

Session 21-08 a Regular Meeting of the Economic Development Advisory Commission was called to order by Chair Karin Marks at 6:00 p.m. on September 14, 2021 at the Cowles Council Chambers, City Hall located at 491 E. Pioneer Avenue, Homer, Alaska and via Zoom Webinar, and opened with the Pledge of Allegiance.

**PRESENT:** COMMISSIONERS MARKS, BROWN, SPEAKMAN, AREVALO, PERSON

**ABSENT:** COMMISSIONERS HALL AND CHEROK (both excused)

**CONSULTING:** MAYOR CASTNER

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

The Economic Development Advisory Commission met for a Worksession on August 31, 2021 from 5:30 p.m. to 7:32 p.m. Discussion topics for the Worksession included Wayfinding-Streetscape Plan Project and Amending HCC 2.58 Regarding Teleconferencing, Attendance, and Vacancies.

#### **AGENDA APPROVAL**

Chair Marks asked for a motion to approve the agenda.

AREVALO/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**

Mayor Ken Castner spoke to City Council's recent work on coming up with a plan for the HERC building and property. He shared his hopes that the EDC will consider and discuss what can be done with the HERC property, and the seasonal housing situation in Homer.

#### **RECONSIDERATION**

#### **APPROVAL OF MINUTES**

A. August 10, 2021 Regular Meeting Minutes

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

BROWN/SPEAKMAN MOVED TO APPROVE THE MINUTES FROM LAST MEETING.

There was no discussion.

VOTE: NON OBJECTION: UNANIMOUS CONSENT.

Motion carried.

### **VISITORS/PRESENTATIONS**

A. Tim Dillon, Kenai Peninsula Economic Development District – KPEDD Update

Chair Marks spoke to the purpose of having the two visitors and how their presentations will tie into EDC's strategic plan. She then introduced Tim Dillon with the Kenai Peninsula Economic Development District (KPEDD).

Mr. Dillon gave a presentation on what KPEDD is, what its goals are, and their purpose. He facilitated discussion and answered questions from commissioners.

B. Robert Green, Alaska Small Business Development Center – Overview of AK SBDC Services

Chair Marks introduced Robert Green, Homer Business Advisor with the Alaska Small Business Development Center (ASBDC).

Mr. Green presented to the commission, reviewing what services the ASBDC provides and responded to questions from commissioners.

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

A. EDC Staff Report

- i. Memo from Deputy City Planner Re: HERC Feasibility Funding
- ii. Memo 21-159 from City Manager Re: HERC Planning Funding
- iii. Ordinance 21-58 Amending HERC CARMA Fund

Deputy City Planner Engebretsen spoke to her written staff report, noting the HERC funding opportunity that has come up, upcoming worksessions for both EDC and City Council, and an ordinance that would fund professional services for a public process and feasibility study for the HERC.

B. Chamber Director Report

In the Chamber Director's absence, Deputy City Planner Engebretsen provided a verbal report on recent events and actions with the Chamber of Commerce.

C. Homer Marine Trades Association Report

D. Kenai Peninsula Economic Development District Report

**PUBLIC HEARINGS**

**PENDING BUSINESS**

**NEW BUSINESS**

- A. EDC Strategic Plan Update
- i. Draft Strategic Plan/Goals for 2021-2022

Chair Marks introduced the agenda item by reading the title and deferred to Engebretsen.

Ms. Engebretsen shared her screen to present the EDC's current strategic plan and facilitated discussion with commissioners on each goal section. Discussion included:

- Whether having the Public Works Director on the annual EDC calendar was enough and near-term goal #1 could be removed, or whether familiarizing with smart growth principals should remain as-is or be reformatted into a different goal.
- Since the Planning Commission and EDC are having regular communication through the Planning Department staff report, near-term goal #2 is a moot point.
- That the regional Comprehensive Economic Development Strategy (CEDs) are done and the EDC assisted Kenai Peninsula Economic Development District (KPEDD) with their development; that goal can be removed as complete and an annual review of the KPEDD CEDS will be included in the EDC calendar.
- Outreach to local business to see what immediate needs are due to COVID was completed earlier in the summer, but many businesses are exhausted at the end of this season so another outreach effort would be appropriate; deliberation on whether to remove the "COVID" aspect; continue to focus on getting a "pulse" of Homer businesses.
- Commending Ms. Engebretsen for all her work on finding them projects, and that asking her every three months to find boots-on-the-ground work could be removed from the listed goals.
- Moving mid-term goal #1, assess jobs training needs and workforce development, to near-term goals and working with partners on how EDC can assist on this subject.
- Leaving the Business Retention and Expansion (BR&E) Survey on as a long term goal.
- Roll-out of funding and leaving mid-term goal #4 on there to continue promoting EDC's assistance and capacity in recovery from economic damage.
- Moving long term goal #1, economic resiliency planning, to mid-term goals.

Chair Marks brought up comments Commissioner Brown had made earlier about smart growth planning. Commissioner Brown commented that the EDC should be discussing what direction as a community we want to see for Homer. She explained past experiences she has had living in other cities that expanded, to consider what kind of character we want for Homer, and what kind of development are we attracting for our future.

Commissioner Person agreed to the importance of that discussion and suggested that the EDC could include values that aren't necessarily about businesses or revenue-generating industries, and address

density concerns. She commented on the Kenai Peninsula Borough's Resiliency and Security Commission and how they could be another way to help manage growth and change as time goes on.

Chair Marks opined if now was the time for EDC to work on planning and asking for more trails and other development projects to be done since they add to Homer's vibe and fall under the umbrella of better walkability and improving the quality of life. Discussion continued on the logistics of City Code, funding, and how the subject can be incorporated into the EDC's goals.

Chair Marks pointed out the new ideas listed in Ms. Engebretsen's memo. Discussion ensued on making amendments to the idea list and how those ideas can be incorporated into the goals if not already addressed in existing goals.

Chair Marks suggested that the commission's discussion be incorporated into a revised strategic plan draft and be brought back to the October meeting for final review.

### **INFORMATIONAL MATERIALS**

- A. City Manager's Report for August 23, 2021
- B. City Manager's Report for September 13, 2021
- C. EDC 2021 Calendar

Chair Marks noted the informational materials provided and that the EDC calendar will be updated to reflect their strategic plan discussion. She stated she will be available to give the EDC report on September 27<sup>th</sup> and clarified with Deputy City Clerk Tussey where the upcoming Council meeting dates are on the EDC calendar.

### **COMMENTS OF THE AUDIENCE**

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

Deputy City Clerk Tussey noted that the teleconferencing ordinance the commission reviewed at their worksession was adopted at last night's City Council meeting, and that the Clerk's Office will be bringing EDC bylaw amendments to their October meeting.

Deputy City Planner Engebretsen thanked the commission for a good meeting.

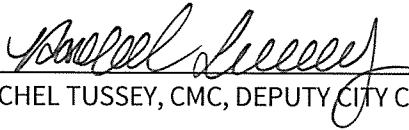
#### **COMMENTS OF THE COMMISSION**

Commissioner Arevalo inquired with staff on what contact and support information is provided on the EDC webpage. There was brief discussion on the public contacting commissioners and how staff is there to facilitate that so members are not using their private emails for public business. Ms. Arevalo commented on the City's efforts to expand the skillsets of existing employees, and that it is harvest season so go out and support your local farmers.

Commissioners Brown, Person, Speakman, and Marks had no comments.

**ADJOURN**

There being no further business to come before the Commission, Chair Marks adjourned the meeting at 8:30 p.m. A Worksession is scheduled for Thursday, September 23, 2021 at 5:30 p.m. and the next regular meeting is Tuesday, October 12, 2021 at 6:00 p.m. All meetings are scheduled to be held in the City Hall Cowles Council Chambers located at 491 E. Pioneer Avenue, Homer, Alaska and via Zoom Webinar.



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RACHEL TUSSEY, CMC, DEPUTY CITY CLERK II

Approved: October 12, 2021