

**PLANNING & ZONING COMMISSION  
CITY OF PALMER, ALASKA  
REGULAR MEETING  
THURSDAY, JUNE 18, 2009  
7:00 P.M. - COUNCIL CHAMBERS**

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A. CALL TO ORDER:

The regular meeting of the Planning and Zoning Commission was called to order by Chairman Kircher at 7:03 p.m.

B. ROLL CALL, DETERMINATION OF QUORUM:

Present and constituting a quorum were Chairman Kircher, Commissioners Madar, Bower, Hamming, and Silva. Vice Chairman Kircher was excused. Also present were Sandra Garley, Community Development Director, and Dawn Webster, Recording Secretary.

C. PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE: The Pledge was led by Commissioner Madar.

D. APPROVAL OF AGENDA: Request to add new Item G, resignation of Chair. The agenda was approved as amended.

E. MINUTES OF PREVIOUS MEETINGS:

The minutes of the Regular Meeting of May 21, 2009 were approved as submitted.

F. PERSONS TO BE HEARD:

Howard Bess addressed the Commission regarding the Mat-Su Housing Coalition; he explained the Coalition's purpose and invited a member of the Planning Commission to attend the next meeting on June 25, 2009, at 1:30 p.m., at 1075 Check Street in Wasilla. Invitations have also been extended to the City Council; so far, there has been no representation by the City of Palmer. He spoke to the ten-year housing plan for the Mat-Su Borough area and the different agencies involved in the funding for the project. Mr. Bess also addressed the types of housing needs in the community.

Note: Due to scheduling conflicts it may be difficult to attend the meeting; Commissioner Silva stated she would try to attend if no one else can go.

G. RESIGNATION: Chairman Kircher announced his resignation as Chair and requested nominations for a new Chair. Not all commissioners were present and therefore, no election was held. Vice Chairman Kerslake will preside at the next meeting.

H. UNFINISHED BUSINESS:

1. Review of Capital Improvement Projects

Ms. Garley provided the staff report and advised these are the only CIP projects she has received for review.

COMMISSIONER MADAR moved, seconded by COMMISSIONER SILVA, to enter into the Committee of the Whole at 7:29 p.m. to discuss the projects submitted.

**VOTE ON MOTION: Motion Carried Unanimously**

The commission stated they were not given enough information to score the four airport-related projects and requested, in the future, the department submitting a project for consideration make a presentation to the commission. Additionally, a copy of the scoring matrix should be provided to the departments so they will be aware of the commission's scoring criteria.

The Commission exited the Committee of the Whole at 7:44 p.m.

I. NEW BUSINESS:

1. Request to recommend recognition of the University of Washington's Pioneering Palmer's Future: Strategies for Managing Growth, as an official planning aide for use when making planning and zoning decisions.

Ms. Garley provided the staff report and stated this is the first step in recognizing the study as an official planning tool if that is what the commission desires. Ms. Garley provided a written statement regarding the study, how it is to be used and the fact that the adopted Comprehensive Plan takes precedence over the study.

COMMISSIONER MADAR moved, seconded by COMMISSIONER SILVA, to recommend recognition of the University of Washington's study as an official planning aide for use when making planning and zoning decisions. The motion was amended to include the statement "The Comprehensive Plan would take precedence over the study in cases of conflict." Commissioners Madar and Silva agreed to the amendment.

Commissioner Madar spoke to the motion and stated the study represents an opinion of the majority of the people of Palmer and is a really good document.

Commissioner Hamming stated the document is too broad; it is an educational tool and much of the material included in the study has been included in the adopted Comprehensive Plan. Commissioner Hamming does not want the study to be an official tool; it should be used as an educational tool and not as a document to be used when making decisions on Conditional Use Permits and Rezones.

Commissioner Silva concurred with Commissioner Hamming's statements.

Chairman Kircher stated a lot of what is in the study has already been done or adopted into the Comprehensive Plan. It is an excellent document and should be used as a reference. The legal criteria for making decisions is the Comprehensive Plan and therefore he recommended voting the motion down.

Commissioner Hamming also objected to the listing of specific private property and the provision of design concepts on private property which could be used as a tool for forcing development to go in a certain direction on those properties; he gave as an example the Mat-Maid Property.

**VOTE ON MOTION: Motion Failed 1 - 4**

Madar	Hamming	Kircher	Silva	Bower
Y	N	N	N	N

2. Discussion of proposed definitions for emergency shelter and boarding house

Ms. Garley advised of the research done for the definitions and found boardinghouse is already included in the roominghouse definition; a definition for emergency shelter has been included in the staff report. Ms. Garley recommended, if the commission wished to do so, they could accept the definition of emergency shelter and request staff prepare amendments to 17.28.030, C-L, Limited Commercial District, Conditional uses; and 17.32.030, C-G General Commercial District, Conditional uses, to add emergency shelters and boardinghouses as conditional uses.

COMMISSIONER MADAR moved, seconded by COMMISSIONER HAMMING to discuss the proposed definition.

Commission Madar provided the definitions he had researched (handout to the commission) on the internet. He spoke to restricting the locations where emergency shelters could be located; does not want the shelters located close to residences; wants to be sure the commission looks carefully at the impact the shelter will have on the area.

Ms. Garley advised of the City Attorney’s concurrence with staff’s finding that the existing shelter is a transient housing facility rather than a residential care facility based on the definitions in the Palmer Zoning Code. Further, Ms. Garley advised further research could be done for definitions of Emergency/Domestic Violence Shelter and Transient Service Facility if the commission wishes.

Commissioner Madar spoke to the support services available at the emergency shelter as being his reason for believing the use was more of a residential care facility rather than a transient housing facility.

Chairman Kircher asked for concurrence from Commission Madar as to the definitions to be pursued by staff; Commissioner Madar wants definitions for Emergency/Domestic Violence Shelter and for Transient Service Facility/Homeless Shelter. Ms. Garley advised that she will need to do some legal research because in many states it would be against the law to restrict where state licensed care facilities for the developmentally disabled or for children in crises could be located.

A brief discussion was held on the appropriateness of interviewing people who are applying for a conditional use permit; the commission was again reminded about ex parte communication and the fact that they cannot talk to the parties involved in a case they are going to hear or potentially could hear in the future.

J. PLAT REVIEWS: None

K. PUBLIC COMMENTS: None.

L. STAFF REPORT:

Ms. Garley reminded the commission of the joint City Council/Planning Commission meeting on July 7, 2009, at 6 p.m. There will be a presentation and a general question and answer period. The speaker will be discussing the award winning planning work accomplished in La Crosse, Wisconsin following the Mainstreet Program model.

Ms. Webster advised she will be on vacation from June 26 through July 7, and Ms. Garley will be on vacation July 8 through July 16<sup>th</sup>. Staff will return calls as soon as possible.

Ms. Garley also provided an update on the couplet meetings. DOT will be starting their public hearing process for the couplet on June 23 at the Depot from 5 p.m. until 8:00 p.m.; the community has been discussing the project for about a month; some members would like the City Council to take action to reject the concept of the couplet; DOT is just starting to refine the design; will be doing context sensitive design as requested by Bill Allen; DOT is hoping to reach a consensus with the community to find a design that does work as the community is still divided on this question.

M. BOARD OF ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT:

Darrin Hamming reported on the meeting and advised of a number of subcommittees which have been established to review various opportunities in the community; that an agricultural group has stated they are capable of growing more products if there were a need for them; Commissioner Silva suggested they contact John Binkley, of the Cruise Ship Association, with regard to tourism needs. On another subcommittee, John Lee is looking into a walking story board setup with a speaker unit that would provide a narrative for the historic places. Commissioner Hamming's project, if the commission approves of his idea is to have the committee come up with five recommended changes to the zoning code that would enhance economic development. As an example, if the fair were permitted to have a higher dB level during fair time, they would be able to book better concerts. They would like to see a 95 dB level established for concerts. As of this date, there has been no representation by the City Council but if they were to attend, perhaps the council representative might come up with five policy changes that would enhance economic development.

N. COMMISSIONER COMMENTS:

Commissioner Bower: No comments

Commissioner Silva: Spoke to the fact that she has attended all of the couplet meetings to date; addressed the presentation by the consultant who represented the people who do not want the couplet.

Commissioner Hamming: None

Commissioner Madar: Also addressed the couplet issue

Chairman Kircher: No comments

N. ADJOURNMENT:

There being no further business, the meeting was adjourned at 8:38 p.m.

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Michael A. Kircher, Chairman

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Dawn U. Webster, Recording Secretary