

Session 22-05 a Regular Meeting of the Economic Development Advisory Commission was called to order by Vice Chair Deborah Brown at 6:01 p.m. on May 10, 2022 at the Cowles Council Chambers, City Hall located at 491 E. Pioneer Avenue, Homer, Alaska and via Zoom Webinar.

**PRESENT:** COMMISSIONERS BROWN, GAMBLE, AREVALO, CHEROK, PERSON

**ABSENT:** MARKS (excused), SPEAKMAN (unexcused), STUDENT REPRESENTATIVE PEARSON

**STAFF:** ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT MANAGER ENGBRETSSEN  
DEPUTY CITY CLERK TUSSEY

### **AGENDA APPROVAL**

PERSON/AREVALO 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. April 12, 2022 Regular Meeting Minutes

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

PERSON/AREVALO MOVED TO APPROVE THE CONSENT AGENDA.

There was no discussion.

VOTE: NON OBJECTION: UNANIMOUS CONSENT.

Motion carried.

### **VISITORS/PRESENTATIONS**

A. Comprehensive Plan Review – Julie Engebretsen, Economic Development Manager

Economic Development Manager Engebretsen provided an overview of the City’s Comprehensive Plan, highlighting Chapter 6 – Public Services and Facilities, Chapter 7 – Economic Vitality, and the goals that are listed as the “primary duty” of the EDC. She spoke to how this document is reviewed once every year or two, and how the work the EDC is currently doing ties into the plan.

Ms. Engebretsen answered questions and facilitated discussion with the commission on the following:

- History of Comprehensive Plan rewrites; recent one was revised in 2018 after a considerable amount of work and public meetings, and the amount of effort, public input, and funding it takes to do a large rewrite.
- Ways of structuring the public input phases; having multiple comment periods and tracking them out visually.

#### **STAFF & COUNCIL REPORT/COMMITTEE REPORTS**

##### A. EDC Staff Report

Economic Development Manager Engebretsen spoke to her written staff report and her experiences/ planning-related observations while traveling through San Diego, California for a conference.

##### B. Homer Chamber of Commerce Report

Economic Development Manager Engebretsen commented that the Chamber of Commerce is looking to hire a Marketing Director and a bookkeeper.

##### C. Kenai Peninsula Economic Development District (KPEDD) Report

Economic Development Manager Engebretsen noted that Tim Dillon with KPEDD and Shirley Kelly, Alaska Representative for the U.S. Economic Development Administration, were in Homer looking at site locations for funding projects. She noted it was great to have that level of attention from the State in our community and Jenny Carroll, Special Projects Coordinator, was able to meet with them in person.

#### **PUBLIC HEARING**

#### **PENDING BUSINESS**

##### A. Pioneer Gateway Revitalization Project Update (HERC) i. Letter from Tim Joyce

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

Economic Development Manager Engebretsen reported on her City Council presentation that broke down the estimated capital costs of the different HERC project options, and different financing and bonding options for Council to consider. Council opted to have a series of worksessions to talk out the options, which will take some time, with the hopes to have something in place in time for the October election ballot. Ms. Engebretsen recapped some of the questions they'll consider: What is the budget? How will we right-size the building? What's the level of service? What grants to pursue? Timeframe?

Vice Chair Brown requested clarification on the comments made at the Council meeting, and if we are looking at other alternatives on what to do with the building. Ms. Engebretsen explained how much of that work to looking into alternative options was previously done, and how the amount of rehabilitation that has to be done would cost just as much if not more than a new building. Commissioner Pearson commented on the poor condition of the HERC building and when evaluating those conditions it's easier to come to the conclusion that a new facility is needed.

Commissioner Cherok commented on the EDC's previous discussions on how the new facility could possibly generate revenue, and inquired if those options, such as leasing space, are still on the table.

Ms. Engebretsen explained how they are still on the table, but the City did not discover any interested parties willing to take on those leases now. The decision point for Council would be build nothing now because the bond payments would be huge without knowing if there will be guaranteed rental income, or build something smaller with the possibility in the future to build something else. She does not foresee Council agreeing to build a \$20-23 million facility without a significant business partner.

Commissioner Gamble inquired if the college has been involved in any communications of expansions to use that facility. Ms. Engebretsen explained how they have been involved in the past and that moving away from utilizing the HERC, building their own new facilities, and making campus improvements within their existing area has been part of their plan.

Commissioner Arevalo reiterated Commissioner Cherok's comments on staying on top of promoting conference uses that can help mitigate some of the bond costs. There is a lot in the plan about recreation, but using it for conferences is very appealing and will benefit the town in many ways.

Ms. Engebretsen spoke to the next steps in the process, Council's wish to dive further into things, and the challenges they're facing with use/building size planning and costs. She let the commissioners know that if there is an opportunity for the EDC to play a role she will bring them in.

There was discussion on operational and maintenance costs and where there are opportunities to generate revenue to help offset the expenses of running/operating the facility.

B. Balance of Quality of Life, Change, & Community Growth Discussion  
i. Weaknesses & Threats to Homer's Quality of Life Worksheet

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

Ms. Engebretsen shared screen and facilitated feedback from commissioners on identifying three to five opportunities, or solutions to weaknesses and threats, that would improve or strengthen Homer's quality of life. Ideas shared by the commission included:

- Housing:
  - Solicit for developers to build multifamily homes; bringing them in with financial incentives to help build sustainable housing to address the housing issue.
  - Way to cap utilities on new facilities to encourage development of new housing.
  - Subsidize ADU (accessory dwelling units).
- Art/murals as a draw for downtown in a thoughtful way; could encourage more businesses participation, cost sharing.
- Keeping youth in the community; college could be an asset; vo-tech training/apprenticeships such as manufacturing, mechanics, etc.
- Wayfinding/Streetscape:
  - Aesthetics/natural living landscape; connected greenspace – trails, water management, wildlife. Opportunities with Stormwater and wildlife, trails.
  - Walkability easy flow of traffic with businesses and the community; wayfinding.
  - Roads and trails maintenance (HART fund usage) Public Works plan.
  - Living or shared streets; roads where cars yield to pedestrians.
- Manage growth wisely.

- Divert Chamber marketing; stop marketing the community aggressively; need to manage the tourism we have.
- Keeping taxes down; lowering taxes; addressing costs as the city grows.
- Look closely at tax policy, state and local levels. Sales tax cap.
- Partner with local native associations on community health and wellbeing; they have other funding streams.
- Collaborating partnerships with other organizations to use mitigation funds when they become available. Be shovel ready.
- PARC has too much work; perhaps arts and culture should be its own entity.
- Tidal generation.
- Identify wildlife and habitat corridors, keep health of local fish and wildlife corridors, maybe not near people trails; purchase key habitat locations.
- Fisheries: lower returns, participating in discussions that aim to identify solutions to bycatch issues.

Ms. Engebretsen agreed to organize this information for review and further discussion at the next meeting.

C. Housing Staff Report

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

Economic Development Manager Engebretsen noted that Chair Marks requested this topic be a standing agenda item for now; there is no action needed at this meeting. She reported on her Spit Comprehensive Plan presentation to the Port and Harbor Advisory Commission (PHC) and the strategic plan and goals overlap between the EDC and PHC, particularly in regards to workforce housing on the Spit for seasonal workers.

**NEW BUSINESS**

A. EDC Meeting Schedule for Summer 2022

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

Economic Development Manager Engebretsen explained how she will be traveling this summer and requested the commission consider canceling their July regular meeting and rescheduling the August meeting to later in the month.

AREVALO/PERSON MOVED TO CANCEL THE JULY 12<sup>TH</sup> AND AUGUST 9<sup>TH</sup> REGULAR MEETINGS AND SCHEDULE A SPECIAL MEETING ON AUGUST 23<sup>RD</sup> AT 6:00 P.M.

Commissioners Gamble and Brown clarified with staff that they would not have a report to City Council in the months they do not meet, and that the agenda topics scheduled for those two months can easily be moved to the following September meeting.

VOTE: NON OBJECTION: UNANIMOUS CONSENT.

Motion carried.

- B. Strategies for Deploying HART Road/Trails Funds to Accelerate Non-motorized Transportation & Road Repair
  - i. Attachments 1 – 4 Roads & Trails Maps
  - ii. Road Financial Plan Spreadsheet
  - iii. Draft Ordinances

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

Deputy City Clerk Tussey gave a brief synopsis of Public Works Director Keiser’s memo; noting the various non-motorized transportation programs that she is proposing to City Council that utilizes HART road and trail funds. The ordinances that appropriate funding had their first reading at last night’s Council meeting and are scheduled for public hearing and second reading at the May 23<sup>rd</sup> meeting. Ms. Keiser has been requesting motions of support from the commissions.

Commissioner Person clarified with staff that the budget cost discrepancies for Item I. Create new Non-Motorized Transportation Opportunity Program, is a typo and the proposed \$1.5 million for sidewalks is the correct number.

PERSON/GAMBLE MOVED TO SUPPORT THE STRATEGIES PROPOSED BY PUBLIC WORKS FOR DEPLOYING HART ROAD AND TRAILS FUNDS TO ACCELERATE NON-MOTORIZED TRANSPORTATION AND ROAD REPAIR, AND RECOMMEND CITY COUNCIL APPROVAL.

Commissioner Arevalo gave the proposal two big thumbs up.

Commissioner Person inquired on the repairs being proposed for East Bayview Avenue. Economic Development Manager Engebretsen commented it may be related to water lines and not necessarily the road itself, but to follow up with Public Works directly to confirm.

VOTE: NON OBJECTION: UNANIMOUS CONSENT.

Motion carried.

#### **INFORMATIONAL MATERIALS**

- A. EDC 2021-2022 Strategic Plan/Goals
- B. Port & Harbor Advisory Commission Strategic Plan & Goals for 2022-2023
- C. Sales Tax Reminder Flyer for Short Term Vacation Rentals
- D. City Manager’s Report for April 11, 2022
- E. City Manager’s Report for April 25, 2022
- F. EDC 2022 Calendar

Vice Chair Brown noted and facilitated discussion on the informational materials provided. She commented that she will be out of town for the May 23<sup>rd</sup> meeting and requested a volunteer to give the EDC report; Commissioner Person agreed to give that report.

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

#### **COMMENTS OF THE CITY STAFF**

Economic Development Manager Engebretsen and Deputy City Clerk Tussey thanked the commission, had no further comments.

**COMMENTS OF THE COMMISSION**

Commissioner Person commented on her attendance at the Homer Drawdown, a local climate action group, and how they selected non-motorized transportation planning as the solution for this year. There will be a lot of community interest and effort on the subject and she's looking forward to that work coming up.

Commissioner Cherok commented it was a good meeting and seeing everyone.

Commissioner Gamble had no comments; thanked the commission.

Commissioner Arevalo thanked Economic Development Manager Engebretsen and Deputy City Clerk Tussey for the effort and information they put forth in the EDC packets, and for making sure the commission stays abreast of things that they are concerned about.

Vice Chair Brown thanked everyone for bearing with her through chairing her first meeting.

**ADJOURN**

There being no further business to come before the Commission, Vice Chair Brown adjourned the meeting at 7:32 p.m. Their next regular meeting is Tuesday, June 14, 2022 at 6:00 p.m. All meetings are scheduled to be held in the City Hall Cowles Council Chambers and via Zoom Webinar.



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RACHEL TUSSEY, CMC, DEPUTY CITY CLERK II

Approved: June 14, 2022