

Session 24-23 A Special Meeting of the City Council of Homer, Alaska was called to order on November 12, 2024 by Mayor Rachel Lord at 3:30 p.m. at the City Hall Cowles Council Chambers located at 491 E. Pioneer Avenue, Homer, Alaska, and opened with the Pledge of Allegiance.

**PRESENT:** COUNCILMEMBERS ERICKSON, HANSEN, DAVIS, ADERHOLD, VENUTI

**COUNCIL**

**CANDIDATES:** JONATHAN YOUNG, BRADLEY PARSONS, JANETTE KEISER

**ABSENT:** COUNCIL CANDIDATE BRANDY MCGEE

**STAFF:** CITY MANAGER JACOBSEN  
CITY CLERK KRAUSE  
FINANCE DIRECTOR FISCHER  
COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT DIRECTOR ENGBRETSSEN  
POLICE CHIEF ROBL  
HARBORMASTER CLARKE  
PUBLIC WORKS DIRECTOR KORT  
CHIEF TECHNOLOGY OFFICER JIRSA  
SPECIAL PROJECTS & COMMUNICATIONS COORDINATOR CARROLL  
RECREATION MANAGER ILLG

**CALL TO ORDER, PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE**

Mayor Lord called the meeting to order. She noted that Council Candidate Brandy McGee was unable to attend the meeting due to unavoidable changes in her travel plans but has submitted an additional statement as a laydown for Council consideration.

**AGENDA APPROVAL** (Only those matters on the noticed agenda may be considered, pursuant to City Council's Operating Manual)

Mayor Lord requested a motion and second.

VENUTI/DAVIS MOVED TO APPROVE THE AGENDA.

There was no discussion.

VOTE. NON-OBJECTION. UNANIMOUS CONSENT.

Motion carried.

**PUBLIC COMMENT ON MATTERS ALREADY ON THE AGENDA**

Heath Smith, city resident, expressed comments on the process of filling the vacancy.

**NEW BUSINESS**

- a. Memorandum CC-24-228 from City Clerk re: Selection and Appointment of Councilmember to Fill Vacancy

Mayor Lord reviewed the process and her role to keep the Council on time and on topic.

Jonathon Young introduced himself to Council stating that he has lived in the community since taking advantage of an opportunity to be transferred by his employer to manage a medical practice. Mr. Young provided information on his start in civic matters with the short term rentals and housing shortage meetings and becoming a Commissioner on the Economic Development Commission and submitting his application for appointment to Council. Mr. Young stated that he saw himself being involved in the community for 30 to 40 years.

Bradley Parsons introduced himself and expressed his appreciation for Council's service to the Community. He stated that he cares deeply for this community and relocated here to be with his extended family, they chose a location to set roots down as close to central Homer as possible. He explained his desire to have a walkable, vibrant downtown, affordable housing for young families and to protect the environment acknowledging the need for growth. He would like to represent the voices he has heard in the community attending various events.

City Clerk Krause clarified for applicant Jan Keiser that she was setting the timer for two one-minute time periods since she was unable to set the time for a two-minute period.

Jan Keiser introduced herself and provided her top three issues that Council will be faced in the coming year and if called to serve would do her best to help with: Comprehensive Plan re-write and code update and the need to make sure that the comprehensive plan embodies community values while ensuring the code is an effective tool for implementing and enforcing those values; Revenues are declining, but every department has wish lists of needs and wants and the Council will need to prioritize those needs and wants, and there could be some difficult conversations and the last was civil discourse, believing in the power of local government to make that community a better place, they put differences aside long enough to come together to have those difficult conversations to reach common ground.

Mayor Lord noted that each Council member will ask one question and each applicant will have one minute to respond. They will start with Mr. Young first and then rotate through each applicant being first on successive questions.

Councilmember Hansen asked: If selected to be on Council, how will you approach difficult decisions when there's a difference of opinion within our community, and often our Council?

Mr. Young responded that he would make sure the party is being heard and understands the argument, make a plan, and when making the decision, be able to have data to back up any decisions, not make emotional decisions. When making those decisions he would have the data and they could understand why those decisions were made.

Mr. Parsons responded that there have been recent controversial issues in the community, the proposed Doyon project, addressing and approaching growth with part of the community expressing they did not want growth, but noting that it was needed and they need to do it environmentally smart because its happening with cars just driving through Homer.

Ms. Keiser stated she agreed with Mr. Young's response, listening to one's concerns is crucial and essential as is understanding the rule of law. She provided examples of working with the public and explaining what was allowed to be done, and pointing them in the right direction if they wanted to make changes.

Councilmember Venuti asked: Do you think Pioneer Avenue is healthy and successful? If not, what can the Council do to help them and change that?

Mr. Parsons responded that it was healthy, moved vehicles at a moderate pace and provides for some walkability. He continued stating that public parking lots are needed to encourage a more walkability as well as finding a solution to deal with the large trucks that travel up and down Pioneer kicking up dust and noise.

Ms. Keiser responded that it would determine what the definition of success was, if it was moving traffic with modest pedestrian haven then yes it was successful, but when Pioneer Avenue was constructed pedestrian safety was not considered. She then referred to the Transportation plans that were developed, and the desire to increase walkability, noting the need to develop a vibrant commercial area by implementing policy and capital planning.

Mr. Young responded that in his opinion Pioneer was doing better but improvement was needed as a commercial center, noting most of the businesses were non-profits, questioning where there was space for development of economic growth. Mr. Young stated that they need to make sure the update to city code addressed these concerns so businesses can develop strong roots.

Councilmember Aderhold asked: Tax revenues for fiscal year 2024 that ended on June 30th were below what was projected, and we are possibly entering a period of lower revenues. In addition to funding basic government services, we have many capital needs and wants. What are your thoughts on how council prioritizes spending as we work on the fiscal year 2027, 2028 budget?

Ms. Keiser responded that basic services and needs such as water, sewer, plow service and public safety need to be covered, noted that everyone wanted a lively library, community recreation programs, a new recreation center noting that Council will be developing the FY2026-2027 budget and will have to focus on next year is really understanding, drilling down into what Council needs to make sure the city functions effectively, and that will become your budget priority.

Mr. Young agreed with Ms. Keiser statement and added that it was Council's fiduciary responsibility to manage the budgets, reviewing basic core city services, and emergency services first, then expanding to the outer edges of those circles like a Rec center, or beautification of a community all the while keeping in view the projects during the period of tightening resources.

Mr. Parsons responded that he agreed with the other responses noting that decisions made on the remaining funds should be considered with what the community desires, while keeping an eye on the future, noting that there is limited ways to increase the tax base and one those is increasing the population and planning for affordable housing for young families to invest in the future and develop that tax base.

Councilmember Erickson asked: Can you objectively look at the broader city issues and separate your biases to build consensus?

Mr. Young responded that he did not have any preplanned direction he wanted to address if appointed to Council but wanted to address the issues and or problems that are brought forward provide the data that Council can use to make the best decision for the community as a whole. He declared being a team player and not a single sports participant.

Mr. Parsons responded that he did not have an agenda or to push his perspective on the community, he wanted to advocate for the community and advocate for them. Council has heard from him speaking on behalf of various issues He assured Council that he can and will step back, take time to listen to all of the arguments, or agreements, and options, to find one that fits the most needs for the most amount of people. He stated that he conducts himself at work and with family in that manner. He is more reflective and believed that is the person he would be working for with the Council for the community.

Ms. Keiser responded stating her initial aspirations and intent being appointed to the parks and Recreation Commission and quickly learned from the other Commissioners, the public and staff that there was policies and processes on how things were to be done. She reported learning how to work effectively in the new role as a commissioner and imagined that the process would be similar but a step above on Council, noting its about listening and understanding points of view to reach consensus.

Councilmember Davis asked: So how do you feel about restricting and controlling what people in homework can do with their own properties? He prefaced the question with information regarding living outside city limits versus inside city limits and decisions made for the common good.

Mr. Parsons responded that care was needed when dealing with our neighbors, and we need to build some code that protects those, the livability around it. What's wonderful about Alaska is that if you don't want to have city codes or building codes, or any of that you don't have to move very far out of town to find that

b. Swearing in of newly appointed Councilmember

City Clerk Krause swore in newly appointed Councilmember Parsons.

#### **COMMENTS OF THE AUDIENCE**

#### **ADJOURNMENT**

Mayor Lord noting that she will call for Public Comment at the beginning of the committee of the Whole Meeting at 5:00 p.m. citing that she wanted to keep all meetings on schedule and adjourned the meeting at 4:51 p.m. All meetings scheduled to be held in the City Hall Cowles Council Chambers located at 491 E. Pioneer Avenue, Homer, Alaska.

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RENEE KRAUSE, MMC, CITY CLERK

APPROVED: \_\_\_\_\_