

Session 22-04 a Regular Meeting of the Economic Development Advisory Commission was called to order by Vice Chair Adele Person at 6:07 p.m. on April 12, 2022 at the Cowles Council Chambers, City Hall located at 491 E. Pioneer Avenue, Homer, Alaska and via Zoom Webinar.

PRESENT: COMMISSIONERS SPEAKMAN, GAMBLE, AREVALO, CHEROK, PERSON, BROWN, MARKS (arrived at 6:11 p.m.) AND STUDENT REPRESENTATIVE PEARSON

STAFF: ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT MANAGER ENGBRETSSEN
DEPUTY CITY CLERK TUSSEY

The Economic Development Advisory Commission met in a worksession from 5:08 p.m. to 5:43 p.m. prior to the meeting for annual commission training facilitated by City Clerk Jacobsen.

AGENDA APPROVAL

AREVALO/GAMBLE MOVED TO APPROVE THE AGENDA.

There was no discussion.

VOTE: NON OBJECTION: UNANIMOUS CONSENT.

Motion carried.

PUBLIC COMMENTS ON MATTERS ALREADY ON THE AGENDA

RECONSIDERATION

CONSENT AGENDA (Items listed below are considered routine and non-controversial by the Commission and are approved in one motion. If a separate discussion is desired on an item, a Commissioner may request that item be removed from the Consent Agenda and placed on the Regular Agenda under New Business.)

A. March 8, 2022 Regular Meeting Minutes

Vice Chair Person read the Consent Agenda and requested a motion.

AREVALO/GAMBLE MOVED TO APPROVE THE CONSENT AGENDA.

There was no discussion.

VOTE: NON OBJECTION: UNANIMOUS CONSENT.

Motion carried.

VISITORS/PRESENTATIONS

STAFF & COUNCIL REPORT/COMMITTEE REPORTS

A. EDC Staff Report

Commissioner Marks arrived at 6:11 p.m.

Economic Development Manager Engebretsen spoke to her written report, highlighting the following:

- A snapshot of the City budget to better understand municipal finances

- Public Works applied for an AARP grant for wayfinding and streetscape improvements
- The EDC Strategic Plan will be on the August agenda
- Notable events including new department restructuring and Ms. Engebretsen's new title as Economic Development Manager

B. Homer Chamber of Commerce Report

Vice Chair Person and Economic Development Manager Engebretsen commented on the Winter King Fishery events and the reason that the Chamber Director Brad Anderson was not in attendance.

C. Alaska Small Business Development Center (AKSBDC) Quarterly Report

Commissioner Marks noted that when approving the funding for the SBDC position, City Council required the position provide quarterly reports. Economic Development Manager Engebretsen confirmed that this report had already gone to Council and no further action is required by EDC.

D. Kenai Peninsula Economic Development District (KPEDD) Report

Commissioner Marks reported on the KPEDD Board's retreat. They primarily looked at the future of KPEDD with funding and staffing possibilities, acted as support for the University of Alaska's Business Center, helping with Borough and State CEDS, and continue as KPEDD Board and staff to work on the Borough's resiliency planning.

E. Homer Marine Trades Association (HMTA) Report

Vice Chair Person noted there was an article provided in the packet.

PUBLIC HEARING

PENDING BUSINESS

A. Pioneer Gateway Revitalization Project Update (HERC)

Vice Chair Person introduced the agenda item by the reading title and deferred to Economic Development Manager Engebretsen.

Ms. Engebretsen gave a presentation update on where the City is at with the Pioneer Gateway Revitalization project and noted that this EDC meeting is the last public comment opportunity where people can come and attend. She recapped the public engagement that took place throughout March and April, the new Option C for a smaller building that was proposed, and the end goal of wrapping this phase of the project up and provide choices for next steps/funding opportunities.

Ms. Engebretsen responded to questions from the commissioners and facilitated discussion on the following topics:

- Funding assistance for clearing out the hazardous wastes on the property
- Phases of the project, next steps, and continuation of gathering public comments through the online survey
- Plans for using renewable energy sources in this project
- What interests were shown from the survey for the use of the facility (beyond pickleball)
- How this survey was advertised

Vice Chair Person clarified that there will be an opportunity at the end of the meeting for public comments.

B. Balance of Quality of Life, Change, & Community Growth Discussion

Vice Chair Person introduced the agenda item by the reading title and deferred to Economic Development Manager Engebretsen.

Ms. Engebretsen provided an overview of the commission's discussion at the last meeting where they identified what they felt were strengths that contribute to Homer's quality of life. She explained how she organized the quality of life themes and information, and that the next step is to identify weaknesses or threats.

Commissioners shared three to five "weaknesses and threats". Primary issues included lack of sustainable/affordable housing, storm drainage/maintenance, risks of losing the "feel" of Homer, poor infrastructure/transportation, costly utilities, outdated zoning, low availability of vocational training, human effect on natural environment, and low diversity.

Part of the discussion provided topics of opportunities, such as:

- Education on what government does
- A planning department assessment; new subdivision/opportunities
- Allow greater investment for worker/affordable housing
- Rezone to allow more housing and tiny homes, etc.
- Addiction education; resources, outreach, networking
- Tax breaks to encourage growth by certain groups that could improve commerce. Tax break for developers geared to multi-family homes.
- Reduced property tax rate to entice mid-career small business owners to move here

Ms. Engebretsen spoke to the next step of the Strengths, Weakness, Opportunities, Threats (SWOT) analysis and what she plans to bring to the commission at their next meeting.

C. Housing Education Staff Report

Vice Chair Person introduced the agenda item by the reading title.

Economic Development Manager Engebretsen explained where City Council is at right now on the topic of housing and suggested the commission postpone this agenda item until they have more information from Council and the final report from their annual visioning worksession.

Vice Chair Person spoke to public discussion that she read through on the Homer Communication Facebook page regarding housing issues and Airbnb's not fully contributing to local sales tax. Commissioner Speakman shared her experience with how the taxing system works when setting up an Airbnb listing.

Commissioner Marks commented on how there is a need for housing education and how to be a proper business owner if they're getting into renting. Ms. Engebretsen noted that the City has been taking steps to help provide information to potential landlords/property businesses.

NEW BUSINESS

A. Election of EDC Officers

Vice Chair Person introduced the agenda item by the reading title. Deputy City Clerk Tussey explained the election process and clarified that Vice Chair Person may facilitate the elections for both officer positions if the commission as a whole was in support of it. Given Commissioner Marks was unable to chair the meeting due to her Zoom connection, the commission agreed to let Commissioner Person run both elections.

Vice Chair Person asked for a motion to determine the EDC's method of voting for the elections.

AREVALO/BROWN MOVED TO HOLD ELECTION BY SHOW OF HANDS.

There was no discussion.

VOTE: NON OBJECTION: UNANIMOUS CONSENT.

Motion carried.

Vice Chair Person opened the floor for Vice Chair nominations.

Commissioners Person, Arevalo, and Brown were nominated. Commissioners Person and Arevalo declined to serve if elected due to other obligations.

With no other nominations called out, the commission unanimously elected Commissioner Brown as Vice Chair. Commissioner Person agreed to continue running the meeting.

Acting Chair Person opened the floor for Chair nominations.

Commissioner Marks was nominated; she agreed to accept the position.

With no other nominations called out, Acting Chair Person announced Commissioner Marks as Chair.

INFORMATIONAL MATERIALS

- A. EDC 2021-2022 Strategic Plan/Goals
- B. Memo 22-022 EDC Reappointments of Deborah Brown & Jay Cherok
- C. Ordinance 22-16 ADA Access Improvements for Nick Dudiak Fishing Lagoon
- D. City Manager's Report for March 14, 2022
- E. City Manager's Report for March 29, 2022
- F. EDC 2022 Calendar

Acting Chair Person noted each of the informational materials.

COMMENTS OF THE AUDIENCE

Tim Joyce, non-resident, was interested in attending to see what the commission was discussing. He commented on their discussion of weaknesses and how he sees Homer having a lack of economic diversity; we are too touristy/seasonal. He commented on the HERC project and the need for a larger facility to accommodate year-round activities, appreciated the comment about having more vocational education, and encouraged more winter-related activities.

COMMENTS OF THE CITY STAFF

Economic Development Manager Engebretsen thanked everyone for their time and the concise meeting.

Deputy City Clerk Tussey thanked everyone and congratulated Commissioners Brown and Cherok for their reappointments, and the newly elected officers.

COMMENTS OF THE COMMISSION

Commissioner Speakman commented on how her boardwalk is getting busy and it feels like the calm before the storm.

Commissioner Arevalo commended Economic Development Manager Engebretsen for spearheading the SWOT analysis and appreciated this approach. She spoke to how through the homework assignments it takes many of the philosophical topics they were discussing and turns them into a very useful use of these meetings. She commented on Mr. Tim Joyce's comment regarding year round fisheries and agreement of having the community center be focused towards conferences.

Commissioner Brown thanked Economic Development Manager Engebretsen and Deputy City Clerk Tussey for all their work and the audience for showing up and making comments.

Commissioner Gamble congratulated the newly elected officers and thanked them for their work. He congratulated Economic Development Manager Engebretsen on her new position and hopes the new status takes effect sooner rather than later; the topics they're discussing are important and Homer is going to change so that's why they are there to guide the "how". He fully agrees to have a larger sized facility to bring in wintertime conferences and see more year-round businesses. He thanked everyone for their time and input.

Commissioner Person commented on the things Homer has to offer. She noted that Pier One is offering youth camps, HOWL has their dirtbag clean-up program next weekend, there are two artists in residence at Bunnell Street Gallery with one giving a concert, a community effort called Draw Down which is seeking local solutions to climate change is offering an open meeting to the public on April 27th, and all the work being done on city trails. She thanked City Staff and Commissioner Brown for willing to be Vice Chair.

Commissioners Cherok, Marks, and Student Representative Pearson had no comments.

ADJOURN

There being no further business to come before the Commission, Acting Chair Person adjourned the meeting at 7:34 p.m. Their next regular meeting is Tuesday, May 10, 2022 at 6:00 p.m. All meetings are scheduled to be held in the City Hall Cowles Council Chambers and via Zoom Webinar.



RACHEL TUSSEY, CMC, DEPUTY CITY CLERK II

Approved: May 10, 2022