

Session 14-11 a Regular Meeting of the Public Safety Building Review Committee was called to order by Chair Ken Castner at 5:32 p.m. on September 24, 2014 at the City Hall Conference Room Upstairs located at 491 E. Pioneer Avenue, Homer, Alaska and opened with the Pledge of Allegiance.

PRESENT: COMMITTEE MEMBERS ROBL, PAINTER, CRANE, CASTNER AND WYTHE

STAFF: DAN NELSEN, PROJECT MANAGER  
CAREY MEYER, PUBLIC WORKS DIRECTOR  
RENEE KRAUSE, DEPUTY CITY CLERK

TELEPHONIC: STANTEC - SARA WILSON-DOYLE AND DALE SMYTHE

### **AGENDA APPROVAL**

The agenda was approved by consensus of the committee.

### **APPROVAL OF SYNOPSIS**

A. Synopsis for September 24, 2014 Regular Meeting

Chair Castner called for a motion to approve the minutes as presented.

ROBL/WYTHE – SO MOVED.

There was no discussion.

The minutes were approved by consensus of the committee.

### **PUBLIC COMMENT ON MATTERS ALREADY ON THE AGENDA** *(3 minute time Limit – Only items on the agenda not for Public Hearing may be commented on)*

Chair Castner invited the audience to speak and to please sign in and that they have roughly three minutes to speak. He reminded the audience that there will be a Public Hearing on the Proposed Project Site and to keep comments to other items on the agenda.

Mary Griswold, city resident, commented on the draft site selection criteria and that the committee should go through the exercise of evaluating the sites.

### **VISITORS**

There were no visitors scheduled.

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

Chair Castner invited Ms. Wythe if she had any reports from Council. Ms. Wythe stated that there were no council actions since Council approved a resolution regarding no leasing.

A. Design Team Reports

Mr. Smythe reported no new status updates at this time.

B. Staff Status Reports

Mr. Meyer had no comments or reports at this time.

**PUBLIC HEARING**

A. Public Safety Building Project Proposed Building Site

Chair Castner opened the Public Hearing.

Kathy Hill, city resident commented against using the HERC site.

Vicki Lowe, city resident, expressed concerns regarding the proximity of a jail next to a middle school.

Janie Leask, city resident, commented against using the HERC site for the proposed project.

Maria Santa Lucia, city resident, commented on the benefits that being able to use the HERC building provides to lower income residents and the use of the Skateboard Park.

Holly Van Pelt, city resident, acknowledged the need of the fire and police department but advocated for consideration of another location since with budget cuts looming there may not be funds available in the future for a new recreation center.

Dixie Hart, resident, commented in favor of keeping the HERC site for recreation.

Matthew Garvey, city resident, commented against using the HERC site. He stated that the Skateboard Park is regularly used by the young people. He mentioned the potential for cost increases of the project.

Chair Castner closed the public hearing and thanked the audience for their comments.

**PENDING BUSINESS**

A. Media Tour of Existing Facilities & Lessons Learned – Ralph Crane & Chiefs Painter & Robl

Chair Castner brought the item to the floor for discussion. He invited Mr. Crane to offer his report.

Mr. Crane provided a brief summary on the invitations extended to local media and that only two representatives showed up, Chris Story and McKibben Jackinsky. He repeated a comment expressed by Mr. Story regarding the conditions at the Police Station.

There was nothing further.

B. Recommendation to the City Council for Site Selection for the Public Safety Building

Chair Castner read the title into the record and requested a motion to open for discussion.

WYTHE/ROBL – MOVED TO SUBMIT RECOMMENDATION TO CITY COUNCIL OF THE SITE SELECTION FOR THE PUBLIC SAFETY BUILDING PROJECT.

Ms. Wythe opened discussion by stating the committee vetted a total of six properties and those were narrowed down for one reason or another to the three properties. The Waddell property was included in those discussions. Some properties considered were not recommended by Council.

She reiterated that the Council's intent was to impact the community as little as possible financially and property that the city owns will bring a substantial match consideration when seeking funding assistance.

Ms. Wythe stated for the record that Council extended use of the gym for pickleball and there has been increased use that was not what Council intended. In regards to the resolution before the Kenai Peninsula Borough, this was sent to the assembly some time ago and why it is coming up before them now may be due to Assembly member Smith's tenure expiring. She emphasized that it was not at Council request.

She further commented on the deed restrictions currently on the HERC property and the Assembly Hearing.

Ms. Wythe thanked Mr. Crane for organizing the media tour and opined that it brought some positive and correct information to the public.

She wanted to reassure people that there have been a lot of meetings regarding providing primary services to community in a manner that is safe to the employees and to the community.

Chair Castner asked if Ms. Wythe would like to address the mitigations at this time since she had previously noted some of the other sites would cost the city money and all the public testimony is that use of the HERC site, the community sees a loss.

Ms. Wythe stated she did not want to ignore the mitigations because she knows they are there but believes the appropriate mitigation for the community to address its recreation needs is a different facility, a healthy facility. To this end she has forwarded a resolution placing a recreation center in the Town Center. She feels that this is the appropriate place for it to be, this is a large green space, there is a potential for a park, and it is close to the library. There were discussions on the egress onto Main Street that would not be in place for a recreation center. She has done a lot of research on her own regarding ballot initiative and there are other alternatives that will not present a large financial impact to the community. She unfortunately has been unable to get the right people together to have that discussion regarding a new facility. Everyone is focused on talking about keeping the HERC.

There was discussion on the other facilities such as the skateboard park and basketball court at the HERC site can be incorporated into a new recreation center; how the value of the HERC property to the city is greater when the Borough only values it at \$810,000 when once you take all that stuff away reduces the value substantially; the value invested provides up to triple the revenue; if there is no money then you cannot move forward; if you do not stop arguing about the HERC and start a new discussion then you cannot get a new recreation facility; there is more value than dollar and cents to the HERC site because of its attributes; the mitigation of \$2.8 million dollars that Chair Castner has approximated is minor; there is a lot of homework if the site is chosen and to determine if they can even use this site; they will eventually have to look into zoning; it was argued that it would be beneficial to look at the value of this site compared to others in the city; they need to build a new building but need to do it smart; they have not tested the hypothesis of fitting the project around the gym; other options with the other parcels came up right away and push back from the Chiefs which is not wanted.

Chair Castner is seeking closure and pushing it to the Council as they are the decision makers. He would like to move ahead to the next phase.

Speaking to the audience Chair Castner stated that Council has previously stated that they are not tearing down the gym to build a jail so he said they need to hold them to it.

Chair Castner invited comments from the remaining committee members.

Mr. Crane tendered his resignation effective at the end of the month due to health issues. He explained some of the high risks involved to fire fighters regarding work related hazards. Mr. Crane continued by stating that he would still advocate for the project, he believed that this was a critical building and their guys are facing the same dangers as he faced and he felt that he had a clean bill of health when he retired but some of the noxious stuff that the guys face every day in PD is unbelievable. He would hate to see anything hold up this project he firmly believed that a joint facility would be the best for this community. He would hate to see this building held up for recreation but to hold a critical building hostage for recreation is not the way to go. He also believed recreation was good for a community but not at the cost of a critical building.

Chief Robl stated that he is always surprised at the people who don't show up at a meeting. They see the same faces at the meetings. He stated it was hard to assess how the rest of the community felt about the project. He wanted to move this forward and see what council wants to do and go from there. Chief Robl stated that the only other alternative was a marriage of city-owned and privately owned land and that is not what the committee has been asked to do at this time; so he is comfortable moving this recommendation forward to council.

Chief Painter echoed what Chief Robl stated and thanked Mr. Crane for his service. He himself has been lucky working for smaller companies and has had less exposure. He commented on the low voter turnout in the recent elections.

Chief Painter acknowledged the community desires to use the property for low cost recreation. He also believed that there are better uses for that property than what it is being used for; he further stated that most of the use has been conducted in recent years and before that the building was mostly vacant. Historically, there is no significance in the building. There are buildings torn down every day around the country of the same vintage making way for newer facilities and or better uses. He could understand the concerns with the proximity to the middle school but this will be a fairly secure building, people are not going to have free access to the people, there will be areas with secured fencing. He further stated that they have looked at redesigning the fire station and other options but they realize that the current building is not placed ideally on the lot and cannot be moved. It has served the community well. They cannot keep designing the equipment to fit the building; they need to have properly sized equipment in order to protect the community. This will increase the ISO and provide a lower insurance rate for homeowners. They need to continue. This is the best site in their opinion and that is what they were asked to do and he is in favor of proceeding.

Ms. Wythe had nothing further to add.

VOTE. YES. NON-OBJECTION. UNANIMOUS CONSENT.

Motion carried.

Chair Castner asked for a motion to instruct the consultants to prepare a couple of overlays to include the gym in the design.

WYTHE/CRANE - MOVED FOR CONSIDERATION OF INCLUDING THE GYM IN THE DESIGN FORMAT.

Discussion ensued regarding the security logistics with the design and functionality and staff access to the facility. Further comment regarding the advantages to having Fire Station located next to community center with the only concern placed on ingress and egress for the department equipment.

Chief Painter suggested that the consultants should incorporate the design element instead of trying to incorporate the existing inefficient building. Chair Castner assured those present that they knew what they are doing and will design appropriately.

Mr. Meyer stated that the design team was looking for direction and believed that everyone wanted to see what the Public Safety Building would look like on that site. He stated that until they review those options of keeping recreational opportunities. He further commented on the affordability of the recreational opportunities conducted at the property is because the city continues to pay those costs and does not charge them back to the users. He continued to emphasize the buildings construction flaws and reiterated that it was not a wise decision to place that burden on the entire community.

VOTE. YES. NON-OBJECTION. UNANIMOUS CONSENT.

Motion carried.

#### **NEW BUSINESS**

##### A. Project Costs, Mitigation Costs, Revenue Sources and City Participation regarding Funding the Project

Chair Castner read the title into the record. He believed that they spoke about this at the last meeting and he had to reacquaint himself with the money that the city in its reserves. It further stated that they reason he was wanted on this committee was his expertise. He admitted that there is value in the carcass of these buildings. Where the boiler is located in the HERC is practically a bomb shelter and in fact the boiler is almost brand new. He would like the consultants to look at repurposing as much as possible to reduce the construction costs.

The mitigations have been listed and when you change purposes of a building you lose some aspects and they will be listed. He requested the Maps that he has provided included in the minutes and presented to Council with the memorandum.

He further stated that Council will probably have a Public Hearing also.

##### B. Scheduling the Next Meeting Date and Agenda Deliverables

Chair Castner noted that the design team will require some time to come up with the concepts. Mr. Smyth noted that it would be preferable to have a month. He asked about the week of November 17<sup>th</sup>. Ms. Krause noted that November 21<sup>st</sup> was a Friday.<sup>i</sup>

Chair Castner requested that date to be penciled in.

#### **INFORMATIONAL ITEMS**

- A. Resolution 14-20 Creation of the Committee and Scope of Work
- B. Public Safety Building Project Fact Sheet
- C. Public Involvement Plan dated June 23, 2014
- D. Supplemental Strategies Chart – Updated and Revised as of August 19, 2014
- E. Project Contact List – Updated and Revised as of August 19, 2014

Mr. Crane requested some clarification on the values presented on the aerial maps provided by Chair Castner.

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

Vicki Lowe commented on the safety building being held hostage to recreation noting that things like that could end the public process. She stated that no one present was opposed to a safety building they just wanted consideration for many different facets of it; she stated that it was now on the Councils heads regarding zoning issues. She further commented on the change in view for students will go from mountains and water to fencing with razor wire and while she appreciates the high security that was spoken of it is not a view of her choice that was hinted at, the High School may have been as close but it will be a much larger facility so they are comparing apples to oranges in her opinion. She hopes that the public process rings true after this. Thank you for your time.

Matthew Garvey commented it is a bummer that not many people come out, but it is something to note that of the people who spoke tonight, seven, they are against it; he believed it was important to value the input of the public.

As a resident he demands an advisory vote on something that affects the children who are going to use it, who do use it. The view as a city as you are driving in will be a big beautiful view, and then a huge prison and he did not believe that is what Homer needed. In regards to hearing from the same people well this small group is committed. They are showing that they do care. Mr. Garvey further said pandering a public hearing then disregarding the comments is probably worse than not asking. He would like to see advisory votes and more considerations for people. He is sure the committee has looked at this and feel it is the best use for it but he pointed out they were biased. He said that firemen were important and not appreciated and the services provided. Mr. Garvey then turned to thank Mr. Crane for his services but still felt that the council making this motion was biased towards it.

Julie Nelsen, wanted to take this opportunity to let them know that they do have the support for the decisions that they have made; her thought on why they don't see a large amount of the supportive individuals here at the meetings is that those individuals see your progress with your thoughts, opinions and recommendations and fully support the direction that you have gone and went to today with your recommendation today. She thanked the committee.

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

There were no comments from city staff present.

There were no comments from those participating telephonically.

#### **COMMENTS OF THE COUNCILMEMBER**

Ms. Wythe stated that she has listened to public testimony for 10 years and consistently she understands and recognizes the feelings that the people who come to the mic that they are not listened to but she really appreciates Ms. Nelsen's sentiment that there are a lot of people that don't make it into this room and just the fact that they don't make it into this room does not invalidate their opinion or their input any more than if you make it into this room validates your opinion or input. Many people participate in many different forms and even if the decision is not in the direction you prefer and you are here continuously in the audience making public comment doesn't mean people don't hear your comments. She believed there were valid adjustments and considerations given to the comments that

were made tonight; as she has said from her perspective she believed that there is a better solution. She will keep pursuing that better solution. Her job as the Mayor and as a member of this committee and her responsibility is to the City of Homer as a whole, not to individual groups. If it was to a group they would never go anywhere or get anything done. Just because they come and talk does not mean they (committee) do not listen to them; they have to weigh the whole picture and they may not be able to agree with them each time they (audience) come. She appreciated them all coming out tonight.

#### COMMENTS OF THE CHAIR

Chair Castner thanked the audience for attending on a Wednesday as it is a Pickleball night and giving up a valuable recreation night. He further stated that he has sat in that audience a lot himself and suffered through similar indignities and it is no easier sitting at the desk on this side and putting your feet under this side of the table and do what is right for the city. It is important that they do this now for the city and the actions they take tonight will help you in your efforts to do what you want to do. What they can do here is limited and strictly advisory, even though they have the Mayor and the two Chiefs and two public members it's really going to be up to you to keep things moving and thank you for coming.

#### COMMENTS OF THE COMMITTEE

Mr. Crane did not want the audience think he does not like recreation. He has heard that consistently through everything before the committee. The challenge is when and where and who is going to pay for it; that's the ugly baby the committee is wrestling with now. He has a lot respect for those who came to testify tonight. He realizes it is not easy sitting up here and stating your opinion. He is impressed on how much it matters to the guys sitting up here and they consider everything that has been said by everyone.

Chief Robl and Chief Painter had no comments.

#### ADJOURN

There being no further business to come before the Committee the meeting adjourned at 7:35 p.m. The next regular meeting will be **MONDAY, NOVEMBER 10, 2014 AT 5:30 P.M.** and will be at the City Hall in the Cowles Council Chambers at 491 E. Pioneer Avenue, Homer, and Alaska.

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RENEE KRAUSE, CMC, DEPUTY CITY CLERK

Approved: \_\_\_\_\_

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<sup>i</sup> Next Meeting Date was changed to Monday, November 10<sup>th</sup> at 5:30 p.m. due to scheduling conflicts.