

Session 12-10 a Regular Meeting of the Economic Development Advisory Commission was called to order by Vice Chair Wagner at 6:00 p.m. on December 11, 2012 at the City Hall Cowles Council Chambers located at 491 E. Pioneer Avenue, Homer, Alaska.

PRESENT: COMMISSIONER FAULKNER, KRISINTU, ROSS, SCHMITT, WAGNER  
STUDENT REPRESENTATIVE DAVIS

ABSENT: SARNO, KRISINTU

STAFF: COMMUNITY & ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT COORDINATOR KOESTER  
DEPUTY CITY CLERK JACOBSEN  
CITY PLANNER ABBOD  
PORT & HARBOR DIRECTOR HAWKINS

### **AGENDA APPROVAL**

The agenda was approved by consensus of the Commission.

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

Susanna Webster, city resident and licensed child care provider, commented in support of the Best Beginnings Business and Economic Impact Task Force. She is the owner of Small Pond Child Care and has expanded to license a second facility, Pond View. She employs five staff members, serves 25 families, 35 children, and she usually has between 5 and 15 families on her waiting list. She explained how the licensing process has changed over the past 17 years, emphasizing that it hasn't changed for the better. The child care licensing process and oversight used to be handled locally by the office of Children's Services, with local support from a case worker and the Fire Chief to assure she was running a safe and quality daycare. The licensing process took two weeks. Sixteen years later it is handled in Anchorage through telephone calls and emails, with a warning that the process will take a minimum of three months to complete. It is an adversarial process, and licensing specialists and Fire Marshall visits are minimal at best as they don't travel south often. Competition is the best way to ensure quality child care in our community, not obstructionist regulations, and a detached licensing body. In order to foster competition we need to work hard to make the process smarter and faster, and address the issue from all vantage points because our community relies on quality child care in order to work. Something has gone terribly wrong in the last 17 years and it is going to take all of us to set it straight.

Hanna Johnson, Executive Director of Kachemak Kid's Early Learning Center, explained that Kachemak Kids is a non-profit preschool with a day care component. Like all other centers and home day cares it is hard working with the state to provide care for all families and finding the support needed to navigate all the systems required of licensed child care centers. A short list of agencies they interact with include Fire Marshall, back ground check unit, state licensing, USDA, child care assistance for pass 1 and pass 2 families, and training with qualified organizations. All the communities' day care programs provide something different, helping families find the best care for their child. It would be great if we could have the support and connection with other facilities in Homer to be better aware of what each other provides and can grow and expand. We need someone knowledgeable in the area of business specific to child care licensing and help places like Kachemak Kids get the support they need. Kachemak Kids serves 27 families and 31 students. Sixteen families are married, 9 are single parents, 6 mothers and 3 dads as

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primary care givers. Two families with a foster child or legal guardian of a child, 7 families on child care assistance, and 2 children enrolled in another special needs program. They serve a variety of children.

Jim Lunny commented regarding the wooden boat partnership with the community. He commented about partnerships with designers of different types of boats, for instance Sail Oklahoma brings in a lot of different designers. There is family boat building in River's West, Oregon and they partner with a maritime museum. Cancer survivors in a wooden boat association raise awareness by paddling dragon boats. There are sailing classes and most associations have a boat building shop. Port Townsend has all sorts of classes for their high school and kids going into college racing. He just wanted to make the Commission aware of partnerships and where this could lead.

Trish Lillibridge commented on the Wooden Boat Society proposal. She is member of the group and speaking on her own behalf. She said they had a successful booth at the Nutcracker Faire and their members constructed the booth and demonstrated excellent wood building skills. They had a sheet for the public to sign if they support the bid for a permanent location on the spit and they received about 180 signatures. They received positive feedback from people in the community and the enthusiasm and excitement was great. The Wooden Boat Society has been active in Homer for about 20 years.

#### **RECONSIDERATION**

There was no reconsideration scheduled.

#### **APPROVAL OF MINUTES**

A. November 13, 2012 Regular Meeting Minutes

The minutes were approved as presented by consensus of the Commission.

#### **VISITORS**

A. Dave Brann, Kachemak Water Trail

Dave Brann co-chair of the Kachemak Bay Water Trail Association gave the Commission an overview of their progress and the benefits of having a trail head on the lot where the Pier 1 Theater is located. The water trail is a defined route around the bay from the Homer Spit to Seldovia that is connected by camp sites, lodges, day use areas, and so on. Goals include providing more access to locations throughout the bay and contributing to economic vitality of the communities around the bay. He has looked at a variety of economic studies done by water trails around the country. Right now there are about 200 established water trails, including coastal, river, and lake trails. Water trails create community economic benefits by serving as a community amenity as a destination type of experience and an attraction for visitors and residents. It can encourage local entrepreneurship in creating new opportunities for area businesses seeking to diversify or expand their offerings. Water trails are very popular around the country right now and this will provide a huge opportunity for entrepreneurs to get on board. Fostering regional destination tourism by providing strategic planning and management is necessary to create broader visitation appeal and ensure stewardship of the bay and education. Mr. Brann said the group is working closely with Seldovia in planning the other trail head site, and also folks in Halibut Cove and other businesses around the bay. Outdoor recreation, tourism, and water sports are a way to broaden the structure in communities that may rely on one or two industries. Building a community's sense of pride

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and well-being through opportunities for residents to enjoy and preserve their local natural resources is key. Although it has been promoted nationally, a big part of this is for local benefit. Mr. Brann explained the Maine Island Trail, created in the '80s to connect state owned islands along the coast, has grown to cover 375 miles of the Maine coast, with 150 sites to camp or for day use areas. Annually the water trail brings in \$1.75 million in spending to Maine's economy, including \$553,000 annually from people using the water trail. The Northern Forest Canoe Trail, an inland trail from New York to Maine, brings in \$12 million in economic impacts to that region. Mr. Brann said in his own work he has identified 6 potential user groups that would contribute to the area with 150 user days from May through September and five participants from each group it equals 4500 user days in the 5 month period. If each person generates \$100 per day in spending, there is potential to create \$450,000 in the area. The numbers add up pretty quick. The economic vitality chapter in the Comprehensive Plan recommends investing in local infrastructure, parks, and civic improvements that serve locals as well as visitor by promoting longer stays, increased expenditures, and more repeat visitation as a form of economic development. The Water Trail Association is a strong supporter of the Wooden Boat Society and they have shared goals of making the groups stronger as well as the economic picture in Homer. They support a home on the Spit and the Wooden Boat Facility a trail head start. There are already water trail groupies that are ready to come.

In response to questions Mr. Brann explained that the Association received a grant and is working on a website for the Kachemak Bay Water Trail, there is a national system being created and when ours is complete we will be in line to be a member of the National Water Trail system. He attended tonight to provide information. He will keep the commission updated and let them know if any actions for support are needed. Mr. Brann thinks it makes sense for the kayak launch to be with the Wooden Boat site in the same place on the spit and explained what would be needed for an effective launch site, including parking and informational signage.

B. Dave Seaman, Wooden Boat Society

Dave Seaman, commented on behalf of the Wooden Boat Society. He showed the Commission photos of logos and designs done by local artists for the society's logo and events, of people enjoying the activities related to the society, boat restoration projects, and boat building classes through the college. Mr. Seaman noted there is still industry in town for wood boats and always jobs available for shipwrights of any skill level. Also, the Wooden Boat Society sponsors a sea shanty singing group called the Rubber Bootleggers. He reviewed their recommendation for the location of the Wooden Boat Society building, noting that the location they selected would be out of the way for a year round site with a lot of potential for usage, and reviewed their building plan. Any support the Commission can give for the Wooden Boat Society to acquire space on the spit would be helpful.

C. Red Asselin, Best Beginnings Business and Economic Impact Task Force

Red Asselin, lead task force member and past owner of Raspberry Lane Preschool, commented that she, like many other parents is contemplating returning to the work force and looking for quality child care. Quality child care is important for parents and for children. On the parent's perspective, knowledge of a safe environment for their child allows them to go to work without much worry and increases their productivity. Many need care outside the home as many have left extended family in other states. Some parents enroll their children into early childcare programs to help them prepare for kindergarten. For the children, the benefits of quality childcare are endless and include socialization, self-reliance, understanding there are adult role models that live outside the home, and to explore freely learning

through discovery and play. Quality Childcare connects families within the community that exist throughout the child's school life. There is no easy answer to find a quality child care program that fits the needs of a family. Child care providers in the town and those seeking to have a program have many obstacles to overcome, as others have shared tonight. Many businesses serve a variety of family types and many of the child care homes are full and have waitlists. There is no central place parent to and find all the options for child care providers in our area, and it is difficult to check on quality, other than by word of mouth. From a provider's perspective the licensing process is tedious, extensive, and very specific. All support must come from Anchorage during the work week, which makes challenging to do the outreach needed if you are already working. The office in Anchorage is extremely scattered and convoluted. When she was running her preschool it took 6 months just to get an application sent down from Anchorage to start the process, and once you begin it doesn't get any easier. With these difficulties combined with local passion for early childhood education and development, they would like to create a task force to tackle these issues, and focus on the business and economic side of early childhood education. It will enable many in the community to place their children in quality care and put many to work in a locally relevant industry. It is only natural that they would ask someone from the Economic Development Advisory Commission to join them. As she explained the task force would address and ease the issues surround opening a child care business, and allow parents more options when it comes to placing their child in day care, and more parents can go back to work in town. More day cares available mean providers will raise the quality of care to a higher standard. A Commissioner on the task force sends a message to the community that the City holds early childhood education to be of the utmost importance. Also working together can create the support those in the child care industry need to be successful, and do it locally. Together we can work to make our community more family friendly and business friendly.

There was brief discussion that the licensing process was probably shifted to Anchorage due to budget cuts and a need to centralize, but it is questionable if it really creates a savings due to caseloads and the dragging of feet, persuading people not to pursue it. This task force was formed out of the Best Beginning's program, so it is backed by a strong group of people who have a plan in place.

D. Kyra Wagner, MAPP Update

Kyra Wagner updated the Commission on the Mobilizing for Action through Planning and Partnerships, a collaboration of 40 different organizations around town. It is a framework that gets organizations to work together by developing partnerships, doing community assessments, identifying issues, and start forming goals, strategies, and plans. It is all about community health improvement. It started with the hospital realizing it needed a community health assessment due to new federal health regulations, and chose the MAPP framework to do this. They defined health very broadly, including not only physical and mental health, but also things like economic, environment, education, cultural, and so forth which play into community health. The steering committee includes the hospital, mental health center, college, and environmental groups. Mrs. Wagner explained how they developed statistics to determine community issues and identify three priority issues to tackle:

1. Healthy lifestyle choices- They applied for and received \$110,000 from the People's Garden Grant through the USDA. The Soil and Water Conservation District applied for it, public health nurses, schools, chamber, and many others were involved.
2. Substance abuse and domestic violence- They found little collaboration between the organizations that address the issues. Finding out what they are doing and getting them better connected was huge. They applied for grant funds and The Homer Prevention Project was

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formed and they received almost \$900,000 over three years to identify substance abuse issues relation to alcohol in the community.

3. Connecting community resources- pop411.org has been created. It's an online directory where organizations can describe their services, and people can search the site.

There are five conditions to collective impact, and one condition is shared measurement, which is what they wanted to focus on. They purchased strategic planning software to organize data and track indicators to jointly show improvements in things within their community. For example if each day care center showed how many families they serve and how many they have to turn away they could have a conglomerate status that would show improvement or decline. The software connects the measurement between organizations and combine statistics community wide. It would benefit in showing what issues need to be addressed or programs to enhance when seeking out state and federal money, as an example. Mrs. Wagner encouraged them to look at the website Mappofskp.net for more information.

**STAFF AND COUNCIL REPORT/COMMITTEE REPORTS/BOROUGH REPORTS**

- A. RV Parking in Homer's Central Business District Staff Report from Dotti Harness-Foster, Planning Technician
  - a. Designate member to work with Planning Technician Harness-Foster

Community and Economic Development Coordinator Koester reviewed the staff report from Planning. Commissioner Ross said he would follow up with Mrs. Koester to get involved.

**PUBLIC HEARING**

None

**PENDING BUSINESS**

- A. Marine Commercial District Zoning on the Spit- Pier One lot planning

City Planner Abboud reviewed the staff reports which provide an over view of the site, recommended layout for the uses, and explained that that there is a process for determining who will lease property on the spit. Harbormaster Hawkins provided feedback supporting the proposed layout. He provided an overview of what the barge haul out may entail and the financial benefit to the Port and Harbor enterprise fund and the opportunity created for work. He also elaborated about the kayak launch facility pointing out that after launching kayaks, people would park in the public parking area. They have been working on the Wooden Boat proposal for a few years, an issue is that building a permanent structure is a commitment and he thinks it needs to be located where it is a good fit and the City won't be sorry they committed to down the road.

The Commission discussed the suggested land use options, raised questions about road layout in relation to the dredge spoils and the potential location for a permanent structure for the Wooden Boat Society as shown in the site plan.

FAULKNER/SCHMITT MOVED TO ACCEPT THE PLAN PROPOSED BY THE PORT AND HARBOR AND PLANNING STAFF AND FURTHER RECOMMEND THAT THE CITY COUNCIL SUPPORT THE EFFORTS BY THE WOODEN BOAT SOCIETY LOCATE A BUILDING ON THE SITE.

Mr. Faulkner commented that he would support a dollar per year lease.

VOTE: NON OBJECTION: UNANIMOUS CONSENT

Motion carried.

**NEW BUSINESS**

- A. Appointment of a member of the EDC to the Best Beginnings Homer Business and Economic Impact Task Force

Commissioner Faulkner said he is willing to participate on the task force.

- B. Update from Commissioner Wagner on Marking Homer to High Tech Business and Establish a Potential Worksession date.

Vice Chair Wagner commented that he has met with some people in the community and talked about a local loan program, and networking with entrepreneurs. The Commission agreed to meet for a worksession on Thursday, January 10<sup>th</sup> from 4 to 6 p.m.

**INFORMATIONAL ITEMS**

None

**COMMENTS OF THE AUDIENCE**

None

**COMMENTS OF CITY STAFF**

Community and Economic Development Coordinator Koester commented that she has some more visitor lined up for the next regular meeting, and she encouraged Commissioners to let her know if there are things they want to discuss at future meetings.

**COMMENTS OF THE COUNCILMEMBER**

None

**COMMENTS OF THE CHAIR**

Vice Chair Wagner said it was a good meeting tonight. It was interesting to see all the layers of decision making behind the scenes.

**COMMENTS OF THE COMMISSION**

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Commissioner Ross commented that it was a good meeting; he wasn't sure what to expect. There was good information about the lot on the spit and it was interesting to learn about building requirements in a flood zone. It was an interesting meeting and good presentations.

Commissioner Schmitt commented that as the appointee to the Lease Committee he will likely see the Wooden Boat Society information again, and he appreciated the Commission's feedback about it.

Commissioner Faulkner welcomed Mr. Ross. He said it would be good for the Wooden Boat Society to get going and supports whatever the Commission can do to move this forward.

Student Representative Davis thanked everyone who presented tonight; it was a very informational meeting. She has a better understanding of what is going on with the plan for the lot on the harbor and thinks it looks like a great plan.

**ADJOURN**

There being no further business to come before the Commission the meeting adjourned at 8:08p.m. The next regular meeting is scheduled for Tuesday, January 8, 2013 at 6:00 p.m. at the City Hall Cowles Council Chambers located at 491 E. Pioneer Avenue, Homer, Alaska.

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MELISSA JACOBSEN, CMC, DEPUTY CITY CLERK

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