

ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT ADVISORY COMMISSION
REGULAR MEETING
NOVEMBER 9, 2010

Session 10-07, a Regular Meeting of the Economic Development Advisory Commission was called to order at 6:05 p.m. by Chair Erickson on November 9, 2010 at the City Hall Cowles Council Chambers located at 491 E. Pioneer Avenue, Homer, Alaska.

PRESENT: COMMISSIONER DAUPHINAIS, ERICKSON, RAVIN, SIMPSON, FAULKNER, NEECE

COUNCILMEMBER: WYTHE

STAFF: SPECIAL PROJECTS COORDINATOR HOLEN
DEPUTY CITY CLERK JACOBSEN
CITY MANAGER WREDE

APPROVAL OF THE AGENDA

The agenda was approved by consensus of the Commission.

PUBLIC COMMENTS REGARDING ITEMS ON THE AGENDA

Mike Illg, city resident and city employee with Community Recreation, commented regarding the old intermediate school. He asked the Commission to consider that facility for the Community Recreation program. He said the program has a vested interest in the facility as they use it for some activities and he sees potential for more. Mr. Illg explained that all of the instructors, with the exception of some volunteers are contracted. Many rely on this program to teach a class and create their own income. In addition to providing a service of recreation or educational classes they are also an economic incubator in the community. There have been instances where instructors have evolved into their own business, or end up teaching at the college. He doesn't have a business plan at this time, but hopes as they look at the variables for this building they consider this program because there is tremendous potential here. Currently the program pays money to use the schools. They don't have enough space for what they are doing now, and this would give them potential to do more.

Henry Novak, director of Cook Inlet Council on Alcohol and Drug Abuse, commented regarding the old intermediate school. He explained that an issue with people who provide services for substance abuse, mental health, domestic violence, and other issues, is that the trend is that clients are referred to other offices. A lot of these folks don't have transportation and have multiple needs. He believes that being referred to several different locations makes it difficult to get things done. He asked the Commission consider a multiple use for the different agencies to be housed in one building. They usually lose people during the referral process and one facility would be easier for people accessing the services.

RECONSIDERATION

There were no items for reconsideration.

APPROVAL OF MINUTES

A. Meeting Minutes of October 12, 2010

The minutes were approved by consensus of the Commission.

VISITORS

There were no visitors scheduled.

STAFF AND COUNCIL REPORT

Councilmember Wythe commented that Council sent the request for reviewing the uses of the west campus. Right now it has a short turnaround but they have recently found out that the College will be there until May, so they may be able to request a little extra time if needed. The primary objective is to find a way for the building to become self sustaining. Currently it is costing the city money to keep it open.

Special Projects Coordinator said she will comment during the CEDS discussion.

PUBLIC HEARING

There were no items for public hearing.

PENDING BUSINESS

A. Comprehensive Economic Development Strategy (New Draft)

RAVIN/SIMPSON MOVED TO BRING THIS TO THE FLOOR FOR DISCUSSION.

No objection was expressed and discussion ensued.

Special Projects Coordinator Holen reviewed her amendments in the current draft.

There were brief comments supporting the current draft and commending Ms. Holen on her work.

DAUPHINAIS/RAVIN MOVED TO FORWARD THIS A RECOMMENDED DOCUMENT TO THE CITY COUNCIL.

There were no comments.

VOTE: NON OBJECTION: UNANIMOUS CONSENT

Motion carried.

NEW BUSINESS

A. Election of Officers

Chair Erickson opened the floor for nominations for Chair.

RAVIN/FAULKNER MOVED TO NOMINATE CHAIR ERICKSON A CHAIR.

There were no other nominations.

ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT ADVISORY COMMISSION
REGULAR MEETING
NOVEMBER 9, 2010

VOTE: NON OBJECTION: UNANIMOUS CONSENT

Motion carried.

Chair Erickson opened the floor for nominations for Vice Chair.

SIMPSON/NEECE MOVED TO NOMINATE COMMISSIONER RAVIN AS VICE CHAIR.

There were no other nominations.

VOTE: NON OBJECTION: UNANIMOUS CONSENT

Motion carried.

B. New Uses for Old Homer Intermediated School

City Manager Wrede participated in discussion with the Commission about the Old Intermediate School. They agreed to do a walk through of the building on the 12th at 4 p.m. and Commissioner's noted some specific items they would like to review. Those items include recent utilities billing and operations costs and building drawings. Further down the line an estimated cost of upgrades may be requested as well.

Discussion ensued and the following points were addressed:

- Currently the building is set up as a school. To change it to an administrative use would require bringing some things to code, thus driving up the cost.
- Suggested uses as schools have included the Fireweed Academy, Community Recreation and the Park and Recreation Department, and a Maritime Academy. Those uses might not require as much of an immediate upgrade.
- The college term of lease is month to month through July, and they are expected to be there through May. The Boys and Girls Club follows the college schedule so they can be there through the end of the school year.
- The goal is to find a tenant who can pay rent to cover the operation costs.
- Subsidizing rent if the spin off benefits of the use justify subsidizing.
- Considering Federal Agencies could be beneficial as they can pay the rent and do the upgrades that are needed.
- Hibernating the building could be considered, but there are concerns about losing the building to damage, which happened earlier in the year to the old water treatment plant building.
- Due to asbestos in the building, tearing it down will be very costly.
- Zoning restrictions for uses needs to be considered.
- There is the option of putting it out for RFP and see what they get.

RAVIN/DAUPHINAIS MOVED TO ASK THE CITY COUNCIL TO MOVE THE DEADLINE TO APRIL.

There was no discussion.

VOTE: NON OBJECTION: UNANIMOUS CONSENT

Motion carried.

ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT ADVISORY COMMISSION
REGULAR MEETING
NOVEMBER 9, 2010

City Manager Wrede added that he would provide the Commission information about what the building can be used for based on agreements with the Borough when title was transferred to the City. The City Attorney is reviewing those documents.

Councilmember Wythe strongly stated that the idea of subsidizing needs to be removed from the thinking process. The City can no longer afford to subsidize the building and we need to do something different with it. Part of the objective in bringing it to the Commission is to try to find a way for this to provide stimulus to our economy at no cost to the City.

There was discussion that a school is the highest and best use for the building. Commissioner Faulkner is on the Board of the Fireweed Academy and explained they have always had interest in the building but the timing for their needs haven't corresponded with the City's timeline for the building. He provided a brief overview of their needs and how they are situated now.

It was agreed that there are a lot of ideas out there and several parties who are interested in the building. Suggestion was made that rather than a formal RFP, asking for ideas from interested parties and allow time for presentations. A point was raised that when it comes to adding jobs, full time jobs should be the focus because that is what will keep people here. The Commission would also like to see some type of financial disclosure that shows long term viability of the proposed use.

Commissioner Erickson and Special Projects Coordinator Holen agreed to review chapter 6 in the Lease policy and work together to draft a questionnaire for interested parties to bring forward ideas. This will not be a formal RFP and that will need to be clear to the parties providing information.

C. 2011 Meeting Schedule

DAUPHINAIS/RAVIN MOVED TO APPROVE THE 2011 MEETING SCHEDULE.

There was brief discussion that meetings can be cancelled if the know there will not be a quorum.

VOTE: NON OBJECTION: UNANIMOUS CONSENT

Motion carried.

INFORMATIONAL MATERIALS

- A. EDC Memo re: Ocean Drive
- B. Items of Possible Interest from recent Council Meeting Packets
- C. Resolution 10-78A Adopting the 2011-2016 Capital Improvement Plan and Establishing Capital Project Legislative Priorities for Fiscal Year 2012
- D. City Attorney OMA Information to the Planning Commission

Question was raised regarding the status of the memo for Ocean Drive. City Manager Wrede said he hadn't made any progress yet, but will work on it and get back to the Commission.

COMMENTS OF THE AUDIENCE

Councilmember Zak thanked the Commission for their work and thinks they have a great project in front of them for Economic Development. He encouraged them to try to finish and provide recommendation before April to allow time for leasing and transition from the college leaving and the new operation coming in. He encouraged the Commission to dream big, as an example, not to rule out the location for a new City Hall. If the college purchased the current building proceeds could possibly offset the cost of refurbishing the old school. He also commented that he was in Seward for an Economic Development Forum that was facilitated by some one from the University of Alaska. He said he would put the facilitator in touch with the EDC incase they want to do a similar forum down here. He noted that he and Councilmember Howard attended the communities' survey project that Sharon Whytal presented. That is going on in the community too. It is mostly addresses health concerns but also look at it from an economic development point of view also. Lastly he has seen, as an EDD Board of Director member for the Peninsula, that there is a lot of development and concern for Seward, Soldotna, and Kenai and feels like Homer needs to increase their representation there.

COMMENTS OF CITY STAFF

Special Projects Coordinator Holen said she will not be at the building walk through. She thanked the Commission for their work on the CEDS. She said it was great to work on and is interested to see what happens next.

COMMENTS OF THE COUNCIL MEMBER

Councilmember Wythe echoed Ms. Holen's thoughts on the CEDS and is excited that it is done. She said she is very interested to see how the review of the Middle School building proceeds.

COMMENTS OF THE CHAIR

Chair Erickson commended the group on making good progress. She thinks that getting the questionnaire out and sending it to interested parties will get the dialogue started faster. She agrees that getting it done sooner than April would be best.

COMMENTS OF THE COMMISSION MEMBERS

Commissioner Neece thanked Ms. Holen for helping with the CEDS. He said he attended the public transportation meeting last Friday. That is moving forward with possibly getting two wheelchair accessible vans for the community. He is looking forward to the project with the school, it has a lot of potential.

There were no other Commissioner comments.

ADJOURN

There being no more business to come before the Commission the meeting was adjourned at 7:05 p.m. The next regular meeting is scheduled for September 14, 2010 at 6:00 p.m. in the City Hall Cowles Council Chambers.

MELISSA JACOBSEN, CMC, DEPUTY CITY CLERK

Approved: _____