

Session 10-06, a Regular Meeting of the Economic Development Advisory Commission was called to order at 6:05 p.m. by Chair Erickson on October 12, 2010 at the City Hall Cowles Council Chambers located at 491 E. Pioneer Avenue, Homer, Alaska.

PRESENT: COMMISSIONER DAUPHINAIS, ERICKSON, RAVIN, SIMPSON

ABSENT: COMMISSIONER FAULKNER, NEECE

COUNCILMEMBER: WYTHE

STAFF: SPECIAL PROJECTS COORDINATOR HOLEN  
DEPUTY CITY CLERK JACOBSEN

#### **APPROVAL OF THE AGENDA**

The agenda was approved by consensus of the Commission.

#### **PUBLIC COMMENTS REGARDING ITEMS ON THE AGENDA**

There were no public comments.

#### **RECONSIDERATION**

There were no items for reconsideration.

#### **APPROVAL OF MINUTES**

A. Meeting Minutes of August 10, 2010

The minutes were approved by consensus of the Commission.

#### **VISITORS**

There were no visitors scheduled.

#### **STAFF AND COUNCIL REPORT**

Special Projects Coordinator Holen did not have a staff report for tonight's meeting.

Councilmember Wythe commented that the Council recognized the recommendations on the lease policy and although not all of them were approved, there were quite a few that were incorporated.

#### **PUBLIC HEARING**

There were no items for public hearing.

#### **PENDING BUSINESS**

A. Proposed Organization and Structure for Economic Development

Commissioner Dauphinais reviewed the document that was provided in the packet. He noted that the communities he looked at all had different ways of doing business. He said in his review and consideration for funding a local area economic development program a bed tax was the easiest to estimate, the monies are reasonable, and it could support a program for the short term.

The Commission discussed some advantages and drawbacks of a bed tax:

- Local providers are resistant. We have a strong B&B association and it may be hard to get buy in on the concept.
- The amount of the tax would likely be about \$3 per night, it really isn't that much.
- Could it be Borough wide. Homer might buy into it, but Kachemak City and other outlying areas could say no and leave Homer as the only group providing bed tax funds for the program that could be used area wide.
- Could it be seasonal, or even on busy weekends like July 4<sup>th</sup>.
- How motivated will people be during these economic times.
- Including RV parks as places people stay should be included.

The Commission also considered in the current economic times if it is realistic to do this now, and how to staff the position. Commissioner Dauphinais commented that from his perspective he sees groups trying to get things done and are inadvertently stepping on each other. He doesn't feel that Homer is going to attract smoke stacks, but there are resources here that the area can take advantage of like the deep water dock, harbor, and fish pier. These can lead to interesting developments. He doesn't know if the time is right but working out a strategy should probably come first.

The Commission agreed that this is a concept that can be developed through the CEDS.

#### B. Comprehensive Economic Development Strategy (draft)

The Commission commended Special Projects Coordinator Holen on her work and provided their feedback.

It was noted that there is no implementation plan included.

Chair Erickson noted that it is important to include the word "exporter" in the port section. There are grants and lines of credit available and it would be beneficial to say that we are an exporter of fish, lumber, and what ever else there may be. She also said in the harbor area it would be good for the City to put in the overslope platforms so the City has control of the basic look of the development and would encourage more people to build business out there. She also suggested some sort of section for creative capital which should incorporate areas of arts, films, recycling and the green technologies, and other creative concepts.

Commissioner Dauphinais noted that he would like to put together a service directory of chamber member and include information like "striving for zero percent waste" "we recycle" "we buy locally" and so forth, and include icons in the business directory so interested people can easily identify those businesses.

Commissioner Ravin proposed a tax exemption for locally produced or manufactured agricultural or reclaimed recycled items.

Suggestions also included a temporary exemption when starting up a business, or doing it through a property tax exemption.

The Commission agreed to review the CEDs at the next meeting.

## **NEW BUSINESS**

### **A. Economic Benefits/Detriments of Cruise Ship Visitors**

The Commission discussed feedback from the summers Cruise Ship Visits to Homer. Points included:

- Several complaints dealt with local merchants that they weren't stopping near their place of business.
- In general, the local businesses noticed increased traffic but not an increase in sales, both in town and on the spit.
- Those businesses that had contracts with the cruise ships for tours and so forth did reasonably well in the number of clients, but had to cut their rates such that there wasn't much of a profit.
- The economic benefit was marginal at best.
- The cruise ship dictates what is going to happen.
- They left out of Homer happy with the stop, they felt it worked well and plan to do the same next year.
- We need to do better at the dock. The ground is uneven and not graded. The City is left open to liability by not taking care of the ground.
- Visitors said not to make this a cruise ship town like Southeast. This is a wonderful stop.
- The cruise ship paid for the busses coming in to town and determined where they stopped. It wouldn't be feasible for the city or the gift shops to incur the cost of running the busses. The cruise ship chose not to make arrangement for handicap accessible transportation but advised them they could take taxis, and by the end the taxis weren't showing up.
- The businesses picking up people probably wouldn't be a problem if they were only taking them to their business and not all around town.
- Next year's visits are predominantly scheduled on Saturday's and that will add to the congestion on the already busy summer weekends.
- Safer crossing areas are needed as a cruise ship passenger crossing the street was hit by a car.

City Manager Wrede participated in conversation from the audience. The Commission shared ideas and safety concerns about next years visits relating to traffic near the Farmer's Market, and stop lights at Main Street and Sterling Highway.

RAVIN/SIMPSON MOVED TO FORWARD A MEMO TO COUNCIL ASKING THEM TO EXPLORE A TURN LANE ON OCEAN DRIVE AND POSSIBLY PUTTING THE BIKE TRAIL ON THE NORTH SIDE.

There was discussion about options for the area.

VOTE: NON OBJECTION: UNANIMOUS CONSENT

ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT ADVISORY COMMISSION  
REGULAR MEETING  
OCTOBER 12, 2010

Motion carried.

Concerns were raised regarding the need for a light at the bottom of Main Street and the Sterling Highway. Councilmember Wythe commented that they are state roads, there is funding that is available for the project, and the City has been working to get it accomplished with the state.

The Commission also discussed improvements for the Harbor for ease of access for the Cruise Ship and its passengers.

#### **INFORMATIONAL MATERIALS**

- A. New York Times: "Though Leery of Washington, Alaska Feasts on its Dollars"
- B. Items of possible interest from recent City Council meeting packets
- C. Alaska Economic Development Reports
- D. Resolution 10-77(A) Amending the City of Homer Property Management Policy and Procedures Manual and Minutes Excerpts of Council discussion

Chair Erickson commented that on the Spit Comprehensive Plan it references the other advisory bodies and use the Alaska Economic Development Corporation, but doesn't mention the Economic Advisory Commission once in responsibilities. The EDC would have good input on local business information there.

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

There were no audience comments.

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

Deputy City Clerk Jacobsen reminded the Commission about the October 13<sup>th</sup> open house for the Spit Comp Plan.

Special Projects Coordinator Holen thanked the Commission for their input tonight.

#### **COMMENTS OF THE COUNCIL MEMBER**

Councilmember Wythe had no comments.

#### **COMMENTS OF THE CHAIR**

Chair Erickson noted for the next meeting to include the CEDs and election of officers at the next meeting.

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

Commissioner Ravin noted that Mr. Hoppe has resigned and encouraged the group to help recruit a new member.

ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT ADVISORY COMMISSION  
REGULAR MEETING  
OCTOBER 12, 2010

Commissioner Dauphinais encourage the group to check out Google Earth and go to the Homer Theatre. There is a person in town that renders buildings in 3D on Google Earth, you can see a 360 degree view of the building and also a view of what you can see from the building. That is a new business that has come to the Chamber.

Commissioner Simpson commented about discussing ideas for people who will be absent to participate. He also commented about the website openoffice.org where there is access to commonly used programs like Microsoft word for free.

Councilmember Wythe asked that that West Campus Utilization be included on the next agendas.

**ADJOURN**

There being no more business to come before the Commission the meeting was adjourned at 7:18 p.m. The next regular meeting is scheduled for November 16, 2010 at 6:00 p.m. in the City Hall Cowles Council Chambers.

---

MELISSA JACOBSEN, CMC, DEPUTY CITY CLERK

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