anchorage has in place before the Commission acts on this.

Deputy City Clerk Krause stated she could share the information that Mr. Banks referred to and it was posted to the website for the public and Commissioner Keiser.

Commissioner Roedl inquired if he was the only one that had concerns and noted that Council did not direct the Commission to look into this issue. If the Commission did not support looking into this issue then they could drop it.

Commissioner Keiser commented on the relationship with developing policies and before she left the city the Public Works department was fielding numerous complaints regarding interactions between pedestrians and electric vehicles on trails and expressed that the topic was very relevant.

Commissioners Fair and Williams agreed and expressed their concerns on the increased use, interactions between pedestrians and electric vehicles on trails and sidewalks and supported having a discussion on the topic by the Commission.

Further discussion was conducted on experiences by Commissioners with interactions with electric vehicles on sidewalks and trails, city liability if a pedestrian is hit by a motorized vehicle whether electric or human powered on its sidewalks and trails, enforcement by Homer Police Department.

Chair Lewis requested input from the Commission on what direction to go on this topic.

Student Commissioner Walker departed the meeting at 7:00 p.m.

Commissioner Archibald suggested that they should be proactive instead of reactive and needs to have support from the police department regarding enforcement especially with four stores in the city, recommending that they bring it back to another meeting after getting more information.

Commissioner Roedl recommended getting it right and noted that they are not going to get much done over the summer.

Commissioner Williams expressed that there are many layers and includes the quality of the trails, roads and if they are going to perform a SWOT then this would be a good part that conversation and then echoed the sentiments on not being a bike friendly community, noting that there is so much that the Commission is not aware of.

Mr. Illg noted that there are organizations related to the bike community, it must go before the City Manager and it does need the support of the police department.

Commissioner Keiser suggested that Staff could provide comparable information from a more similar sized community and noted that Staff would be attending the ARPA Conference and maybe able to obtain more information that could be provided to the Commission on the topic.

Commissioner Fair stated that this process was going to be lengthy and the Commission is currently voicing that they desire to see that something gets done to protect bikers and pedestrians. He then read from the Alaska Public Media regarding the governor's veto on House Bill 8, it passed by a bipartisan vote of 57 to 2 and the Governor vetoed it stating that it created un-necessary bureaucracy by regulating a recreational activity.

Chair Lewis suggested bringing this issue back to the May agenda and they can make decisions then after review of information provided by Staff and the Clerk.

NEW BUSINESS

A. Welcome New Commissioner, Jessica Williams

Chair Lewis welcomed Commissioner Williams and noted that all her information was provided in the packet.

B. Memorandum PARC-24-020 Developing and Establishing Parks & Recreation Policies

Chair Lewis introduced the item by reading of the title and deferred to Mr. Illg.

Mr. Illg reviewed his report for the Commission. He referred to the large list of policies regarding Parks and then a separate list for Community Recreation. Mr. Illg requested that the Commission review the extensive list provided so they can begin working on the formal document requested by City Council. He stated that he was trying to be as inclusive as possible and acknowledged that there were some policies and procedures already written or addressed in city code and there are some areas he is missing that should be included referring to pages 45-47 of the packet. Mr. Illg stated that the parks and recreation tree is huge and currently that it did not include aquatics or an ice rink but one thing that was not on the list was inclusive recreation and probably should, but he expressed his appreciation for the Library department as the Library Director recently reviewed and updated their policies and procedures and this provided them with some backup when they had those contentious issues surrounding books.

Parks Maintenance Coordinator Felice was asked to provide input on the Parks listing and he acknowledged that this was the first he looked at the material, and it appeared very vague, and could discuss but admitted more time would be required to fully review the list.

Mr. Illg reported that he spoke with the Clerk on this topic and she noted that they could locate some policies from similar cities and use material from them to create a document tailored for Homer, noting that it did not require creating a document from scratch. In his research so far he has only found Juneau, Soldotna or Seward did not have policies.

Deputy City Clerk Krause noted for the record that the list did contain items that were covered by city code and there were adopted policies and procedures for some items on the list and others Mr. Illg mentioned, such as the Art Policies and Procedures which was updated last year, Animal Control is in code which was totally rewritten a couple of years ago and updated last year. She reported that it would not be as extensive as the Commission expected.

Commissioner Williams questioned what was available now, noting the list is pretty extensive and appears to be a lot to dive into and expressed her surprise that many of these were not already in place, and available and if there were new employees.

Mr. Illg responded that the Community Recreation did have many procedures and policies in place, but not a formally adopted document.

Commissioner Fair informed the Commission regarding the Library Policies and procedures was conducted by Library Director Berry and without him performing the review, editing and presenting the drafts to the Board for review and approval and the same thing was going to have to be done here and was not sure who in staff would be the workhorse to get this done for the Parks and Recreation as its going to be a whopper of a job.

Commissioner Archibald agreed that there were several policies already developed some may need to be reviewed and updated.

Public Works Director Kort stated that under parks on the Memorandum there were several duplicated and in a community that does not accept change well there may be some resistance if this much policy is released at once.

Commissioner Williams reported that the hospital has an entire committee that is dedicated to working on making policies and it can take months to get one through, let alone think of the number on this list and to require it being completed by the end of this year is quite a bit to accomplish.

Commissioner Keiser expressed appreciation to Mr. Illg for putting this list together it really highlights how exhaustive it is but City Council has directed the Commission to develop and somehow we need to address the task, she agreed with Commissioner Williams that it was a heavy lift and there are a lot of items. She questioned what Mr. Illg expected from the Commission tonight.

Mr. Illg explained that due to the amount of work required they may need to communicate with City Council regarding their timelines of the end of the year was unrealistic.

Commissioner Keiser suggested creating a notebook that was tabbed and identify the policies already in place so we know what is needed and suggested the possibility of hiring a temporary consultant to write the policies we do not have.

INFORMATIONAL MATERIALS

A. PARC Annual Calendar 2024

Commissioner Williams volunteered to attend the next Council meeting on Tuesday, March 26, 2024.

Commissioner Keiser asked about the items on the calendar for the April meeting regarding Budget and if not at the next meeting, when.

Mr. Illg reported on the next meeting items that he will be bringing before the Commission regarding budget and reported on the mid-biennium budget process with the former city manager and now with the interim city manager.

Commissioner Keiser reported on the Trail Financial Plan and Road Financial Plan suggesting that it be reviewed for possible carryover projects that need to be addressed.

B. City of Homer Newsletter for March 2024

C. City Manager's Reports

CM Report for City Council Meeting on February 26, 2024

CM Report for City Council Meeting on March 11, 2024

COMMENTS OF THE AUDIENCE

COMMENTS OF THE CITY STAFF

Deputy City Clerk Krause expressed her view that the Commission was making more work than necessary on the development of the Strategic Plan, but acknowledged that it was the Commission's decision and that all she was attempting was to provide guidance and if the Commission did not want to follow it, that was fine. Ms. Krause welcomed Commissioner Williams remarking that they try to have fun at Commission meetings and recognized Dan Kort, Public Works Director, observing that this was his first meeting and the sun is still shining.

Public Works Director Kort expressed his appreciation for the opportunity to attend the meeting tonight and that he was following in some big shoes. Mr. Kort stated that he was trying to get his feet underneath him and he appreciated Commissioner Keiser's input on the information for the budget. He looks forward to working with the Commission in the future.

Parks Maintenance Coordinator Felice commented that he will see everyone next month.

Recreation Manager Illg commented that he had to keep the Chair awake, jokingly, indicating the gavel was actually for his use, as the Chair almost missed allowing him to comment. Mr. Illg welcomed Commissioner Williams and Public Works Director Kort. He expressed appreciation that Commissioner Keiser was able to attend the meetings from so far away, recognizing her input as well as everyone else's is significant. He then encouraged everyone to review page 28 in the meeting packet, and that all the Commissioners attend the Open House Event on the Comprehensive Plan on Thursday, March 28th at Islands and Ocean Visitor Center, noting that the consultant would not be coming to present to the Commission. Mr. Illg stated it was very important, whether the Commissioner was new or really experienced, to attend the public events and provide input on parks and recreation. This will be a map for the future of Homer and it is clear we need to improve parks and recreation as a whole.

COMMENTS OF THE COMMISSION

Commissioner Keiser stated she wanted to emphasize what Recreation Manager Illg reported on the Comprehensive Plan and the importance of being involved in the process, but there is a section in the existing comprehensive plan on public service and facilities, parks and community recreation are mentioned in that section, sadly not much is said but that needs to change. Secondly, she advocated for the Commission to be involved in the process and if what Mr. Illg stated is correct, that Agnew::Beck is not presenting to the Commission, to tell them what they are going to include in the new comprehensive plan about public services and facilities, then the Planning Department should. Thirdly, she did not appreciate being admonished by the city clerk for not following her instructions.

Commissioner Williams commented that she was happy to be here and it was lovely first meeting. She did not realize it was going to be such fun.

Commissioner Archibald commented that Agnew::Beck is expensive, they do plans and he has been working with them for the last two and half months on another project. This was a good meeting. He then commented on the Exxon Valdez 35th Anniversary in Prince William Sound and how it changed many Alaskans for a long time. Mr. Archibald reported that he had a bicycle wheel on his computer and likened the spokes to each one of the Commissioners and staff to a spoke and without the complete wheel, things can go wrong really fast whether it's is each of us as individuals, agencies, people in government with oversight and posed the question of where those present, their bicycle wheel was at? He provided clarification that it was the oil spill and Prince William Sound for the Exxon Valdez, Joseph Hazelwood and his bridge team, a complete breakdown from the Coast Guard to the people, to the shipping companies, to all companies of Alyeska and added that he represents the city on the citizen's advisory board. Mr. Archibald ended by stating it was a good meeting.

Commissioner Roedl commented that it was a good meeting and he will see everyone next month.

Commissioner Fair had nothing additional to add. Mr. Fair responded to the question, if this meeting was his last, that he had one more meeting.

Chair Lewis commented that as usual it was a good meeting and it was nice that the city was able to hire someone to develop their comprehensive plan and the Commission has to develop their own.

ADJOURNMENT

There being no further business to come before the Commission the meeting adjourned at 7:32 p.m. The next regular meeting is Thursday, April 18, 2024, 2024 at 5:30 p.m. Meetings will be conducted at City Hall Cowles Council Chambers located at 491 E. Pioneer Avenue, Homer, Alaska and via Zoom webinar.

RENEE KRAUSE, MMC, DEPUTY CITY CLERK II

Approved: _____