

Session 21-23, a Regular Meeting of the Planning Commission was called to order by Chair Scott Smith at 6:31 p.m. on November 3, 2021 at Cowles Council Chambers in City Hall located at 491 E. Pioneer Avenue, Homer, Alaska, and via Zoom Webinar.

PRESENT: COMMISSIONERS BARNWELL, BENTZ, CONLEY, HIGHLAND, SMITH, VENUTI

ABSENT: COMMISSIONER CHIAPPONE (EXCUSED)

STAFF: CITY PLANNER ABBOD
DEPUTY CITY CLERK KRAUSE

APPROVAL OF THE AGENDA

BENTZ/HIGHLAND MOVED TO APPROVE THE AGENDA AS PRESENTED.

There was no discussion.

VOTE: NON OBJECTION: UNANIMOUS CONSENT

Motion carried.

PUBLIC COMMENTS ON ITEMS ALREADY ON THE AGENDA

Karin Marks, Chair, Economic Development Advisory Commission, requested comments from the Commission on the presentation that will be made by Ms. Engebretsen tonight.

RECONSIDERATION

CONSENT AGENDA

- A. Planning Commission Regular Meeting Minutes of October 20, 2021

BENTZ/HIGHLAND MOVED TO APPROVE THE CONSENT AGENDA AS PRESENTED.

There was no discussion.

VOTE: NON OBJECTION: UNANIMOUS CONSENT.

Motion carried.

PRESENTATIONS / VISITORS

- A. City of Homer Wayfinding & Streetscape Project Update from Deputy City Planner & Special Projects Coordinator Julie Engebretsen

Chair Smith introduced the item by reading of the title.

Ms. Engebretsen made a presentation to the Commission regarding the proposed wayfinding and streetscape plan and proposed designs to be used in the plan. Ms. Engebretsen facilitated questions, comments and responded on the following:

- good to see something tangible coming forward after several years

- benches recommended that are more modern in design were not quite as preferred compared to existing benches

- City does not have the labor resources to maintain the wooden benches that are currently used

- relocation of the blue, informational building at the Baycrest pullout is not included in this project

- costs for signage

- Travelers these days are pretty sophisticated and doesn't the Chamber of Commerce provide maps for visitors

- but not everyone uses technology and it is best to have signage to point you in the direction that you want to go.

It is also helpful to know where you can park your car.

There is always a balance between enough signage and not enough signage.

Readability of the signage

Cost estimate will be part of the final presentation from the Consultant. City Council wanted to know what they would be getting before establishing a budget. It was expected to start early part of 2022 by ordering the DOT required signage. Some of the other signage may need to go on private property since there is limited right of way to place the other signage.

ADA Compliance in pedestrian signage

Identifying Neighborhoods as far as Districts during the project

- providing signage to East End Road
 - Neighborhood refers to directing pedestrian traffic

Including Kachemak City in this project

- Took three years to obtain the funding and support for the project

Consistent simplified map

Bridging the commonality of the signage to market to businesses when they apply for their permits

- Is not a requirement
 - Some discussion on including a pattern book that shows the designs and color palette
 - Homer is very eclectic

Chair Smith thanked Ms. Engebretsen for her work and presenting this information to the Commission.

REPORTS

A. Staff Report 21-65, City Planner's Report

City Planner Abboud reviewed his staff report that was included in the packet. He commented further on the following:

- Hazard Mitigation Planning

- Zoning Rural Residential Areas to Urban Residential Areas

- There is interest in this enhancement
 - This change would address non-conformance issues and address new subdivisions
- Getting the new permitting software lined up and ready which will allow the Planning Department to be connected with Public Works, for real time information that can be shared, online payments, future permitting and enforcement issues will be able to be addressed
- Requested volunteers to attend the City Council meeting on November 8, 2021. He then provided guidance on giving the reports to City Council especially those items that may be quasi-judicial.

PUBLIC HEARINGS

- A. Staff Report 21-66, Draft Ordinance 21-xx, Amending Onsite Parking Requirements for Detached One Bedroom or Efficiency Dwelling Units.

City Planner Abboud provided a review of Staff Report 21-66 to the Commission.

There was no applicant.

Chair Smith opened the Public Hearing and having no public present in the audience or attending via Zoom he closed the Public Hearing and opened the floor to questions from the Commission.

There was no questions from the Commission.

VENUTI/BENTZ MOVED TO ADOPT STAFF REPORT 21-66 AND FORWARD DRAFT ORDINANCE TO AMEND PARKING REQUIREMENTS FOR DETACHED ONE BEDROOM AND EFFICIENCY DWELLING UNITS.

There was a brief discussion regarding clarification that by adopting the Staff Report the Commission will be recommending that the draft ordinance be forwarded to City Council for Public Hearing and approval.

Deputy City Clerk Krause confirmed that would be the action needed from the Commission.

VOTE: NON-OBJECTION. UNANIMOUS CONSENT.

Motion carried.

PLAT CONSIDERATION

PENDING BUSINESS

- A. Staff Report 21-52, Use of Shipping Containers

Chair Smith introduced the item by reading of the title and invited City Planner Abboud to provide his report.

City Planner Abboud prefaced the discussion by stating that they are not referencing the previous appeal and anything specific regarding that specific site. This is to be a general discussion on the future use of shipping containers not delving into anything that the Commission might have talked about regarding that previous permit.

City Planner Abboud then facilitated discussion on the future use of shipping containers. Some of the following points discussed were:

Aesthetics

- no specific residential building regulations
- anything goes if it is not financed
- metal rectangles are not as appealing to many communities
- not allowed for use as a dwelling in Anchorage

Safety

Expensive to convert

Alternative to standard building materials

Most issues are solved within building codes, however Homer has no building codes

No rush in using this alternative as a dwelling

Recycling

Possible devaluing property values

Difficulties in wiring and plumbing connexes and making sure they have proper egresses

Toxicity exposure with used connexes

Including it in the Zoning Code and holding public hearings to get input

other popular building materials or dwellings is yurts and how far into the details does the Commission want to go

Ongoing maintenance as property owner ages for a connex dwelling

logistically impossible to ban one type of materials over another and what that language or code would look like and if all the boxes are checked for safety and habitability then it should not be excluded based on material.

Specific areas in the city are allowed to have mobile homes

- Mobile homes in other districts were in place before so are grandfathered in
- Central Business District and Rural Residential allows mobile homes

Designs can be reviewed on some really nice homes constructed out of connexes.

Apply all requirements such as health and safety to all dwellings

Building issues or development within the zoning code leads to development of a building code

Cost of land in Homer does not lend to placing a connex dwelling

Previous act setting a precedent

Current economy and lack of availability may preclude this from being an issue

Examples of connexes and mobile homes that have been totally changed appearance wise on the exterior

Commissioners who are interested in proposing language work with planning staff to develop proposed code for review and discuss at a future meeting.

Cabins installed on top of connexes out on the spit and if these should be regulated in some manner such as limiting the spread.

- This is where we need to adopt a building code to address this issue
- Then we will need a building department

- Not sure how much longer the city can go on without having a building code and department
- Commission can make a recommendation and Planning will then work with Administration and see where it goes
 - Listing of the situations where having a building code would be addressed that is not handled by zoning code
- other neighboring first class cities have building departments
 - Permit fees would fund building permits
 - Inspection of properties/projects
- Planning Department provide a list of situations, process for adoption, enforcement and working with the local professional community
 - date uncertain as to bringing back the information to the Commission on Building Department/Building Code

NEW BUSINESS

- A. Memorandum from City Clerk re: Advisory Bodies 2022 Meeting Schedule

Chair Smith introduced the item by reading of the title.

City Planner Abboud commented on the typical meeting schedule noting the months where the Commission only meets once during those months.

BENTZ/HIGHLAND MOVED TO APPROVE THE RESOLUTION TO ESTABLISH THE 2022 MEETING SCHEDULE AS PRESENTED.

There was no discussion.

VOTE: NON-OBJECTION. UNANIMOUS CONSENT.

Motion carried.

INFORMATIONAL MATERIALS

- A. City Manager's Report for October 25, 2021 City Council Meeting
B. Planning Commission Calendar

COMMENTS OF THE AUDIENCE

COMMENTS OF THE CITY STAFF

City Planner Abboud commented he was actually kind of excited about getting some of these initiatives and topics rolling and noted that while some of it is a little intimidating he felt that he was up for the challenge. Mr. Abboud stated that they got a lot of dots to connect, they kind of look at microcosms and then step back and kind of look at the macro issues that may be a bigger solution or better way to look at things.

Deputy City Clerk Krause commented that it was a good meeting and lots of good information.

COMMENTS OF THE COMMISSION

Commissioner Bentz commented on thinking about the DGGs presentation about coastal bluff hazards and vulnerability and looking forward to having conversation with Commission with the staff from the State. She continued by stating I think a lot like the City Planner said, these different initiatives are kind of coalescing and they're related and connected to a lot of priorities, we have, as far as safety and infrastructure and the general planning for the future program so it is exciting.

Commissioner Barnwell echoed Commissioner Bentz sentiments and further commented on the ability to participate. He expressed appreciation for the presentation by Public Works Director Keiser at the worksession and the discussion by the Commission on the macro side was really good to see. Growing up in Anchorage he did not see that and it's good to see it being done in Homer.

Commissioner Venuti expressed appreciation for the good meeting and looks forward to seeing the storm water planning begin as it has been a long time coming. He also noted that Veteran's Day was coming up and wanted to wish all his friends that were veterans a Happy Veteran's Day.

Commissioner Highland echoed the previous sentiments and wished everyone a Happy Thanksgiving.

Commissioner Conley commented on the very encouraging conversations tonight and it is no mystery that Homer is growing and did not think it was going to slow down anytime soon and will look forward to seeing where it goes.

Chair Smith expressed his appreciation for the City Planner's efforts on the storm water planning and addressing the homelessness issues.

Commissioner Highland questioned the Clerk if they had to call or email every meeting if they plan to attend by Zoom.

Deputy City Clerk Krause responded that for this Commission they can notify her if they plan to attend in person. Since they all attend via Zoom normally, unless she is notified otherwise she will assume they will be attending via Zoom.

ADJOURN

There being no further business before the Commission, the meeting was adjourned at 8:30 p.m. The next Regular Meeting is Wednesday, December 1, 2021 at 6:30 p.m. A worksession is scheduled for 5:30 p.m. All meetings scheduled to be held in the 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: Dec. 1, 2021