

Session 21-02 a Regular Meeting of the Economic Development Advisory Commission was called to order by Chair Karin Marks at 6:00 p.m. on February 9, 2021 at the Cowles Council Chambers, City Hall located at 491 E. Pioneer Avenue, Homer, Alaska via Zoom Webinar, and opened with the Pledge of Allegiance.

PRESENT: COMMISSIONERS MARKS, BROWN, RICHARDSON, AREVALO, SPEAKMAN, CHEROK
(arrived 6:04 p.m.)

ABSENT: COMMISSIONER JOHNSON

STAFF: DEPUTY CITY PLANNER ENGBRETSSEN
DEPUTY CITY CLERK TUSSEY

AGENDA APPROVAL

Chair Marks called for a motion to approve the agenda.

BROWN/RICHARDSON MOVED TO APPROVE THE AGENDA.

There was no discussion.

VOTE: NON OBJECTION: UNANIMOUS CONSENT.

Motion carried.

PUBLIC COMMENTS UPON MATTERS ALREADY ON THE AGENDA

RECONSIDERATION

APPROVAL OF MINUTES

A. January 12, 2021 Regular Meeting Minutes

Chair Marks called for a motion to approve the last meeting minutes.

AREVALO/RICHARDSON MOVED TO APPROVE THE MEETING MINUTES.

Commissioner Arevalo noted under Pending Business Item A. COVID Business Survey, all references to PPE should be amended to PPP. Ms. Arevalo also noted under New Business Item B. Main Street Sidewalk Project, the comments made by Chair Marks should reflect that the sidewalk was not meant to go on the west and east side as that was not what Public Works was proposing. Deputy City Clerk Tussey responded that Ms. Marks did make those comments, and that the motion reflected in the meeting minutes was still applicable to the commission's intent. It was requested that a footnote be added to clarify the intent of Ms. Marks' comments.

VOTE: NON OBJECTION: UNANIMOUS CONSENT.

Motion carried.

VISITORS/PRESENTATIONS

A. Tim Dillon, KPEDD Executive Director – 5-year Comprehensive Economic Development Strategy

Chair Marks introduced Tim Dillon, Kenai Peninsula Economic Development District (KPEDD) Executive Director.

Mr. Dillon gave a presentation on KPEDD, highlighting the following:

- What is KPEDD and their purpose
- Purpose of developing a Comprehensive Economic Development Strategy (CEDS)
- KPEDD’s CEDS planning and outreach efforts on the Kenai Peninsula from major industries and business groups
- How KPEDD conducts their presentations and engagement with communities
- What a SWOT Analysis is (Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities, Threats) and what types of items are identified in those areas
- The five overarching CEDS goals
- Their expected timeline of completion for the CEDS
- When having a CEDS has made a difference; efforts to invest in broadband infrastructure, identifying it as a universal priority, and other existing challenges on the Kenai Peninsula
- What City of Homer’s top five State requests are and what the EDC can do to help in this process

The commission and Deputy City Planner Engebretsen directed questions to Mr. Dillon, seeking clarification on points made during his presentation and how the EDC can help KPEDD during the outreach process. Chair Marks requested the slides be shared with commissioners wishing to have a copy.

STAFF & COUNCIL REPORT/COMMITTEE REPORTS

A. EDC Staff Report for February 2021

Deputy City Planner Engebretsen asked if the commission had any questions regarding her written report. She added that staff plans to have Public Works Director Keiser be a quarterly visitor to present updates on projects relevant to EDC.

B. Chamber Director Report

Chamber Director Brad Anderson was not in attendance.

C. Homer Marine Trades Association Report
i. HMTA Regular Meeting Minutes January 6, 2021

Chair Marks noted the HMTA minutes in the packet.

D. Pioneer Avenue Task Force Report

Chair Marks reported that with all the Chamber's Winter Carnival Festival planning, the task force's February meeting to work on the peony celebrations was postponed to March. She encouraged anyone who wishes to participate in the Peony Celebration Task Force to contact the Chamber of Commerce.

E. Kenai Peninsula Economic Development District Report

Chair Marks noted there was no KPEDD report.

PUBLIC HEARINGS

PENDING BUSINESS

A. COVID Business Survey

- i. Forbes Article "Nine Ways Local Governments Can Support Small Business Success During A Pandemic"

Chair Marks introduced the item by reading the title and opened the floor for discussion on if there was further action the EDC could take or help with regarding common problems businesses are experiencing. She commented that when she gave the last City Council report on this subject, they were interested but did not have any additional feedback.

Commissioner Richardson provided an update on his efforts in resolving the substitute teacher issue. He reported that he has not made much progress given it's a very complicated situation and difficult to reach from the City into the school district and motivate change. Everyone has so much on their plate and do not have as much spare time.

Chair Marks asked the commission if they felt there was anything the EDC could do at this point, ways to help businesses, or have they gone as far as they can go? Commissioner Richardson opined the EDC has gone as far as they can with the survey. He felt the achievement they made may not have been what they intended, but they have increased communication between businesses and the City. He sees that as a big accomplishment.

Chair Marks referenced the Forbes article provided in the packet and commented on how it ties into KPEDD's efforts and her desire to see a new and improved City website. She sees the website as outdated and in need of revamping.

Commissioner Arevalo shared a concept she would like to explore with staff in creating a curated package of online-based support systems that that help businesses get more digital, and if there was some financing available through the City to assist with that. Deputy City Planner Engebretsen recommended they discuss the concept in greater detail outside of the meeting. In response to comments and suggestions to revamp the City's website, Ms. Engebretsen commented that she can

assist with updating the EDC's page, including relevant resources and links, but a complete revamp of the City's website is unlikely and very far on the horizon. There was brief discussion on what existing links and resources could be added to the EDC page.

Mr. Richardson commented on the Forbes article, and how making big changes may not happen until sometime after the pandemic once businesses have returned to some level of normalcy. Discussion ensued on examples of businesses who already made the shift to an online presence because of the pandemic, the increase in buy-local campaigns, how informational projects take a lot of work to break through a person's everyday life, Ms. Arevalo's curated package concept to better help businesses get online, and different resources that are already available for businesses through other organizations such as the Chamber.

Ms. Engebretsen and the commission discussed having this topic be on the March agenda to see if there is any part of this subject that the EDC can do. In response to questions, Deputy City Clerk Tussey explained how the Open Meetings Act restricts commissioners to work through their staff person on tasks instead of together outside of meetings.

Commissioner Speakman responded to Ms. Engebretsen's inquiry on tech grants being offered by Kenai Peninsula Foundation to assist businesses with their online presence. She also noted that many of the online tools Ms. Arevalo was suggesting are available through Small Business BC. During discussion on making sure these resources are more available to business owners, it was pointed out that many of these resources are also available on websites for the Chamber of Commerce, University of Alaska, KPEDD, and the City of Homer's Economic Development page.

Chair Marks requested this topic be on the next agenda.

B. Comprehensive Economic Development Strategy (CEDS) Update

Chair Marks introduced the item by reading the title and noted the next steps are to identify ways the EDC can assist KPEDD over the next 30 and 60 days, and assign/volunteer for EDC tasks and report back for March meeting.

Deputy City Planner Engebretsen explained that once they get the informational flier from KPEDD it will help with online and in-person outreach. It sounds like KPEDD has media outreach pretty well covered but she was open to comments from the commission.

Chair Marks voiced her interest in knowing which groups/organizations would be beneficial to have a KPEDD presentation at. She commented that having more info provided towards KPEDD's CEDS will later result in more info for the EDC to pull from when determining their next steps. She also noted how having the flier would help when speaking to businesses.

C. Community Design Manual Update

- i. Memo PL 21-01 to Planning Commission Re: Draft Community Design Manual
- ii. DRAFT Chapter 2 Site Design
- iii. DRAFT Chapter 3 Outdoor Lighting

Chair Marks introduced the item by reading the title and deferred to Deputy City Planner Engebretsen.

Ms. Engebretsen provided an update on the community design manual and the revisions being made by the Planning Department and Planning Commission.

Chair Marks inquired on if there was anything being done with grandfathering or if it was automatically included. Ms. Engebretsen explained that they try to apply the manual in a fair way. If you're not putting new siding onto your building then they're not going to require you meet that part of the design manual. If something needs to be contested then it would be done through the appeal process.

NEW BUSINESS

INFORMATIONAL MATERIALS

- A. City Manager's Report for January 25, 2021
- B. City Manager's Report for February 8, 2021
- C. Memo from City Clerk to City Advisory Bodies Re: Reports to Council
- D. EDC 2021 Calendar

Chair Marks noted the informational materials provided, pointing out the change in EDC reports to City Council. She encouraged commissioners to give that report; Ms. Marks agreed to attend the February 22nd meeting.

COMMENTS OF THE AUDIENCE

COMMENTS OF CITY STAFF

Deputy City Clerk Tussey noted the changes in City Council reporting, and that Chair Marks had already covered that.

Deputy City Planner Engebretsen thanked everyone for a great meeting.

COMMENTS OF THE COUNCILMEMBER

COMMENTS OF THE CHAIR

Chair Marks thanked everyone for being present. She opined they're making themselves more educated, and looks forward to when the EDC has a revised CEDS to work from.

COMMENTS OF THE COMMISSION

Commissioner Speakman shared that in her official capacity she is Executive Director for Kenai Peninsula Tourism Marketing Council and are dealing with another poor year due to cruise ships not coming into port. For Homer, there is one scheduled from Gulf Asia that plans to stop but they don't

know what the CDC guidelines will be at that time. The past year they have been working with CDC and the Canadian Government on travel policies, which impacted Homer tourism through limiting bus and individual travels. She noted while it was a lot of bad news this week, Alaskans did come through last year, vaccines are being rolled out, and they foresee this summer being another year of the Alaskan. There was brief discussion on small craft cruises.

Commissioners Arevalo, Brown, Richardson, and Cherok had no further comments.

ADJOURN

There being no further business to come before the Commission, Chair Marks adjourned the meeting at 7:37 p.m. The next Regular Meeting is Tuesday, March 9, 2021 at 6:00 p.m. All meetings scheduled to be held via Zoom Webinar in the City Hall Cowles Council Chambers located at 491 E. Pioneer Avenue, Homer, Alaska.



RACHEL TUSSEY, CMC, DEPUTY CITY CLERK I

Approved: March 9, 2021