

Session 15-03 a Regular Meeting of the Parks and Recreation Advisory Commission was called to order on February 19, 2015 at 5:32 pm by Chair Matt Steffy at the Cowles Council Chambers City Hall located at 491 E. Pioneer Avenue, Homer, Alaska.

PRESENT: COMMISSIONERS LILLIBRIDGE, LOWNEY, ARCHIBALD, STEFFY, MACCAMPBELL, BRANN, AND ROEDL

STAFF: JULIE ENGBRETSSEN, DEPUTY CITY PLANNER
MIKE ILLG, COMMUNITY RECREATION COORDINATOR
RENEE KRAUSE, CMC, DEPUTY CITY CLERK

APPROVAL OF THE AGENDA

Chair Steffy requested a motion to approve the agenda as presented.

BRANN/MACCAMPBELL - SO MOVED.

There was no discussion.

The agenda was approved by consensus of the Commission.

PUBLIC COMMENT ON ITEMS ALREADY ON THE AGENDA

Chair Steffy invited the public to comment and requested them to please sign in they will have 3 minutes.

Buck Laukitis, city resident, commented on the access issues at the bottom of Main Street and what the public perceives as Public Land and Private Land. He also expressed the wish to drive to his property in the future, concern for the rowdy traffic on the beach and the efforts to calm traffic in Old Town plus being able to walk their pets on the beach. He thanked the Commissioners for their service.

Kathy Carsow, city resident, commented on walking the beach every day and the ability to walk her dog off leash, she remarked on the number of vehicles driving on the beach just going around in circles ruining the peace and tranquility of walking on the beach. She expressed that if people can drive out on the beach to the left they just cross the stream and keep going. She understands the necessity of some to collect coal but also believes they should just put a stop to all vehicle access and putting up a gate to prevent vehicles on the beach. She supports that 100%.

Robert Moss, city resident, commented on the need and ability to collect coal from the beach and recommended a seasonal closure.

Tye Gates, non-resident, business owner in town and a surfer, best spot is at the mouth of the slough which is a bit far to carry a surf board so he drives. One of his customers is 94 year old Gus who has his cup of coffee, then goes and collects coal. He advocated for allowing vehicles on the beach to continue these activities.

Mike Arno, city resident and beach user, commented on being able to drive his elderly parents to picnic on the beach because they cannot walk the necessary distance. He stated that to close the beach to all user groups is not fair. He advised the Commissioners that Main street was 100 feet longer and it wasn't vehicles that destroyed the beach but winter storms. He advocated for continued use for responsible users, families, only prohibit those being irresponsible.

Scott Adams, city resident, commented on the beach becoming a neutral zone for the animals (dogs) to play, but he carries a leash at all times, cannot say every owner did but most responsible ones do, he also commented on vehicle access to the left. Mr. Adams questioned the creation of a task force and that all the comments from the commission were one sided.

VISITORS

A. George Matz, Kachemak Bay Birders

Mr. Matz provided information on the value as habitat for the numerous breeds of shorebirds that visit or summer in Homer. He also spoke about requesting Bishop's Beach and Beluga Slough as a Western Hemisphere Shorebird Reserve Network or WHSRN (pronounced Whizzern). Mr. Matz informed the commission that Mud Bay and Mariner Park Lagoon were already designated as WHSRN. This would he believes enhance the visiting opportunities to residents and visitors alike. He would like to see the commission submit a recommendation of support to council.

Mr. Matz noted the observances of dogs off leash and the damage and stress caused to roosting and resting birds in the area to the left and supports a recommendation to make that a leash only area, and vehicular use in the intertidal areas and supports closing the beaches to vehicles in areas 7,6 and 4 (to the left all the way to the end of the spit.) Vehicles would be allowed to the west and dogs would be allowed off leash to the west also.

In response to questions from the commissioners Mr. Matz stated that they could support a seasonal on leash proposal mid-March through October. There is a problem with vehicles disrupting and stressing the resting birds which is detrimental to their survival.

B. Dr. Sherwood, Homer Veterinary Clinic - Rescheduled to March 19, 2015 regular meeting

RECONSIDERATION

There were no items for reconsideration.

ADOPTION OF THE CONSENT AGENDA

A. Minutes for the special meeting of February 5, 2015

Chair Steffy requested any comments, questions or corrections regarding the items on the consent agenda. Hearing none he requested a motion for adoption of the consent agenda.

ARCHIBALD/BRANN - MOVED TO ADOPT THE CONSENT AGENDA.

There was no discussion.

VOTE. YES. NON-OBJECTION. UNANIMOUS CONSENT.

Motion carried.

STAFF & COUNCIL REPORTS/COMMITTEE REPORTS/BOROUGH REPORTS

A. Staff Report re: Recap of the February 5, 2015 Special Meeting

Ms. Engebretsen reported she was contacted by Ginny Espenshade regarding testimony from young people who use the beach and getting their input on the proposed changes. She recommended that they be scheduled to speak at the March 19, 2015 meeting. They will also have Fish & Wildlife as a guest at that meeting along with Dr. Sherwood.

She proceeded to recap the decisions at the last meeting.

Commissioner Lowney commented on adding the seasonal closures for the three recommendations made at the last meeting. Ms. Engebretsen stated that could be addressed later on the agenda and would have to be amended by motion.

Ms. Engebretsen commented on the Strategic Doing memorandum by the interim City Manager, Marvin Yoder and the status update for the PARC Needs Assessment. Commissioner Lillibridge requested the report and survey before being given to the Council. Mr. Engebretsen explained that potentially will be ready for the March 19th meeting.

Mike Illg, Community Recreation was recognized by Chair Steffy and invited to provide a report. This was not on the agenda.

Mr. Illg provided a status report and update on the various activities, new continuing and canceled in the Community Recreation program. He has met with Commissioner Archibald and Lowney regarding a Trails Symposium instead of a Parks Day and he has been able to retain the Homer High School commons for two dates April 11 or 18th that he will need confirmation on which date from the commission. This will be an inaugural meeting to discuss different things related to parks and trails and to leave this meeting with something tangible to do.

This coming weekend will be the Men's Basketball League, February 6-7, 2015

He announced an introduction to Pickleball will be done on this weekend also on Saturday. The planning for the Annual Conference in October 7-9th is moving along. He is working on the 2014 statistics and so far he has an increase in the projected revenue. He will also be providing a report to presentation to Rotary in a few weeks on Community Recreation. Homer High School is hosting the regionals, this happens every 8 years and will be bringing lots of revenue to the area businesses. He also reminded the commission about the interviews for the two finalist candidates for City manager position.

PUBLIC HEARING

There were no items scheduled for this meeting.

PENDING BUSINESS

There was no pending business on the agenda.

NEW BUSINESS

A. Recommendation to Support a New Picnic Pavilion on the Spit

Commissioner Archibald provided background on the request for support for a new pavilion. Commissioner Brann added some information on the design choice and funding available along with the addition of some further funding.

MACCAMPBELL/LILLIBRIDGE - MOVED TO FORWARD A REQUEST FOR SUPPORT TO CONSTRUCT A NEW PICNIC PAVILION ON THE SPIT.

A brief discussion ensued regarding some details on the pavilion size of 20 x 40, possible uses and locating next to the fishing lagoon.

VOTE. YES. NON-OBJECTION. UNANIMOUS CONSENT.

Motion carried.

B. Discussion on Hosting a Trails Symposium

Chair Steffy read the title into the record and requested Commissioner Lowney elaborate on the item.

Commissioner Lowney first stated that the title is still not quite accurate as a Trails Symposium, she believes that the idea is still a Parks and Rec Symposium and that it should be kept under that title. She explained that this idea has grown out of a group of people who grew from the MAPP meetings on Walkable Homer and what they talked to Mike Illg about was to have a Parks and Rec Symposium with the center piece this year on Trails. The Commission is not formally involved right now but should be; they will provide a venue, the core steering committee will be meeting Monday at the Library to create the opportunity for a core group to obtain their objective. She would like to see the Commission provide the forum for a group to reach their goals. This falls under the collective impact process. As the commission they need to decide tonight how they will start to formulate this thing. She is looking at 1-2 hour event, ground work would be done by this core group meeting on Monday, identification of

the key players that would want to come to the forum, presenters, the whole commons filled with people presenting information and a part of the forum and then how do they get the public to attend and engage in that activity. Anything goes at this point. Next year can be something different. They need to choose a date, April 11th or the 18th. She wanted a few people from this group. She wanted to open it up.

Chair Steffy inquired about the working group setup as a group of people and a facilitator; Commissioner Lowney responded that since most of the people in the group have an agenda she would support taking funds from the commission to pay for a facilitator.

The event will grow from this core group. Currently the following people have been invited or are members of the core group:

Angie Otteson, Julie was invited, Adele Person, Andy Haas, Lynn Maslow, herself and Robert Archibald and one other that she could not recall.

Chair Steffy asked for comments. Commissioner Lillibridge restated the issue.

A discussion was entertained on any previous decision made by the commission at the meeting last year; the format of the event; presentations; forum would be a focused discussion on one subject providing an opportunity to have that discussion. The discussion included the extent of the commission involvement, senior prom was scheduled for April 11th, need to double check that date, preference for April 18th.

Commissioner Brann asked if the commission needs a motion to support this concept and have it on April 18th he will make that motion. Commissioner MacCampbell and Lowney stated that the commission had previously approved the concept.

Ms. Krause brought the commissioners attention to the memorandum in the packet noting the previous discussion by the commission was to hold a Parks and Recreation Conference involving Homer area businesses. Commissioner Lowney stated that the commission had not defined what the conference at that time and proceeded to elaborate on the topic stating that the choice to call it a symposium was to differentiate the event from the Annual Parks & Recreation Conference planned for October so there was no confusion. Commissioner Lowney proceeded to provide some additional details on what the symposium could include.

Ms. Engebretsen commented that Commissioner is apparently asking for some funding for this for advertising, and she could see each of the commissioners being involved in some form, is there something specific Commissioner Lowney is asking from the Commission. There is a steering committee.

Commissioner Lowney stated that she sees the event being hosted by this Commission and the Commission had decided to do this in lieu of the annual parks day.

Staff jointly explained that all meetings would then need to be advertised and recorded and fall under the guidelines established by City Council and before any further action could be done permission to create this steering committee would have to go before City Council.

Commissioner Lowney requested clarification if the commission was going to speak about parks day it would be okay but to have the steering committee they would have to ask permission. Ms. Krause responded that if the commission works on this then it would be completed during the commission meetings but to have a separate committee with different meetings we need permission from Council.

Commissioner Lowney then requested the commissions support for the steering committee to be formed and organizing this event and would ask for potentially, funding for advertising and a facilitator.

Ms. Engebretsen explained that the commission can express support and discuss the funding at the March meeting. Ms. Krause clarified that as long as no more than three commissioners are involved in the steering committee then they will not have to advertise those meetings. Four commissioners constitutes a quorum and they would run into the Open Meetings requirements.

Commissioner MacCampbell asked about commissioners participating under their other hats such as himself, State Parks or Matt. Ms. Krause responded that they are drawing a fine line there. Ms.

Engebretsen stepped in and explained that if they had a discussion within the steering committee on the use of HART Funds they as a Commission make recommendations on that to Council and there is a conflict there. Ms. Krause interjected that it is the perception of the public that there may be wrong doing and we do not want to give any instance of that to the public that everything is up front and open on the issues.

Commissioner Lowney stated that the commission will simply be providing the forum for the Parks & Recreation Symposium: Walkable Homer which can include whatever periphery stuff that will come from it and the core group will be designing the base template for the forum. All she will ask from the Commission is the approval of the date for the event and the potential funding for advertising and a facilitator.

Chair Steffy asked if the Commission approved of the April 18, 2015 date for the event.

No motion was made approving the April 18, 2015 date.

Chair Steffy asked for any discussion or comment on providing funds for advertising the event. he questioned if the amount would be the same as they normally spend for Park Day.

Ms. Engebretsen responded that it would be more and elaborated that this is where the steering committee would determine the methods and number of advertising and present the cost to the Commission and the commission would have to approve it by motion and vote.

There was a brief discussion on what Walkable Homer would contain such a cyclists, walkers, etc.

BRANN/LILLIBRIDGE - MOVED TO SUPPORT THE PARKS AND RECREATION SYMPOSIUM: WALKABLE HOMER AND ESTABLISH APRIL 18, 2015 AT HOMER HIGH SCHOOL AND CONTRIBUTE FUNDING AS REQUESTED IN THE FUTURE.

There was no discussion.

VOTE. YES. NON-OBJECTION. UNANIMOUS CONSENT.

Motion carried.

Chair Steffy looks forward to hearing more about this at future meetings.

C. Birds, Dogs and the Beach - A Discussion

Chair Steffy introduced the item to the floor and noted the numerous discussions and comments at recent meetings. He requested any recommendations on changes to the policy regarding dogs, to left on the beach.

Commissioner Lillibridge responded that after hearing all the testimony and careful consideration that she recommended closing the left side of the Beach to start, they need to crackdown on the reckless driving and carrying away your dog waste. She resents the gentleman who stated they are one-sided. She has opened her mind on other things but for the dog waste issue she is not relenting.

Chair Steffy recited that they do have a recommendation on the table to closing the beach only to the left. There is no recommendation to close the beach to the right.

Ms. Engebretsen commented on a possible solution to start would be for the commission to purchase doggie poo bags since this is not just a problem on the beach but all over Homer in the parks and on the trails.

Chair Steffy responded favorably on the idea and shared what he did in the parks in Fairbanks with PVC pipe and shopping bags.

Commissioner MacCampbell offered appreciation for all the comments. He prefers the seasonal closures for the vehicles and agrees that winter driving on the beach does less damage and would benefit the coal gatherers. He disagrees on no leash in high density areas that afford more encounters with aggressive dogs. His animals have been beaten up many times. He also supports more appropriate signage and education on the rules.

Commissioner Lowney proposed postponing further discussion on dogs until they hear from Dr. Sherwood on March 19th and then they will be able to make fully informed decisions regarding the policy. She agreed with Mr. Matz that they need to be consistent. In reference to education they really need to start a strong campaign and remarked on efforts being done by the museum. People are trying. She also noted that the last meeting she attended they made recommendations to close the beach to the left all the way to the end of the spit. She still favors the gate to close off the beach, but also favors the seasonal closure. She advocated for listening to some additional input before making a final decision. How they are going to maintain fire rings and trash receptacles if placed. She would like to amend the recommendations to include the seasonal closures.

Commissioner Brann advocated for the free permit system and looked into that a bit but still is not fully sure how that would be implemented and this permit could include the coal gatherers, subsistence fishing and extend it to surfer dudes.

Commissioner Lowney is also curious on what the young folks have to offer.

Commissioner Archibald would like to speak about some issues with the dogs other than feces.

Chair Steffy stated they need to decide that tonight since this topic is the bulk of the meeting.

Commissioner Lillibridge asked about more input and appearing on the Coffee Table. Ms. Engebretsen responded that has been arranged already for April 1, 2015 before the first Public Hearing. Ms. Engebretsen cautioned the commission that they only have made two motions for recommendations and if the commission is serious about this they need to start making motions for their recommendations so the Public has something to respond to.

Chair Steffy asked for direction regarding amending the recommendations.

Discussion continued on seasonal closures.

MACCAMPBELL/BRANN - MOVED TO RECOMMEND SEASONAL OPENING OCTOBER 1ST TO MARCH 1ST FROM BISHOPS BEACH TO THE SLOUGH AND PLACEMENT OF NATURAL BARRIERS AS CLOSE TO THE TIDELINES AND RUNNING HORIZONTAL ALONG THE BEACH WITH APPROPRIATE SIGNAGE TO INCLUDE ORDINANCE.

There was brief discussion on the access of the beach by vehicles and how to put a preference for one group over the other. The commission requested clarification on access from Mr. Moss who was in audience regarding coal gathering.

Commissioner Lowney offered a friendly amendment to Close Area 7 to vehicles annually. Commissioner MacCampbell accepted her friendly amendment.

MACCAMPBELL/BRANN - MOVED TO RECOMMEND PROHIBITING VEHICLES ANNUALLY IN AREA 7 AND ALLOWING SEASONAL OPENING FOR VEHICLES IN OTHER AREAS FROM OCTOBER 1ST TO MARCH 1ST AND PLACEMENT OF APPROPRIATE SIGNAGE TO INCLUDE ORDINANCE CITATION.

Discussion on clarification of areas affected.

VOTE. YES. NON-OBJECTION. UNANIMOUS CONSENT.

Motion carried.

Chair Steffy requested direction on application of a barrier is contingent upon approval of the motion in response to the question from Commissioner Roedl regarding the placement of a barrier to the left.

LOWNEY/LILLIBRIDGE - MOVED TO PLACE A PERMANENT BARRIER TO DEFINE THE ACCESS CONSTRUCTED OF NATURAL MATERIALS PLACED AT MEDIUM TIDELINE TO THE RIGHT AND TO THE LEFT IN ORDER TO ENCOURAGE VEHICULAR TRAFFIC AWAY FROM SENSITIVE AREAS.

Discussion ensued on the use of natural materials substantial enough to last through natural elements and wave action, consent and response by the US Fish & Game Department to their recommendation, this would apply to both sides of the vehicle access point to create more of a corridor, legal access and historical use, amending the motion to include a gate, placement of a barrier due to costs, losing area typically used for parking and pushing parking into the streets and more on private property, making the proposed corridor follow the city property lines, current use encourages traffic to cross private property, current efforts implemented by existing property owners; the area used in the lower area is actually private property.

LOWNEY/BRANN - MOVED TO PLACE A PERMANENT NATURAL BARRIER TO BLOCK VEHICULAR ACCESS TO AREA SEVEN.

Discussion ensued on defining a natural barrier, leave discussion and solution to the partners to decide and proper signage regarding no vehicles to the left.

VOTE. YES. LILLIBRIDGE, ROEDL, BRANN, ARCHIBALD, STEFFY, MACCAMPBELL, LOWNEY

Motion carried.

LOWNEY/BRANN - MOVED TO PLACE A NATURAL BARRIER KTO THE RIGHT FROM THE BEACH ACCESS TO DETER VEHICULAR TRAFFIC FROM CROSSING PRIVATE PROPERTY AND EXTEND TO MDEIUM TIDE.

Discussion started on defining the travel route along private property if the private property owner allows that placement of several markers to delineate the private property a little ways down the beach; obligation to try and assist the private property owner; creating driving conditions that create additional problems of stuck vehicles; postponing further discussion until more information is received; determining actual property lines, obtaining an official survey of the old meander line, creating another set of problems by creating a travel lane.

MACCAMPBELL/ROEDL - MOVED TO POSTPONE THIS DISCUSSION AND ACTION ON THIS MOTION UNTIL THE NEXT MEETING.

There was no further discussion.

VOTE. YES. NON-OBJECTION. UNANIMOUS CONSENT.

Commissioner Brann would like to advance the recommendation Mr. Matz made by making a motion.

BRANN/MACCAMPBELL - MOVED TO FORWARD A RECOMMENDATION TO COUNCIL TO ADD BISHOPS BEACH AND BELUGA SLOUGH TO THE EXISTING WESTERN HEMISPHERE SHOREBIRD RESERVE NETWORK DESIGNATION.

There was a brief discussion on completing this process.

VOTE. YES. NON-OBJECTION. UNANIMOUS CONSENT.

Motion carried.

Commissioner Lowney brought up the potential placement of fire rings and trash cans. Ms. Engebretsen explained that the commission discussed this and noted the locations at the previous meeting. She also stated that she has received mixed messages on the definition of park as the whole beach. Chair Steffy

explained the definition and Staff explained that the commission should not get caught up in the definitions because it is not being effective in what the commission is attempting to solve here, the attorney is available to assist them.

Commissioner Archibald inquired if it would be appropriate to invite the private property owners to provide input on the issues and how the city could assist them.

Discussion evolved on the number of property owners who have testified and that they are the ones who started the commission on this journey, invitation to a specific meeting that the commission is holding a public hearing where the commission has made some suggestions such as the public hearing scheduled at the first meeting in April, need to clarify that there is no camping allowed in the park but the city has no control over the camping being allowed on private property. Further clarification on historical use regarding egress across private property and the appropriate signage and if they get the designation that should be the message along the berms and helps mitigate that use.

Discussion dissolved into the issues that happened at Whiskey Gulch and private property owners which was a whole different issue.

Chair Steffy stated that was off agenda and it was late.

D. Next Meeting Deliverables and Discussion Topics

There was a brief discussion on the deliverables were discussed previously and Chief Robl had a long list of questions submitted to him.

INFORMATIONAL MATERIALS

A. Woodard Creek Watershed Plan

Chair Steffy commented briefly on the presentation at Islands and Ocean Visitor Center scheduled for February 26th.

COMMENTS OF THE AUDIENCE

Bill Ostwald, property owner in Old Town, requested clarification on including just the property owners bordering the beach or those property owners affected by Bishops Beach there said (Chair Steffy clarified that they would like input from all property owners in the area but when it comes to the issues of trespass, and access issues they are talking about the parcels that have direct access to the beach); and he asked what kind of a message do we want to give people who visit our community, and recited an experience his visiting daughter received with a vehicle pile driving right through the tidal pool and this was to the right; he supported establishing a permit system, with signage stating that access is by permit only, this is a fine area and there are lot of people involved in this area, lots of tourists that spend a lot of dollars; there is an old saying that a person rights end where another person's rights begin.

Louise Ashmun, highly recommended and supported annual closure in area 7 as it is not only a resting place, nesting and habitat, the berm is really important too for the protection of the area. Ms. Ashmun further stated that the commission needs to stop using the negative language "no dogs" but changing their language to "Dogs on Leash Only in this Area" and Pick up Its Poop!

Ms. Ashman inquired who started the steering committee for the trails symposium; Commissioner Lowney responded that it was people who attended a MAPP meetings on a regular basis and were interested in trails.

Mark Webber, Deputy Manager, Islands & Ocean Visitor Center, commented that they have had conflicts with dogs attacking stranded wild animals and supports a form of control to protect not only the wildlife but protects the dogs from contracting any diseases from the wildlife too.

COMMENTS OF THE CITY STAFF

Ms. Engebretsen thanked Mr. Ostwald for bringing the subject up contacting the property owners and briefly explained how she would determine property owners for notification.

Ms. Krause had no comments.

COMMENTS OF THE COUNCILMEMBER *(If one is present)*

There were no council members present.

COMMENTS OF THE COMMISSION

Commissioner Lillibridge commented it was a good meeting and thanked everybody. She likes to see they are all participating and this is what the public process is all about.

Commissioner Roedl had no comment.

Commissioner Brann appreciates everybody coming and their comments. He agreed it was a confusing issue and that there were lots of parts to the web here that needed figuring out. He appreciates everyone's efforts and staff's efforts to keep them informed.

Commissioner Archibald agreed that it was a confusing subject but appreciated the public input and it helps, thanked staff for their time and efforts.

Commissioner MacCampbell thanked those for staying until the end those that stated their piece and left. He believes they are listening to everyone and this is not an easy topic. Thank you.

Commissioner Lowney agreed with all previous sentiments and apologized for repeating anything from previous discussions; she has tried to stay informed by reading but when you miss discussion it is kind of hard; she is a bit tired tonight as she got up at 2:00 to start her travel back home today. She thought she did pretty good.

COMMENTS OF THE CHAIR

Chair Steffy echoed all the sentiments expressed; he agreed with Commissioner Lillibridge to disagree with the gentleman who said they were a one sided group; he believes that is proven since they established a time limit and consistently go over it to address all sides of the issue or discussion; they are trying to listen to everyone and come up with something in the middle ground; he appreciates the fact that everyone is trying to listen to as many users as possible and he does not get any sense of an agenda being pushed forth by any commissioner. He provided a personal experience while lunching at Bishop's Beach and within the period of 20 minutes there were 26 cars and 15 cars on the beach with 7 of them in zone 7; he believes that this is a well-used beach and there is really no up time or down time. He saw only one vehicle that was not acting responsibly. He believes that this group is not taking this task lightly to minimize user conflicts.

He inquired who was scheduled to go before council. He volunteered himself since he had to call his substitute for the last one.

ADJOURNMENT

There being no further business to come before the Commission, Chair Steffy adjourned the meeting at 8:27 p.m. The next **SPECIAL MEETING IS SCHEDULED FOR MONDAY, MARCH 2, 2015** at 5:30 p.m. at City Hall Cowles Council Chambers 491 E. Pioneer Avenue, Homer, Alaska.

Renee Krause, CMC, Deputy City Clerk I

Approved: _____