

PLANNING COMMISSION REGULAR MEETING
March 22, 2023 AT 7:00 PM
CORDOVA CENTER COMMUNITY ROOMS A & B
MINUTES

1. CALL TO ORDER

Chair **Mark Hall** called the Planning Commission Regular Meeting to order at 7:00 PM on March 22, 2023 in Cordova Center Community Rooms A & B.

2. ROLL CALL

Present for roll call were Commissioners **Mark Hall, Tom McGann, Sarah Trumblee, Chris Bolin Trae Lohse, Tania Harrison, and Kris Ranney**

Staff present was City Planner **Kevin Johnson**.

3. APPROVAL OF AGENDA

M/McGann S/Trumblee to approve the agenda.
With no objections, the agenda was approved

4. APPROVAL OF CONSENT CALENDAR

a. Record unexcused absence for Chris Bolin from the February 14, 2023 Regular meeting

M/Trumblee S/Bolin to approve the Consent Calendar
With no objections, the agenda was approved

5. DISCLOSURES OF CONFLICTS OF INTEREST AND EX PARTE COMMUNICATIONS

None

6. CORRESPONDENCE

None

7. COMMUNICATIONS BY AND PETITIONS FROM VISITORS

- a. Guest Speakers - None**
- b. Audience comments regarding agenda items**

Jeremiah Beckett representing Cordova Telecommunication Cooperative (CTC) spoke regarding the Second Street rebuild draft plans. He explained that CTC has long supported this project since before the grant application as this roadway has always been in need up repairs. However, they did not realize at the time that the city asked for a letter of support and funding assistance that the new sidewalks would result in CTC losing the parking lot in front of their building. He asked that the commission consider if a sidewalk was necessary on that side of the street and to preserve the area in front of the CTC building as best as possible.

Ken Jones agreed with the comments for CTC about the parking lot concern. He also asked that the commission approve the PIDP grant concept as the Harbor Commission has worked hard to get this to where it is and its much needed. Speaking to the item regarding the public safety building, he asked that the commission not suggest tearing the old one down and instead sell it off when a new one is built as the old building could easily be repurposed.

8. PLANNER'S REPORT

Trumblee asked for an update on the addressing project. **Johnson** explained that due to timing with tax assessments they were holding off on publishing the list and that there were still minor changes being made to the database. **Trumblee** asked what the status was on the database being implemented with the 911 dispatchers. **Johnson** explained that the database is ready to be used as is, but that the correct equipment had not been purchased yet and that Council would need to allocate somewhere around 600K to purchase all the needed equipment.

9. UNFINISHED BUSINESS

a. Resolution 23-02 - 2023 Land Disposal Maps Recommendation

M/McGann S/Ranney Move approve Resolution 23-02 recommending the Council approve the 2023 Land Disposal Maps as presented

McGann said that he supports this and that after discussing this over the last two meetings its time to move it onto City Council

Bolin asked for more information about the Chinese graveyard identified near the end of New England Cannery Road. **Ranney** explained that it is the location of some of the Chinese workers that worked at New England Cannery.

Bolin expressed his disagreement with opening the seven of ten lots on Second Street as that is a very valuable snow dump. In a regular snow year there is not enough crews to move the snow from that dump to then have it usable for the next snow. **Ranney** said that those lots are incredibly economically productive land and the most viable place for construction and that their development would bring in enough tax revenue to bring on the staff needed to off set the loss of the snow dump area.

Bolin asked about moving the impound lot cars to the baler and how that works since we do not own that lot and we lease it from the State. **Johnson** explained that he had taken a look at the lease and the plat for that lot and that from what he saw there is still area to expand and that staff would be working with the State to figure out next steps for getting that expansion approved. Johnson spoke with the Refuse Superintendent and he was okay with the idea especially if it meant we could create more space for baler operations.

Lohse said that he thinks it might be a good idea to maybe only make three or five of the ten lots on Second Street available just to start and see who bites.

Hall asked if the images were going to be updated. Johnson said that these are still the most current images available. There are plans for new images to be available in the spring of 24' once the State is able to fly and take the photos this summer.

Trumblee asked about the playground that was once where the Second Street lots are located and how snow was handled when the playground was there. The commission allowed **Ken Jones** to approach from the audience to give comments. **Jones** explained that there was always snow pushed down from

Second Street and they just did not dump snow in that area. It was when snowpocalypse occurred that the playground was destroyed. But they plowed snow around it for 15 years before that.

Bolin asked about the bioswale that is at the north end of the Second Street lots and what the rules and responsibilities as the streets crew have been instructed to now cover that whenever possible. It is especially important to keep it clear during spring break up so that as the snow melts it can catch the sand and other sediment that has built up over the winter from sanding the roads. **Johnson** said that he was not sure what the responsibility was for that but would look into that and it would need to be taken into account if the adjacent lots were developed.

Hall asked if the Public Works Director had been consulted about these proposed changes and what her opinion was. **Johnson** said that he speaks to the PW Director daily and that she is aware about these proposed changes. She is never stoked on losing snow dump spaces but she also does understand the need for development.

Upon voice vote, motion passed 5-2.

Yea: **Hall, McGann, Trumblee, Lohse, Harrison, Ranney**

No: **Bolin, Lohse**

10. NEW BUSINESS

a. Second Street Pedestrian, Parking, And Drainage Upgrades Draft Design Discussion

Johnson began by letting the commission know that **Brandon Irvine** from AK DOT&PF was on the phone line to assist with any questions as needed.

Ranney was curious about the ability to reduce the lane widths from 12' to 10' to allow for more parking and larger sidewalks. He was also curious about putting in traffic circles especially at the Adams and Second intersection.

McGann said that he is in general favor of the plans but believes there could be some tweaks on the westside of the street and that he does not see much of an issue in front of the CTC building. He also asked about the warehouses north of the pilot house and how those bay doors will be accommodated. **Johnson** said that in some areas rolled curbs would be used where needed for things like plowing and that there is no intention to take away access to those warehouses. They may no longer be able to park up against the warehouses like they do now, but they will still be able to access them.

Trumblee said that she does have concerns with the sidewalk in front of the CTC building and that if business owners are saying they are going to be affected that needs to be considered. She also commented on the direction of the parking and that it makes it so you must go one way to park on that street. **Johnson** said that there is currently angled parking to the north of this area and so this would be a continuation of an existing condition. Also, that we are lucky to live in a very walkable town and that there may just be a cultural shift from believing that you must be able to park directly in front of the location you are going to. He further explained that staff was already in talks with CTC to address this issue and we are looking into having perpendicular parking along a portion of Second Street to to preserve as much parking as possible.

Bolin asked if the intersection of Copper River Highway and Second has considered rolled curbs for the snow storage area there. **Johnson** said that we will be circulating this around the streets crews for their comments and will work those into the design as appropriate.

Bolin asked if in front of CTC the sidewalk could go straight along the roadway and then people drive up and over to park on the other side. **Johnson** said that is typically frowned upon for safety reasons

and that he does want to point out that while historically that area has been used as a parking lot, it is still city Right-of-way and is for the use of all of the public and not solely for CTC. Staff does plan to continue to work with CTC to come up with a solution that works for everyone.

Bolin asked about what will happen where people have existing driveways or ADA ramp access. **Johnson** said that all existing driveways will have curb cuts provided and that ADA ramps have not been discussed but there are plans to provide them where feasible.

Bolin asked about the covered and heated sidewalk in front of his building and if that will be kept. **Johnson** said that we have not discussed encroachments yet but we will look into what will be allowed. It is staffs opinion that we need to preserve and promote covered sidewalks anywhere possible.

Hall said that he has concerns about the parking on the west side of Second street between Lake Ave and Adams as this plan looks to remove a lot of parking that is currently used there.

b. Conditional Use Permit -Three Detached Dwellings - Lot 6, Lakeview Subdivision, 2004-10

M/Bolin S/McGann Move that the Planning Commission grant the Conditional Use Permit request submitted by Kenneth Jones and to adopt and incorporate the findings within the staff report.

Bolin said that he was just making the motion to get the conversation started. He understands that there may be an issue with this violating the neighborhood Conditions, Covenants, & Restrictions (CCRs) but does not believe the city can enforce those. **Johnson** said that is correct, CCRs are private agreements between property owners and the city has not authority to enforce those as they are not laws.

McGann said that he agrees that we need more permanent housing instead of temporary housing, but housing is housing and that after reading through what could be allowed there based on existing code, this project has a much lower impact than what could be done and that he is in favor of this.

Trumblee said that she is all for housing but that we need long term stable housing. You do hear that people are looking for short term housing, but that is because they need a place until they can find long term housing. Still, she would rather see long term housing being built. She does agree that based on the ability to subdivide the lot this has a much lower impact on the neighborhood than what could happen.

Ranney asked if there had been any tracking on what the increase in short term rentals vs long term rentals has been. **Johnson** said that unfortunately this has not been tracked over time and that this is something he plans on working with the finance department on to track as part of business licenses.

Lohse said that he is in support of this, but he also would like to see some sort of zoning change in the future to clarify these rules so that a Conditional Use Permit not be required. He would prefer long term development but he also supports development happening in general.

Harrison understands that while this is consistent with the Comprehensive Plan it is unfortunate when very usable land like this is used for short term rentals instead of providing long term housing for the community. She would like the commission to evaluate the zoning code in the future and determine if this is really the use, we want to see in areas like this.

Hall commented that he would also like to see more long-term housing being built. However, there is still a lot of empty vacant lots that could be developed that people are just sitting on and at least this is something moving forward.

Bolin said that he wants to echo the other commissioners' comments and that long term housing is the preference, but he also agrees that at least this is development that is happening and adds to the tax base.

Upon voice vote, motion passed 7-0.

Yea: **Hall, McGann, Trumblee, Bolin, Lohse, Harrison, Ranney**

c. North Harbor Port Infrastructure Development Program (PIDP) 2022 Grant Concept

M/McGann S/Bolin Move to support the Harbor Commission resolution 03-23-02 and to recommend that the City Council pass a resolution supporting the concept for grant application.

McGann said that there are parts of this that he really likes and some that could be adjusted but that he will support the Harbor Commissions resolution.

Bolin said that he agrees that there is a lot of good here and some things could be tweaked but this is just a general concept and it is much needed for the community.

Trumblee is in support

Ranney is in support

Lohse is in support

Harrison is in support

Hall asked if the Forest Service dock has been handled and if the Forest Service was on board with this.

Johnson said that accommodations have been made and that the Forest Service understands that this is our harbor and they will need to go along with the changes that are needed.

Upon voice vote, motion passed 7-0.

Yea: **Hall, McGann, Trumblee, Bolin, Lohse, Harrison, Ranney**

d. Public Safety Building (PSB) Discussion

Lohse said that he has reservations about the proposed size of the building considering the slow pace of growth in the city and believes that this could be done more cost effectively and in a more timely manner if the size of the structure was reduced. He understands the need for a new PSB just not sure that it needs to be as large as what is proposed.

Bolin asked if this concept included space for the State Troopers. **Johnson** said that the Troopers are not incorporated into the new design as they want to build their own office but there is space allocated for the Department of Motor Vehicles.

McGann said he was disappointed that a cost estimate was not included since we do not know if there is any possibility that we could build this new building. He also expressed concerns about the sally port as that will require a lot of additional excavation of the hillside which will increase cost dramatically.

Ranney asked if moving the PSB out of the tsunami zone was a requirement. **Johnson** said that while it may not be required, it would make the most sense to move it. Depending on the funding source it would likely be a requirement of that.

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McGann said that this was a productive conversation and that it was nice to discuss but truly we need to see new cost estimates so that we can have a real conversation on how to proceed with determining how to get a new PSB. *Johnson* said that we would need to talk with the Council to get money allocated for further investigation into construction of a new PSB.

e. Historic Preservation Commission Nomination

Johnson explained that the Historic Preservation Commission is ramping back up and that they are required to have a member of the Planning Commission on their board and so we are looking for a member to be nominated.

McGann nominated *Ranney* with *Trumblee* seconding that nomination.

With no further nominations, *Ranney* was nominated 6/0

11. AUDIENCE PARTICIPATION

Kenneth Jones thanked the council for their work and said that he is very interested in building long term housing, so he is excited to see the new land being opened up on the land disposal maps and plans to come back with more plans for housing.

12. COMMISSION COMMENTS

McGann congratulated *Ranney* on his nomination to the Historic Preservation Commission as its important that they stay in compliance with the State

Bolin seconded those comments and thanked everyone for their time and commitment

13. ADJOURNMENT

M/McGann S/Trumblee to adjourn the Regular Meeting.
With no objection, the meeting was adjourned.

Approved:

Tania Harrison
Tania Harrison, Chair

Kevin Johnson
Kevin Johnson, City Planner

