Port and Harbor Advisory Commission

Regular Meeting

February 23, 2022

Session 22-02, a Regular Meeting of the Port and Harbor Advisory Commission was called to order by Vice Chair Catherine Ulmer at 5:00 p.m. on February 23, 2022 in the City Hall Cowles Council Chambers located at 491 E. Pioneer Avenue, Homer, Alaska and via Zoom Webinar. Commissioner Zeiset was reappointed for another term. Commissioner Shavelson was appointed to fill the seat vacated by Commissioner Zimmerman, who did not seek reappointment.

Present: Commissioners Zeiset, Matthews, Siekaniec, Shavelson, Ulmer, Erickson, Student Representative Stonorov

Absent: Commissioner Pitman (excused)

Staff: Port Director/Harbormaster Hawkins
      Deputy City Clerk Tussey
      Deputy City Planner & Special Projects Coordinator Engebretsen

The Port and Harbor Advisory Commission met in a worksession from 4:00 p.m. to 4:45 p.m. prior to the meeting, and was facilitated by City Clerk Jacobsen for annual commission training.

Agenda Approval

Matthews/Zeiset moved to approve the agenda.

There was no discussion.


Motion carried.

Public Comments Upon Matters Already on the Agenda

Reconsideration

Approval of Minutes

A. January 26, 2022 Regular Meeting Minutes

Siekaniec/Zeiset moved to approve the minutes of January 26th.

There was no discussion.


Motion carried.

Visitors/Presentations

Staff & Council Report/Committee Reports

A. Port & Harbor Staff Report for February 2022

Port Director Hawkins spoke to and facilitated discussion on his written staff report, highlighting the following topics:
Follow-up actions after the visit by U.S. Senator Lisa Murkowski and U.S. Coast Guard Rear Admiral Nathan Moore.

- Report on the Juneau trip to assist with lobbying projects that benefit the City of Homer.
- Identifying items the PHC can take action on: Imploring the Fuel Dock owner/leasee to be open for fishing vessels that leave before they're open and return after they're already closed.
- Next dredging event; Mr. Hawkins agreed to follow up with the Army Corp of Engineers.
- Efforts to do battery clean-up in the harbor and if it needs to be an agenda item.
- Timeline for public input on the Large Vessel Harbor Expansion project.
- Float improvement project update.
- Updates on the Ice Plant, Fish Dock cranes, and other harbor facilities.

B. Homer Marine Trades Association Report

Commissioner Zieset verbally reported on the marine trade classes that are being taught at the high school and community college, an update on establishing a local welding certification program, and the Anchorage Boat Show that took place last week.

Port Director Hawkins reported on his participation in the boat show on behalf of the City.

PUBLIC HEARING

PENDING BUSINESS

NEW BUSINESS

A. Implementation of the Wayfinding-Streetscape Plan
   i. Streetscape Plan Excerpt
   ii. Wayfinding-Streetscape Sign Types

Vice Chair Ulmer introduced the item by reading the title and deferred to Deputy City Planner and Special Projects Coordinator Engebretsen.

Ms. Engebretsen explained what changes the Economic Development Advisory Commission made to the Wayfinding-Streetscape Plan since PHC last reviewed it, staff's tentative plan for implementing the plan, and how they are looking for input from the commission on what they consider priorities for wayfinding signage on the Spit.

She facilitated discussion with the commission and received the following feedback:

- Ensuring the neighborhood names will match what the Chamber of Commerce uses.
- More signage directing people on the road to parts of the harbor: the restrooms (and whether they're open or closed depending on the season), ramp numbers, and main float letters; post maps for pedestrians.
- Being considerate not to overdo it with signs, and that the ones installed don't create a safety hazard and can withstand the harsher elements.
- Signage types, where they would be used, and how they can be on buildings or built to be moved around; best to use the sign types that will be the most helpful for visitors driving on the Spit rather than walking.
- Potential need for a more detailed wayfinding plan specific for the Homer Spit/harbor.
- Using QR codes for directing people to online sources.
• What the Chamber’s new website includes and how it can be used in lieu of creating another business database that has to be maintained by City staff.
• Harbor staff distributing their informational brochures to local businesses on the Spit to help with walk-in visitors who may not use QR codes.

B. City Code Updates for Special Events & Food Trucks
   i. Special Event HCC Update Draft Memo from City Manager
   ii. Draft Ordinance Amending HCC Re: Special Events
   iii. Event Permit Decision Tree
   iv. Food HCC Update Draft Memo from City Manager
   v. HCC 8.11 Mobile Food Service Draft Amendments

Vice Chair Ulmer introduced the item by reading the title and deferred to Deputy City Planner and Special Projects Coordinator Engebretsen.

Ms. Engebretsen provided an overview of the proposed amendments to City Code regarding special events and food truck permitting in relation to the harbor.

Commissioner Matthews raised concerns that the new code for special event permits would cause undue burdens on local organizations and individuals who plan events that can potentially bring revenue to Homer. She pointed out the code verbiage that allows the City Manager to impose additional costs for City staff time and insurance requirements.

Ms. Engebretsen responded, noting:
• How many of the events used as examples would not be required to get a permit under the new code/process;
• That events that do require a permit, such as ones that impact the Right-of-Ways, are already doing the things outlined in the new code (that has not changed, it’s just been clarified better);
• How the City is trying to be more mindful of what’s happening on our properties. She explained how the potential fees are at the City Manager’s discretion and would only apply to really large events that would cost the City a lot of money in staff time; that will not be the case for many of our community events. Right now we do not have the tools, as a landowner, in place to protect our City parks and facilities from events that could have the potential to damage them with little repercussions.

Deputy City Clerk Tussey reiterated Ms. Engebretsen’s points, how the amendments streamline the special event permitting process, and shared her experiences with processing special event permits during her time as Acting City Manager Assistant.

Commissioner Matthews opined there are some things that need to be clear and cleaned up. She highlighted some events, such as the Peony Festival or firework events, that would now have to budget more due to the costs associated with getting a special event permit. Ms. Engebretsen reiterated that many of those events are already required under the existing code to have permits and submit insurance requirements; that is not changing with the new code amendments and she does not see where event planners will have to pay an extra $1,000. The intent is to have language that says “yes you’re going to do this big thing and you’re going to have to provide some insurance”.

2/25/2022 rt
At Commissioner Matthews’ request for more clarification from someone at City Hall, Ms. Engebretsen suggested a separate meeting where she, staff, and the City Manager can discuss it further. There was discussion on what that meeting would entail and other community events that Commissioner Matthews feels will be affected by the code change.

Student Representative Stonorov left the meeting at 6:04 p.m.

Commissioner Matthews inquired on the proposed food truck code. Her understanding of health department regulations is that food trucks had to remain a set distance away from established restaurants. Ms. Engebretsen explained that City Code has a rule regarding distance but one was not found in Alaska State Statutes. Commissioner Matthews said she would follow up on that requirement.

Commissioner Matthews questioned how the new code applies to Farmer’s Market stands. Ms. Engebretsen explained how those uses fall under different Planning and Zoning rules pertaining to outdoor markets and the need for itinerant merchant licenses, and the rules imposed by the farmer’s market organizers. Ms. Engebretsen also clarified that food trucks used at large events, such as the Food Truck Festival that Commissioner Matthews used in her example, would not be required to get a mobile food permit as they would be covered under the Chamber’s special event permit. She further clarified that events such as the Homer Little Leagues are covered under a Memorandum of Agreement they have with the City to use the park facilities. Commissioner Matthews brought up food trucks in the Right-of-Ways, such as out on the Spit. Ms. Engebretsen noted anyone using the State’s Right-of-Way would need a permit from the State, and how the City cannot charge for the use of it. Commissioner Matthews reiterated her concerns with the vagueness of the code as a person who is trying to build business/economy and as a commissioner.

Commissioner Shavelson shared an observation of his time living in larger cities that had many ice cream and food vendors on bicycles and push-carts. He opined it was reasonably foreseeable to see similar vendors on the Spit and suggested that be considered when determining the definition of mobile food services.

C. PHC Chair/Vice Chair Elections

Vice Chair Ulmer requested a motion to determine how the commission will hold elections.

SHAVELSON/SIEKANIEC MOVED TO THE COMMISSION HOLD OFFICER ELECTIONS BY SHOW OF HANDS.

There was no discussion.

VOTE: NON-OBJECTION: UNANIMOUS CONSENT.

Motion carried.

Vice Chair Ulmer opened the floor for Vice Chair nominations.

Commissioner Siekaniec was nominated; he agreed to accept the position.

With no other nominations called out, Vice Chair Ulmer announced Commissioner Siekaniec as Vice Chair and passed the gavel.

Vice Chair Siekaniec opened the floor for Chair nominations.
Commissioner Zeiset was nominated; he stated he would not like to accept the position if elected. Commissioner Matthews was nominated; she agreed to accept the position.

With no other nominations called out, Vice Chair Siekaniec announced Commissioner Matthews as Chair and passed the gavel on.

INFORMATIONAL MATERIALS

A. Memo 22-017 Mark Zeiset Reappointment & Bob Shavelson Appointment to PHC
B. City of Seldovia Press Release – Seeking Regional Input on Jakolof Bay Dock
C. Port & Harbor Monthly Stats for January 2022
D. Water/Sewer Bills Report
E. Ice & Crane Report
F. Dock Activity Report
G. PHC 2022 Meeting Calendar

Chair Matthews opened the floor for discussion on Informational Materials. Commissioner Zeiset commented he was thankful to be on the PHC for another term. Commissioner Shavelson voiced his appreciation for being appointed and realized he has a steep learning curve.

In response to questions, Port Director Hawkins spoke to the City of Seldovia’s request for regional input on a Jakolof Bay Dock. Discussion ensued on how the commission can request City Manager Dumouchel submit a letter of support for the project.

Staff and the commission discussed the PHC’s calendar. Chair Matthews requested the budget review item be moved to April. Commissioners volunteered to give the PHC report to City Council at the following meetings: Commissioner Zeiset – September and October; Commissioner Siekaniec – May; Commissioner Erickson declined; Commissioner Shavelson – March and December; Commissioner Ulmer – June and July; Chair Matthews – August; Commissioner Pitzman – April.

COMMENTS OF THE AUDIENCE

Doug Van Patten, city resident and harbor user, thanked the commission for all their volunteer work. He commented on the parking issues on the Spit and the need to remove vacant boat trailers and RV’s to make more space. He pointed out that many boat yards stay empty during the summer and opined that by opening up spaces on the Spit by removing those trailers, you’re also helping a marine trades business and making it easier for those folks that utilize Spit parking. He shared information he gathered from his own vehicle counting/observations and from pricing parking costs at other Alaskan harbors; he is not advocating for additional burdens on harbor stall lessees, but that visitors pay part of the burden. He spoke to wayfinding efforts and how other communities don’t always have parking directly at their harbors. Mr. Van Patten offered to volunteer on any working groups or committees that may come up.

COMMENTS OF THE CITY STAFF

Port Director Hawkins confirmed with Commissioner Zeiset the number of Homer Marine Trade Association scholarships that have been awarded. Mr. Hawkins noted the Alaska Association of Harbormasters and Port Administrators also has scholarships out and available. He reviewed his notes on what agenda items he needs to follow up on to bring back for the next meeting.
Deputy City Clerk Tussey thanked everyone for a busy meeting, thanked Commissioner Zeiset for serving another term, and welcomed Commissioner Shavelson. She suggested he reach out to either Mr. Hawkins or herself if he had any questions.

COMMENTS OF THE COMMISSION

Commissioner Zeiset thanked the commission and Chair Matthews for taking the Chair position, and commented it was good to see some new faces.

Commissioner Siekaniec welcomed Commissioner Shavelson and commented he's looking forward to the next meeting.

Commissioner Erickson congratulated Chair Matthews and noted she's a busy lady already and is going to be really busy.

Commissioner Shavelson voiced his appreciation for Chair Matthews serving as Chair. He looks forward to working with everybody, commented on the steep learning curve, and thanked Deputy City Clerk Tussey for the support already given.

Chair Matthews commented this will be the last time we'll see any of our same faces not stressed out over the incoming summer traffic, and that it was a great meeting.

Commissioner Ulmer welcomed Commissioner Shavelson.

ADJOURNMENT

There being no further business to come before the Commission, Chair Matthews adjourned the meeting at 6:41 p.m. The next regular meeting is scheduled for Wednesday, March 23, 2022 at 5:00 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: March 23, 2022