

CALL TO ORDER

Session 24-09 a Regular Meeting of the Economic Development Advisory Commission was called to order by Chair Karin Marks at 6:03 p.m. on March 11, 2025 at the City Hall Cowles Council Chambers located at 491 E. Pioneer Avenue, Homer, Alaska and via Zoom Webinar, and opened with the Pledge of Allegiance.

PRESENT: COMMISSIONERS AREVALO, BROWN, NOOMAH, DICKINSON, MARKS & ZUBEK

ABSENT: COMMISSIONER YOUNG

STAFF: COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT DIRECTOR ENGBRETSSEN & DEPUTY CITY CLERK APPEL

AGENDA APPROVAL

Chair Marks requested a motion and second to approve the agenda as presented.

AREVALO/BROWN 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

Michael Jones, Homer resident, expressed concerns about the plan's focus on climate change and sustainability, suggesting that it might not be inclusive of all community members. He also questioned the city's responsibility in addressing social equity and resilience.

RECONSIDERATION

CONSENT AGENDA

- A. EDC Unapproved Minutes of January 14th, 2025 Regular Meeting

Chair Marks requested a motion and second to approve the meeting minutes.

AREVALO/ZUBEK MOVED TO APPROVE THE JANUARY 14TH MEETING MINUTES.

There was no discussion.

VOTE: NON-OBJECTION: UNANIMOUS CONSENT.

Motion carried.

VISITORS/PRESENTATIONS

STAFF & COUNCIL REPORT/COMMITTEE REPORTS

- A. EDC Staff Report

Community Development Director Engebretsen reported the decommissioning of the Coast Guard Cutter Naushon. She also discussed the City Council's decision to petition for additional liquor licenses.

B. Chamber Director Report

There was no report provided

C. Homer Marine Trades Association Report

Meeting minutes were provided. There was no discussion

D. Kenai Peninsula Economic Development District Report

Chair Marks stated that the quarterly meeting was later in the month and as a result, she would have a full report for the EDC Regular Meeting in April.

E. HERC Update

Community Development Director Engebretsen reported that the City receives technical support services from the state for the HERC building. She said the State of Alaska will have a consultant in Homer in May and will potentially hold an open house to provide more public information.

F. Housing Update

Commissioner Noomah and Chair Marks spoke on the MAP organization and Guiding Growth's final report on March 21st. They also mentioned Guiding Growth was planning on hosting an event on March 25th to go over the changes in City code.

G. Planning Update

Community Development Director Engebretsen spoke on the Comprehensive Plan and how the comment period was about to close. She also mentioned other Advisory Bodies had it in their agendas to discuss the Comprehensive Plan and submit comments to the consultants for review.

PUBLIC HEARING

PENDING BUSINESS

A. Comprehensive Plan

Community Development Director stated she had three main questions for the Commission: Is there anything missing in the comp plan, does the Commission agree with the outlined goals on page 56 of the document, and if there were any big picture ideas or concepts missing or should be more focused?

Commissioner Noomah discussed taxation and developing a more business friendly tax structure. There was discussion about land value taxes with Commissioner Noomah noting that Homer's tax base is primarily sales tax based, with a smaller property tax. He also pointed out that unimproved land is assessed at a lower rate than improved land, which could discourage business development. He suggested that a land value tax could incentivize more efficient use of land and encourage business development, as it would tax all land equally. He mentioned that the current tax environment is a negative for small business owners.

Commissioner Brown expressed concerns about the City's support for South Peninsula Hospital, citing a disconnect between the hospital's priorities and the City's actions. She questioned the City's commitment to the hospital's expansion plans, which had been voted down by the public. She also highlighted a disconnect between the community's desire for minimal government growth and the City's plans for new facilities and services. She suggested that the City needs more time and public input to ensure alignment with community needs.

Chair Marks brought up discussion on the need for a more focused plan for the City of Homer, emphasizing the importance of prioritizing needs over wants. The Commission agreed on the need for a clearer distinction between the City's role and the community's goals, with some community input potentially being placed in an appendix. The Commission also discussed the importance of not wasting staff and Council time on non-essential matters. The consensus was to make the document more user friendly and concise, with still retaining the community input.

NEW BUSINESS

INFORMATIONAL MATERIALS

- A. EDC Annual Calendar 2025
- B. SWOT Analysis
- C. City Manager's Report
 - January 27, 2025 City Council Meeting
 - February 10, 2025 City Council Meeting
 - February 24, 2025 City Council Meeting
 - March 10, 2025 City Council Meeting

Chair Marks noted the informational materials. Commissioner Arevalo volunteered to deliver the March report to City Council.

COMMENTS OF THE AUDIENCE

Michael Jones, city resident, said he appreciated the dialogue and enjoyed watching the Commission work together to navigate the document.

COMMENTS OF THE CITY STAFF

Deputy City Clerk Appel noted the EDC calendar and the deadlines for submitting items for the meeting agendas.

Community Development Director Engebretsen thanked the Commission for being so well prepared for the conversation.

COMMENTS OF THE MAYOR/COUNCIL MEMBER (If Present)

COMMENTS OF THE COMMISSION

Commissioner Dickinson thanked the audience for the comments they brought to the table, as well as Commissioner Noomah and Community Development Director Engebretsen for sharing knowledge and conversation topics.

Commissioner Brown thanked everyone for the discussion in processing the document.

Commissioner Arevalo noted the Homer Soil and Water Conservation District is on a freeze due to the executive order regarding federal funding.

Commissioner Zubek noted the packet availability online and stated she continues to have really great experiences at the Commission meetings.

Commissioner Noomah stated he was excited that the Commission takes things seriously but is comfortable with give and take.

ADJOURNMENT

There being no further business to come before the Commission, Chair Marks adjourned the meeting at 8:22 p.m. The next regular meeting is Tuesday, April 8, 2025 at 6:00 p.m. All meetings are scheduled to be held in the City Hall Cowles Council Chambers and via Zoom Webinar.

ASHLEY APPEL, DEPUTY CITY CLERK I

Approved: _____