

Session 21-05 a Regular Meeting of the Economic Development Advisory Commission was called to order by Chair Karin Marks at 6:00 p.m. on May 11, 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. One seat remains vacant.

**PRESENT:** COMMISSIONERS MARKS, BROWN, CHEROK, PERSON, AND AREVALO (Ms. Arevalo was present 6:06 to 6:33 p.m.)

**ABSENT:** COMMISSIONER SPEAKMAN (unexcused)

**STAFF:** DEPUTY CITY PLANNER ENGBRETSSEN  
DEPUTY CITY CLERK TUSSEY

**AGENDA APPROVAL**

Chair Marks called for a motion to approve the agenda.

BROWN/PERSON 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. April 13, 2021 Regular Meeting Minutes

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

BROWN/PERSON MOVED TO APPROVE THE MINUTES.

There was no discussion.

VOTE: NON OBJECTION: UNANIMOUS CONSENT.

Motion carried.

**VISITORS/PRESENTATIONS**

A. Peter Briggs, Corvus Design – Wayfinding-Streetscape Plan Project Introduction

Chair Marks introduced Peter Briggs from Corvus Designs to give his Wayfinding-Streetscape Plan project introduction.

Commissioner Arevalo arrived at 6:06 p.m.

Mr. Briggs introduced himself and provided his goals for tonight's meeting and what information he is looking for from the commissioners. He facilitated discussion with the commission, gathering their personal thoughts on what key component and/or vision they consider important to the project and what would they consider important to accomplish by the end of the project to consider it a success. During discussions, primary concepts shared by the commissioners included:

- Getting around town, and that keystone signage ensures that downtown doesn't get bypassed
- Walkability; how boardwalks make trails enticing
- Having a design that enhances Homer's beauty and does not distract from it; it should contribute to the "Homer" character
- Incorporating public arts into the improvement projects
- Support for doing the improvements in phases; awareness for money constraints

There was discussion about commissioners sharing photos of Homer with Mr. Briggs through a file share program to better assist Corvus with design brainstorming. Chair Marks thanked Mr. Briggs for attending.

Commissioner Arevalo left the meeting at 6:33 p.m.

**STAFF & COUNCIL REPORT/COMMITTEE REPORTS**

A. EDC Staff Report

Deputy City Planner Engebretsen spoke to her written report, highlighting upcoming events such as the Alaska Shellfish and Seaweed Festival, and announced that she will be out of the office next week and then working remotely for the two weeks after. She noted the topics she feels the EDC can revisit at a later meeting.

B. Chamber Director Report

Brad Anderson provided a verbal report, noting they are expecting a fairly strong tourist recovery this summer, with reports coming in of more international travelers making bookings. The Chamber has been busy with the following upcoming events and projects:

- Halibut Tournament on June 4<sup>th</sup> and 5<sup>th</sup>
- Food Festival from June 13 – 20<sup>th</sup>
- 4<sup>th</sup> of July Parade; theme this year is "Whatever Floats Your Boat", celebrating the marine trades industry
- Peony Celebration from July 9<sup>th</sup> – 24<sup>th</sup>
- World Arts Festival in September

- Recently completed a State grant application to help support organizations such as the Chamber with marketing, branding Homer, and boosting the tourism industry.
- Revamping the Halibut Derby Shack on the Spit into a Visitor Center.
- Interest in coordinating on the Wayfinding-Streetscape project to ensure consistency in the branding of Homer.
- Website makeover is launching in August.
- Discussion on Town Clean-Up Month and the activity level from the community; bags are available at the Chamber for any groups interested in picking them up. There was a change in how the program operates; now a month-long event and any trash collected must be brought to the Homer Transfer Facility directly.

C. Homer Marine Trades Association Report

Chair Marks noted the HMTA minutes in the packet.

D. Kenai Peninsula Economic Development District Report

Chair Marks commented that this report will be discussed under Pending Business.

**PUBLIC HEARINGS**

**PENDING BUSINESS**

- A. Comprehensive Economic Development Strategy (CEDS) Update
- i. DRAFT Kenai Peninsula Economic Development District (KPEDD) CEDS (*laydown*)

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

Ms. Engebretsen said that Kenai Peninsula Economic Development District (KPEDD) has the draft Comprehensive Economic Development Strategy (CEDS), but has not been publicly published so no laydown was available. She suggested the EDC hold a worksession in the upcoming weeks to review the draft CEDS in detail.

Discussion ensued between staff and commissioners on scheduling a Worksession. The commission agreed to hold a Worksession via Zoom on Tuesday, May 25, 2021 at 7:00 p.m.

**NEW BUSINESS**

- A. Proposed 5-Year Capital Improvement Plan (CIP) for Public Works
- i. DRAFT Public Works 5-Year CIP

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

Ms. Engebretsen spoke to Public Works Director Keiser's memo and proposed 5-Year Capital Improvement Plan (CIP) for Public Works. She commented that it's exciting to have this kind of longer-term plan for these kind of projects. She explained how documents like this helps the City plan better and shows the public what we're trying to accomplish, what the costs are, what funds are paying for it if money has already been allocated by City Council, and the estimated timeline for completion.

Commissioner Person clarified with Ms. Engebretsen the difference between this Public Works-specific CIP list and the City's larger CIP that assists with acquiring federal and grant funding. Ms. Person inquired on the prioritization of certain projects, and if some areas of concern are being addressed such as pedestrian safety on Main Street. Ms. Engebretsen spoke to budgeting constraints and encouraged commissioners direct their comments and/or suggestions to Public Works Director Keiser.

Commissioner Brown requested that Jack Gist be identified in the CIP and for it to not be neglected. She noted some of the improvements that are needed to the park. Ms. Engebretsen agreed to share those comments with Ms. Keiser and spoke to recent improvements that are happening to that area, including the installation of electricity from a nearby subdivision that's going in. Commissioners discussed their support for improvements to Jack Gist.

Ms. Person inquired why funding was included in the HERC Strategic Plan if the recommendation from the previous HERC Task Force was to demolish the building. Ms. Engebretsen agreed to bring more information on that subject back to the commission.

Chair Marks voiced her appreciation to see wayfinding and streetscape funding in the CIP. In response to Chair Marks' questions, Ms. Engebretsen clarified that additional grant funding may be available but there is no magic bullet of funds that will pay for everything, and that Corvus Designs is aware of the City's request to notify us if any funding opportunities are available.

Ms. Person suggested the 5-Year Capital Improvement Plan (CIP) for Public Works be called something different than the CIP so that it's clear it's an internal document and different from the larger, external funding City-wide CIP.

Chair Marks asked for a motion to support the plan.

PERSON/CHEROK MOVED TO RECOMMEND ADOPTION OF PUBLIC WORKS CAPITAL IMPROVEMENT AND MAINTENANCE PLAN TO THE CITY COUNCIL.

Chair Marks commented that this plan is very favorable, and allows people to look at the deliverables. She hopes that this could be the beginning of a trend and that the City does more of these kind of plans for other City projects.

At the request of commissioners, Deputy City Clerk Tussey clarified the definition for CARMA: Capital Asset Repair and Maintenance Allowance fund.

VOTE: YES: MARKS, PERSON, BROWN, CHEROK

Motion carried.

B. Wayfinding-Streetscape Plan Project Update

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

Ms. Engebretsen gave an update on the Wayfinding-Streetscape Plan project. She has started working with Corvus Designs on setting dates for a series of events and coming up with public outreach ideas for a “Discovery Week”, to take place in June. Outreach concepts that Corvus has been proposing include pop-up events at key sites, meetings with parks staff and other advisory body members, creating a website, and holding virtual forums. She is hoping by next meeting to have more set dates to share with the commission.

Chair Marks thanked Ms. Engebretsen for suggesting to have separate West Pioneer and East Pioneer events, and looks forward to having those event dates at their next meeting.

C. Annual Review of the City of Homer’s Comprehensive Plan

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

Ms. Engebretsen shared her computer screen to provide an online walk-thru of the current City of Homer Comprehensive Plan. She reviewed the plan chapter-by-chapter with the EDC to help familiarize them with City’s facilities and services, long-term economic development plans, and ways that the Wayfinding-Streetscape Plan will help us accomplish community goals.

The commission discussed how EDC should be pulling ideas from Chapter 7 of the Comprehensive Plan for the commission to work on over the course of the following year. Chair Marks suggested they decide what project they could work on next at their June meeting, to begin work at their August meeting since they don’t expect to have a regular meeting in July. Ms. Engebretsen noted that other advisory bodies have their own strategic plans and that it’s possible to share more dialogue among the various groups, so staff can bring it all together for City Council’s consideration.

**INFORMATIONAL MATERIALS**

- A. City Manager’s Report for April 26, 2021
- B. City Manager’s Report for May 10, 2021
- C. EDC 2021 Calendar

Chair Marks noted the informational materials and facilitated discussion on cancelling the EDC’s July 13<sup>th</sup> regular meeting. Deputy City Clerk Tussey spoke to the City Council report schedule; Commissioner Person agreed to give the EDC report at the May 24<sup>th</sup> Council meeting. Chair Marks commented that it would be great to have different commissioners attend the meetings.

**COMMENTS OF THE AUDIENCE**

**COMMENTS OF CITY STAFF**

Deputy City Clerk Tussey commented that an appointment application for the EDC was received yesterday, and if their application is approved by the Mayor and City Council, they could have their seventh member appointed by May 24<sup>th</sup>.

Deputy City Planner Engebretsen voiced her excitement for working with Corvus Designs and moving forward with the Wayfinding-Streetscape Plan project. She also noted that she appreciated the commissioners' positive feedback and comments on the signage in town.

**COMMENTS OF THE COUNCILMEMBER**

**COMMENTS OF THE CHAIR**

Chair Marks provided a follow-up response to a question Commission Arevalo had previously asked at their last meeting concerning participation levels to the KPEDD survey. She noted that Homer's participation consisted of over 50% of the survey's responses. She commended their outreach efforts and how it likely played a role in the high turnout.

**COMMENTS OF THE COMMISSION**

Commissioner Person commented that it was good to hear the Chamber's report, and hopes they continue to direct efforts towards the Town Clean-up event as she feels they're a galvanizing event for our community. She voiced her excitement for a potentially new commissioner and the upcoming work the EDC has planned.

Commissioners Brown and Cherok had no further comments.

**ADJOURN**

There being no further business to come before the Commission, Chair Marks adjourned the meeting at 7:41 p.m. The next Regular Meeting is Tuesday, June 8, 2021 at 6:00 p.m. A Worksession is scheduled for Tuesday, May 25, 2021 at 7:00 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.

  
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RACHEL TUSSEY, CMC, DEPUTY CITY CLERK I

Approved: June 8, 2021