

Session 21-10 a Regular Meeting of the Economic Development Advisory Commission was called to order by Chair Karin Marks at 6:00 p.m. on November 9, 2021 at the Cowles Council Chambers, City Hall located at 491 E. Pioneer Avenue, Homer, Alaska and via Zoom Webinar, and opened with the Pledge of Allegiance. Luke Gamble was appointed on November 8, 2021 to fill the vacant seat.

PRESENT: COMMISSIONERS AREVALO, CHEROK, GAMBLE, MARKS, SPEAKMAN

ABSENT: COMMISSIONERS BROWN AND PERSON (both excused)

STAFF: DEPUTY CITY PLANNER ENGBRETSSEN
CITY CLERK JACOBSEN

AGENDA APPROVAL

AREVALO/SPEAKMAN MOVED TO APPROVE THE AGENDA

There was no discussion.

VOTE: NON OBJECTION: UNANIMOUS CONSENT

Motion carried.

PUBLIC COMMENTS ON MATTERS ALREADY ON THE AGENDA (3 minute time limit)

RECONSIDERATION

APPROVAL OF MINUTES

A. October 12, 2021 Regular Meeting Minutes

AREVALO/GAMBLE MOVED TO APPROVE THE MINUTES FROM OCTOBER 12TH.

There was no discussion.

VOTE: NON OBJECTION: UNANIMOUS CONSENT

Motion carried.

VISITORS/PRESENTATIONS

A. Devony Lehner, Independent Living Center – Accessible Homer

Devony Lehner presented to the Commission on Accessible Homer, a website through the Independent Living Center that emphasizes recreation and leisure activities available in Homer for those experiencing disabilities, and provides guidance on the availability of services and adaptive equipment.

STAFF & COUNCIL REPORT/COMMITTEE REPORTS

A. EDC Staff Report

Deputy City Planner Engebretsen noted her staff report that was included in the agenda packet. In addition she reported on the microphone upgrades at in the Council Chambers, the Kenai Peninsula Homeless Coalition working group, and an upcoming presentation from City Planner Abboud on housing, housing supply, and land use. Mrs. Engebretsen noted negotiations are still ongoing with STANTEC on the HERC project, and there should be nearly final a Wayfinding and Streetscape presentation and package at the December meeting.

There was brief discussion regarding funding for the HERC project, and on the Homeless Coalition.

B. Chamber Director Report

Brad Anderson, Homer Chamber of Commerce Executive Director, reported on the recent Chamber Luncheon with Harbormaster Bryan Hawkins and Aaron Fleenor from Northern Enterprises with a focus on the Large Vessel Expansion Plans. They'll be doing a tourism forecast at their January luncheon. There are signs next year will be a very strong tourism season for Homer, based on feedback from local businesses and calls to the Chamber, and currently there are two cruise ships scheduled. He highlighted updates to the Chamber website and reported on upcoming conferences being scheduled in Homer for 2022.

C. Homer Marine Trades Association Report

D. Kenai Peninsula Economic Development District (KPEDD) Report

Chair Marks reported KPEDD's Economic Resiliency Program rollout is coming out soon and that will be beneficial to the work the Commission is doing. She noted the work KPEDD does in providing support letters for projects throughout the Peninsula, videos that are available through KPEDD that businesses are using to help with recruiting, and the Industry Outlook Forum coming up on January 6, 2022 in Kenai. She also addressed KPEDD's work in assisting communities in applying for American Rescue Act Funds and EDA Grants.

PUBLIC HEARING

PENDING BUSINESS

- A. EDC Strategic Plan Update
i. DRAFT 2021-2022 Strategic Plan

Deputy City Planner Engebretsen noted she made the changes the Commission addressed at their last meeting and realized under ongoing goals she may not have captured all the ideas they discussed, but thinks it's ready to be approved so they can start working on the goals.

AREVALO/SPEAKMAN MOVED TO APPROVE THE 2021-2022 STRATEGIC PLAN AS THEY HAVE DEVELOPED IT.

There was no discussion.

VOTE: YES: MARKS, CHEROK, AREVALO, SPEAKMAN, GAMBLE

Motion carried.

- B. EDC Bylaw Amendments
 - i. DRAFT EDC Bylaws
 - ii. Current EDC Bylaws – Adopted September 28, 2020

Chair Marks briefly reviewed some of the amendments to the bylaws.

AREVALO/GAMBLE MOVED TO APPROVE THE BYLAWS AS WE HAVE SEEN IN OUR DRAFT AND HAS BEEN AMENDED OVER THE COURSE OF THE LAST TWO MONTHS AND FORWARD TO CITY COUNCIL FOR APPROVAL.

There was no discussion.

VOTE: YES: MARKS, CHEROK, AREVALO, SPEAKMAN, GAMBLE

Motion carried.

NEW BUSINESS

- A. Recommendation on the Funding Request from AKSBDC
 - i. Alaska Small Business Development Center (AKSBDC) October Presentation

Deputy City Planner Engebretsen commented regarding an email that was circulated regarding the Alaska Small Business Development Center FY22 first quarter report and a copy of their contract with Seward. From a municipal perspective the question is, is this service important enough that the City of Homer and its tax payers should be paying for a University of Alaska employee to provide this service in our town. This came to the City before and the City said no, it needs to be a sustainable program and it's not for us to fund an employee of another organization. That being said it is a great service and it's a recommendation the Commission can make to City Council. She would like them to make a motion for or against funding, and discuss basic ideas. If it's something they support, she'll let Mr. Cochran know and he can provide information to Council.

Chair Marks provided additional information and history on the Small Business Development Center. CARES Act money funded this current temporary half time position and if there isn't support in funding the position here, people will have to go the Kenai/Soldotna office. As the Chamber Director said, there has been a heavy increase of people having interest in small businesses. Having more business support

is good for Homer in creating more jobs, sale tax revenue, and expanding service. She feels it's worthy of recommendation. She shared that the \$25,000 is a portion of the cost, the SBD provides funds and support and the Chamber provides in-kind support, and it might be worth finding other organizations that might be able to help with the funding request.

Commissioner Cherok commented regarding the low cost of a great service. It will allow for better educated and more sustainable small businesses in Homer. There can be a lot of turnaround in small businesses and having a local resource with someone who knows Homer will help keep small businesses successful and grow more of them. That would result in tax revenue and population growth. He feels they should support the funding request.

Commissioner Gamble has had good experience working with Mr. Cochran, he's very knowledgeable. He agrees that the increase in revenues from having this service available in town will more than offset the cost. The Chamber doesn't have it in their budget to do this and they can use all the help they can get in developing businesses in town. It will be a hindrance for a lot of folks trying to start a new business to have to do the meetings over the phone or to drive up the road.

Commissioner Speakman shared about the significance of having someone here locally because a lot of people don't know how to start a business and they get limited information from the Borough and State Business Licensing offices. She thinks this is an inexpensive answer and we'll see the returns on it.

SPEAKMAN/CHEROK MOVED TO SEND A RECOMMENDATION TO CITY COUNCIL ON THE FUNDING REQUEST FOR \$25,000 TO SUPPORT A HALF TIME EMPLOYEE IN HOMER FOR THE SMALL BUSINESS DEVELOPMENT CENTER.

There was no discussion.

VOTE: YES: MARKS, CHEROK, AREVALO, SPEAKMAN, GAMBLE

Motion carried.

Deputy City Planner Engebretsen will put together a short memo of recommendation from the Commission and let Mr. Cochran know so he can prepare information to provide to Council.

B. Annual Report to City Council

Deputy City Planner Engebretsen shared that even though Council hears the Commission's report each month, it's rare to have a group that reports on their annual accomplishments.

GAMBLE/SPEAKMAN MOVED TO APPROVE THE 2021 COMMISSION ACCOMPLISHMENTS LISTED IN DEPUTY CITY PLANNER ENGBRETSSEN'S MEMO AND FOR THEM TO BE FORWARDED TO CITY COUNCIL VIA MEMORANDUM.

It was suggested adding their work and recommendation regarding the Small Business Development Center. Deputy City Planner Engebretsen confirmed she would add it.

VOTE: YES: MARKS, CHEROK, AREVALO, SPEAKMAN, GAMBLE

Motion carried.

- C. EDC Meeting Schedule for 2022
 - i. DRAFT Reso 21-1xx 2022 Meeting Schedule

There was brief discussion regarding the July meeting and whether or not to cancel it.

AREVALO/SPEAKMAN MOVED TO APPROVE 2022 MEETING SCHEDULE AS WRITTEN IN THE RESOLUTION.

There was no discussion.

VOTE: NON OBJECTION: UNANIMOUS CONSENT

Motion carried.

- D. Staff Recommendation for a Consent Agenda
 - i. Consent Agenda Information

Deputy City Planner Engebretsen explained the consent agenda is a tool the Commission can use to help streamline meetings. The consent agenda is made up of regular, non-controversial business, and if there's something a Commissioner wants to discuss, they can remove it from the consent agenda before it's approved.

SPEAKMAN/GAMBLE MOVED TO USE THE CONSENT AGENDA AS PART OF THE MEETING AGENDA FORMAT.

There was no discussion.

VOTE: NON OBJECTION: UNANIMOUS CONSENT

Motion carried.

INFORMATIONAL MATERIALS

- A. City Manager's Report for October 25, 2021
- B. City Manager's Report for November 8, 2021
- C. EDC 2021 Calendar

The Commission discussed upcoming meeting schedules and reports from the Commission.

COMMENTS OF THE AUDIENCE

COMMENTS OF THE CITY STAFF

Deputy City Planner Engebretsen welcomed Commissioner Gamble.

COMMENTS OF THE COMMISSION

Chair Marks welcomed Commissioner Gamble. She commended the current members and those before. We've come a long way with the Economic Development Commission and she thanks them from the bottom of her heart, that they're doing things and showing purpose and value.

Commissioner Arevalo commented the Alaska Farm Bureau is teaming up with Western Sustainable Agriculture Research and Education to have a conference in Anchorage this weekend to help support local agriculture industry broadly. She also announced KBBI will be having a scavenger hunt leading people to local businesses to take selfies and post them to promote local businesses.


Commissioner Speakman commented Small Business Saturday is coming up and encouraged getting out and shopping locally, and early.

Commissioner Gable thanked everyone for welcoming him and he's looking forward to working on the Commission.

Commissioner Cherok welcomed Commissioner Gamble, it was a good meeting tonight.

ADJOURN

There being no further business to come before the Commission Chair Marks adjourned the meeting at 7:47 p.m. Their next regular meeting is Tuesday, December 14, 2021 at 6:00 p.m. All meetings are scheduled to be held in the City Hall Cowles Council Chambers and Zoom webinar.



MELISSA JACOBSEN, MMC, CITY CLERK

Approved: December 14, 2021