

Session 22-04, a Regular Meeting of the Port and Harbor Advisory Commission was called to order by Chair Crisi Matthews at 5:00 p.m. on April 27, 2022 in the City Hall Cowles Council Chambers located at 491 E. Pioneer Avenue, Homer, Alaska and via Zoom Webinar. Commissioner Bruce Friend was appointed March 29, 2022 to fill the seat vacated by Jeff Erickson.

PRESENT: COMMISSIONERS ZEISET, MATTHEWS, SIEKANIEC, SHAVELSON, ULMER, FRIEND, PITZMAN (arrived at 5:12 p.m.), STUDENT REPRESENTATIVE STONOROV

CONSULTING

MEMBER: MAYOR CASTNER

STAFF: PORT & HARBOR DIRECTOR/HARBORMASTER HAWKINS
DEPUTY CITY CLERK TUSSEY

The Port and Harbor Advisory Commission held a worksession from 4:05 p.m. to 4:57 p.m. prior to the meeting to discuss the Port and Harbor Budget with Port Director Hawkins and Finance Director Walton.

AGENDA APPROVAL

ULMER/ZEISET 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. March 23, 2022 Regular Meeting Minutes

ZEISET/ULMER MOVED TO APPROVE THE MARCH 23RD REGULAR MEETING MINUTES.

There was no discussion.

VOTE: NON-OBJECTION: UNANIMOUS CONSENT.

Motion carried.

VISITORS/PRESENTATIONS

A. Update on Workforce Housing Issue – Julie Engebretsen, Economic Development Manager

Economic Development Manager Engebretsen spoke about the number of other groups, such as City Council and the Economic Development Advisory Commission, who are also talking about the workforce housing issue in Homer, what steps the City is currently taking to address it, and that she expects to come back to the commission later in the process.

In reference to housing out on the Spit, Ms. Engebretsen referred to the City's Comprehensive Plan and the Homer Spit Comprehensive Plan and explained how the plans correlate with the PHC and land use, where the commissioners can find those documents online, and encouraged the commissioners to read them.

Commissioner Pitzman arrived at 5:12 p.m.

Ms. Engebretsen responded to questions and facilitated discussion on the following:

- Zoning code allowances/restrictions for worker housing on the Spit and how any code amendments would need to consider the different kinds of housing uses that are out there.
- The costs and involvement required to update the Spit Comprehensive Plan; it would require a budget line item to pay for doing an update/rewrite of the document.
- What the mission of the workforce housing issue would look like; the City is hoping to hire a special project coordinator with planning skills to look at the policies and development patterns regarding short-term rentals and affordable housing.
- How the commission can initiate a zoning code amendment to allow worker dormitories on the Spit; it could be an agenda item at a future meeting where a memo would be written up addressed to the City Manager.

City Staff and commissioners discussed having this topic as an agenda item at the May meeting. Commissioner Shavelson volunteered to work with Port Director Hawkins to prepare the memo and materials for the commission to review.

STAFF & COUNCIL REPORT/COMMITTEE REPORTS

A. Port & Harbor Staff Report for April 2022

Port Director Hawkins spoke to his staff report, highlighting and answering questions on the following:

- Update on airport leases; how the harbor came to be the lease managers and the new lease with Kenai Aviation
- Attendance at an Alaskan Grant Symposium in Anchorage, hosted by Senator Lisa Murkowski
- How busy the Ice Plant and Fish Dock are, likely due to high prices for halibut
- Electrical issues and power outages all winter on the Spit, its causes, and their effect on the harbor and communities across the bay
- Success of the Winter King Salmon Tournament

B. Port & Harbor Budget/Financial Report

Chair Matthews and Port Director Hawkins spoke to the new budget report and how this will be a new monthly item in their meeting packets.

Commissioner Siekaniec inquired on why there is a waste oil revenue and waste oil expense account. Mr. Hawkins explained how the harbor charges for the disposal of large amounts of waste oil, their costs associated with having the collected waste oil disposed properly, and how local shops can use the used oil for heating in shops, but can't utilize the sludge that builds up due to soap and bilge water that gets mixed into used oil.

C. Homer Marine Trades Association Report

Commissioner Zeiset verbally reported on the HMTA meeting. Hot topic is worker housing and how it's hurting the marine trade businesses. Nomar put in a shower and laundry facility at their business for those workers who live in dry cabins. Other big topic is working with Alaska Vocational Technical Center (AVTEC) to develop training programs that would provide jobs after graduation, including welding and electrical. They are pushing to figure out what we can provide here for students that would eventually join the workforce. HMTA donated scholarship funds is almost at \$5,000 total, all for people in the Homer area to attend local marine courses.

PUBLIC HEARING

PENDING BUSINESS

- A. Homer Spit Parking Plan Discussion
- i. Updated/Revised HDL Parking Study Final Report
 - ii. Current Spit Parking Map

Chair Matthews introduced the agenda item by reading the title and deferred to Port Director Hawkins.

Mr. Hawkins reported on HDL's presentation to City Council at their April 25th meeting. He spoke to the highlights of the presentation, what staff is currently doing, and provided an update on where harbor staff is at with implementing the plan that the commission supported at their March meeting. Staff is still coming up with the budget of what it would take to implement parking between Ramps 3 and 4, e.g. signage, pay kiosks, and any delineation to the lot.

The commission and staff discussed:

- Putting in a request to Alaska Department of Transportation and Public Facilities (ADOT&PF) if we can charge for parking in the Right-of-Way.
- Delays in implementation due to staffing shortages and what harbor functions are deemed essential during this time; commissioners voiced support for higher pay to attract the workers but it's a city-wide issue.
- How parking has only recently been seen as a revenue source to the PHC; up until now it's been primarily about control, and that's how Council still sees it. Consideration for contracting out the parking enforcement.
- Confirmation that harbor staff can still meet the July 1st implementation goal that the commission recommended
- The identified priority areas and emphasis on improving and setting the parking lines/boundaries at the Seafarer's Memorial parking lot
- Clarification that the commission has already made their recommendations so no further action is necessary at this time; staff will continue working on putting the budget plan together and bringing that, plus PHC's March recommendations, to Council for their consideration.

NEW BUSINESS

- A. Annual Review of Strategic Plan & PHC Policies/Bylaws
- i. 2021-2022 PHC Strategic Plan
 - ii. PHC Bylaws - Adopted November 8, 2021

Chair Matthews introduced the agenda item by reading the title and deferred to Deputy City Clerk Tussey.

Ms. Tussey explained how every year at the April meeting the PHC reviews their strategic plan/goals for the upcoming year and their policies, rules, and regulations, i.e. the bylaws. She did not expect much changes to the bylaws since the commission recently updated them last year, but this is their annual opportunity to review them and ask questions or propose any changes.

For the strategic plan and goals, Ms. Tussey shared screen and facilitated discussion on revisions the commissioners would like to see to their goals.

The following amendments were proposed and discussed:

- For Ongoing Goals: move Mid-Term Goal #4 to be #5 Promote and support the new Large Vessel Port Expansion Project.
- For Short Term Goals:
 - Edit #2 to read Continue developing more paid parking on the Spit.
 - Add #5 Promote workforce development and housing on the Spit, specifically to seasonal workers.
 - Add #6 Develop recommendations to hire a Port and Harbor Project Manager.
- For Mid Term Goals:
 - Goal #4 moved to be an ongoing goal
 - Add new #4 Explore a vessel and vehicle traffic study for the Spit to address congestion issues in the harbor.
 - Add #5 Review and provide support on rewriting the Spit Comprehensive Plan.
- For Long Term Goals: add #2 Continue to work on overslope opportunities and leasable properties.

ULMER/SIEKANIEC MOVED TO APPROVE THE AMENDED PORT AND HARBOR ADVISORY COMMISSION STRATEGIC PLAN FOR 2022-2023.

There was no discussion.

VOTE: NON-OBJECTION: UNANIMOUS CONSENT.

Motion carried.

Chair Matthews asked if there were any questions, comments, or proposed changes to the bylaws.

Commissioner Shavelson pointed out a grammatical discrepancy in Article VII, Section 3 and provided his suggested rewording of the section to read “Any rule or resolution of the Commission, whether contained in these Bylaws or otherwise, may be suspended temporarily in connection with business at hand if two-thirds of those present shall so approve.” Ms. Tussey clarified that his suggested changes were simply wordsmithing and not a change to the content itself. She explained how much of the bylaws come directly from Homer City Code or Robert’s Rules of Order so may not read clearly, and that any little corrections such as typos can be done by the Clerk’s Office before the final bylaws are published.

In response to Chair Matthews inquiring if this item needed to be on the agenda again, Ms. Tussey explained that would not be necessary given Commissioner Shavelson’s suggested wording changes and not proposed amendments to the content itself. She further explained the two-meeting steps necessary to amend bylaws before they go to City Council for final approval.

The commission agreed there were no content changes to the bylaws.

INFORMATIONAL MATERIALS

- A. Memo 22-045 Bruce Friend Appointment to PHC Info
- B. Ordinance 22-19(A) Engaging R&M Consultants for Port Infrastructure Development Program (PIDP) Grant Application Assistance for Float Replacement Project
- C. Resolution 22-028 Approving Copper River Seafoods' Amended Property Development Plan
- D. Port & Harbor Monthly Stats for March 2022
- E. Water/Sewer Bills Report
- F. Ice & Crane Report
- G. Dock Activity Report
- H. PHC 2022 Meeting Calendar

Deputy City Clerk Tussey requested feedback from the commission on scheduling an annual review of the Spit Comprehensive Plan on the calendar; the commission agreed to have it at their September regular meeting. After further discussion, commissioners requested to have a paper copy of the plan provided to them.

There was discussion on the next PHC report to City Council, what would be included at the May 9th meeting that the commissioner would need to be able to speak to, potentially having Student Representative Stonorov give a future presentation, and that Commissioner Pitzman would likely provide a written report as he was unsure if he'd be in town to attend the meeting.

COMMENTS OF THE AUDIENCE

Shawn Grimes, Tackle Shop lessee, introduced himself to the commission and shared what he and his wife are looking to accomplish with their business as they reach the 1-year anniversary of owning the Tackle Shop. They are interested in investing into the property further and would like to request a private option to purchase the land that the Tackle Shop boardwalk sits on. The commission unanimously agreed to suspend the rules to allow Mr. Grimes to finish speaking past the three minute limit and to allow the commission to respond. Mayor Castner explained the channels that he would need to take to get the ball rolling, suggesting that Mr. Grimes start with a letter of intent to the City Manager and Port Director along with a sit-down conversation with Mr. Hawkins.

Mako Haggerty, non-resident, commended the commissioners for their work. He voiced his concerns regarding congestion and use of the bottom of ramps for water taxi use. In response to a question from Commissioner Shavelson, Mr. Haggerty shared his experiences/history with the harbor and his opinion on Homer Harbor's growth.

COMMENTS OF THE CITY STAFF

Port Director Hawkins noted that the use of the emergency loading/unloading area at the bottom of Ramp 7 is open to picking up and dropping off, you just can't tie off there.

Deputy City Clerk Tussey welcomed new commissioner Bruce Friend. She reminded the commission that their meetings will be switching over to 6:00 p.m. next month through September.

COMMENTS OF THE COMMISSION

Commissioner Ulmer thanked Commissioner Friend for joining the commission and the audience for their comments.

Commissioner Friend thanked the audience for their public input and opined how the water taxi businesses are an important part of the harbor. He wondered if developing the other side of the harbor for the water taxi offices would be better for them. He thanked everyone and noted it was great to be a part of the group.

Commissioner Shavelson welcomed Commissioner Friend and thanked the members of the public for coming out, City staff for their support, and Mayor Castner for being there and his comments. He commented on the nice additions the commission made to the strategic plan, noting the biggest challenge is following up with them. He looks forward to working with Mr. Hawkins on the housing agenda item they discussed.

Commissioner Siekaniec thanked City staff for their work and Chair Matthews for a good meeting.

Commissioner Zeiset thanked Commissioner Friend for joining and for having another good mind on the commission. He appreciated the public comments and how he enjoys the different perspective.

Student Representative Stonorov thanked Chair Matthews for suggesting she give the PHC report at the City Council meeting; she would be interested in doing that in the future. She welcomed Commissioner Friend and everyone for being there.

Consulting Member Mayor Castner recommended the PHC not just put their money into the reserve account but to spend/use the money and do the things they need to do within the new 2-year budget cycle. The commission needs to build a track record of why they want to use the money; if it's just placed in reserves Council may say that isn't a wise use of the funds. Mr. Castner commented on housing and how he's tempted to put together an ad-hoc committee to work on just the housing issue, both for City employees and the community. He likes Mr. Hawkins' idea of hiring a special project assistant or program manager that's specific to the Port and Harbor. He commented on the water taxi congestion issue and supported Commissioner Friend's suggestion on spreading out the used areas. Mr. Caster voiced his appreciation for the commission and the terrific job they are doing. He encouraged them to continue pressing the point that the harbor is the economic muscle in regards to capacity, what Homer is, taxes, and fees. He then thanked Commissioner Friend for accepting the position.

Chair Matthews thanked everyone for being there and voiced her appreciation for their support. It is paramount for all of them to keep the charge going and energizing them in their roles. She offered to donate an inflatable air dancer to direct the public to where the restrooms are out on the Spit. Chair Matthews noted that they are expecting a very busy summer season with tourists already showing up and the number of buses coming out of Anchorage onto the Kenai Peninsula. Parking is going to be another crisis and all part of what they can do to support Mr. Hawkins and City Staff in parking implementation efforts.

Commissioner Pitzman commented it was a really good meeting and that he opted to participate by Zoom given a slight cold. He thanked everyone for all their work tonight and will talk with them soon.

ADJOURNMENT

There being no further business to come before the Commission, Chair Matthews adjourned the meeting at 7:05 p.m. The next regular meeting is scheduled for Wednesday, May 25, 2022 at 6:00 p.m. All meetings are scheduled to be held in the City Hall Cowles Council Chambers located at 491 E. Pioneer Avenue, Homer, Alaska and via Zoom Webinar.



RACHEL TUSSEY, CMC, DEPUTY CITY CLERK II

Approved: May 25, 2022