

**PLANNING & ZONING COMMISSION  
CITY OF PALMER, ALASKA**  

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**REGULAR MEETING  
THURSDAY, JANUARY 15, 2015  
7:00 P.M. - COUNCIL CHAMBERS**

A. CALL TO ORDER:

The regular meeting of the Planning and Zoning Commission was called to order by Chairman Kerslake January 15, 2015 at 7:00 p.m.

B. ROLL CALL:

Present and constituting a quorum were Commissioners:

William Kerslake, Sr., Chairman  
Michael Kircher, Vice Chair  
Dan Lucas  
David Petty  
Merry Maxwell

Also present were:

Sandra S. Garley, Community Development Director  
Kimberly A. McClure, Planning and Code Compliance Technician  
Pam Whitehead, Recording Secretary

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

D. APPROVAL OF AGENDA: The agenda was approved as amended.  
Item J, Plat Reviews, were moved forward to immediately follow item G, Public Hearing, out of courtesy to the applicant and audience participants. There were no objections.

E. MINUTES OF PREVIOUS MEETING(S):  
The minutes of the December 18, 2014 Regular Meeting were approved as presented.

F. PERSONS TO BE HEARD:  
There were no persons wishing to speak on a topic not on the agenda.

G. PUBLIC HEARING(s):

1. **Resolution No. 15-001:** A Resolution of the Palmer Planning and Zoning Commission Recommending City Council Approve a Zoning Map Amendment for a 2.46 acre Portion of Tract A, Golden Glenn Estates Phase I, Partially Zoned R-2, Low Density Residential, and Partially Zoned CL, Limited Commercial, to be Rezoned to CG, General Commercial, located in Section 32, Township 18 North, Range 2 East, Seward Meridian, Alaska.

**Tom Gibbons**, authorized representative on behalf of the Applicant/Owner, spoke with regard to the proposed new Fred Meyer store. It will be a full service store with all of

the merchandise typically found in its full-service store in addition to groceries as well as employ about 75 more people than the existing store. There has also been quite a bit of interest in the existing building to either sell or lease to other retail tenants. There were some great suggestions from people in the community at the recent public meeting as to what business they would like to see in Palmer.

**Michael Chen**, of Mackenzie, planner/architect, authorized representative of the owner, explained that the zoning change was necessary in order to accommodate development of a 123,000 sf store on the existing CG zoned site which will increase the site by approximately 2.46 acres adjacent to the Palmer-Wasilla corridor. He thanked staff for the smooth process and noted that the applicant concurs with staff's findings and recommendations, and further asked for the commission's recommendation for approval to the City Council.

Staff Report: Ms. Garley reported background information on the subject request for zoning map amendment. Public notice and publishing requirements pursuant to code have been met. A total of 2 written comments were received in response, with 1 in favor, 1 opposed, and zero objections. One additional written comment was received (copy on the table). See full written staff report in the packet (pages 15-19) which includes the applicant's responses.

Staff recommends approval based on the information provided by the applicant, the following findings of fact pursuant to PMC 17.80.036.C, and if the Commission concurs, move it forward to the City Council with a recommendation for approval:

**Fact 1)** The proposed change is in accordance with the borough and city comprehensive plans:

Staff finds the following facts support this finding:

Goal 4 of Chapter 6, Land Use, from The 2006 Palmer Comprehensive Plan states: "Encourage new commercial development so residents of Palmer, residents of surrounding areas, and visitors can find the goods and services they need in Palmer." Objective D under Goal 4 goes on to state: "Allow for attractive commercial use along the Glenn Highway corridor." The proposed zone change to CG-General Commercial would allow for future commercial development of a large retail establishment in combination with the adjacent general commercial property located along the Glenn Highway corridor which is not a current available option in the R-2 and C-L districts.

Objective A, Goal 1, Chapter 6, Land Use, from the 2006 Palmer Comprehensive Plan recognized that new commercial use would most likely occur primarily in downtown, along the Palmer-Wasilla Highway and along the Glenn Highway; and these areas would need adequate space for expansion of commercial uses. This property is located along the Glenn Highway corridor and the proposed rezone would encourage expansion of commercial uses helping residents to find the goods and services they need in Palmer as stated in Goal 4.

**Fact 2)** The proposed change is compatible with surrounding zoning districts and the established land use pattern:

Finding: The parcel's location is adjacent to a mix of General Commercial, R-2 Low Density Residential, and C-L Limited Commercial districts. Located to the east of the Glenn Highway of this parcel are Fred Meyer gas station and Chevron, among other existing businesses and General Commercial uses; and to the south of this parcel is a large tract of land zoned CG-General Commercial where the former Pioneer Square Center was located and will be the site of the new Fred Meyer store. If rezoned to CG-General Commercial, this portion of Tract A would continue to be compatible with surrounding zoning districts and established land use pattern, and would accommodate the square footage need for the construction of the large retail establishment.

**Fact 3)** Public facilities such as schools, utilities and streets are adequate to support the proposed change:

Finding: Public facilities such as schools and utilities are adequate to support the proposed change since there are numerous existing General Commercial uses in the surrounding area and this site was the location of the former Pioneer Square Center. This parcel sits adjacent to and near two major thoroughfares, South Glenn Highway and Palmer-Wasilla Highway, which are comprised of existing commercial uses. Both highways are DOT-maintained and would be adequate to support the proposed change.

**Fact 4)** Changed conditions affecting the subject parcel or the surrounding neighborhood support the proposed change:

Finding: Changed conditions affecting subject parcel are the future plans by State of Alaska DOT to extend West Dogwood Avenue to the west dividing this portion of Tract A and the future development of the new Fred Meyer store; both support the proposed change to General Commercial. There has been major development along the Glenn Highway and the Palmer-Wasilla Highway throughout the years and these two main corridors continue to grow in commercial activities and development providing more goods and services to residents of the greater Palmer area.

**Fact 5)** The proposed change is consistent with the public welfare and does not grant a special privilege to the owner(s):

Finding: The proposed zone change is consistent with the public welfare as the requested zone change is compatible with adjacent and surrounding properties zoned CG-General Commercial. The proposed change does not grant a special privilege to the owner as large retail establishments are a permitted use in the General Commercial district.

**Commissioner Kircher** moved, seconded by **Commissioner Petty**, recommending City Council approve the Zoning Map Amendment more particularly described in **Resolution 15-001**, for a 2.46 acre portion of Tract A, Golden Glenn Estates Phase I from R-2 Low Density Residential and C-L Limited Commercial, to CG, General

Commercial, as outlined by staff.

Commissioner Kircher commented in favor of accepting staff's detailed report and stated that he believes this will definitely be of benefit to the city of Palmer.

Commissioner Petty commented in full agreement and believes that this is a good growth opportunity for businesses in Palmer; that he is looking forward also to the Dogwood extension.

Commissioner Maxwell commented in full support of the rezoning request and that it will be good for Palmer.

Commissioners Lucas and Kerslake fully concurred.

*Amendment:*

**Commissioner Lucas** moved, seconded by **Commissioner Petty**, to amend the main motion to adopt the Findings of Fact as above-stated by staff and applicant and as reviewed by the Commission in support of Resolution 15-001.

**ROLL CALL VOTE**

**ON AMENDMENT: Carried Unanimously**

[Kerslake-yes; Kircher-yes; Lucas-yes; Petty-yes; Maxwell-yes]

**ROLL CALL VOTE**

**ON MOTION AS AMENDED: Carried Unanimously**

[Kerslake-yes; Kircher-yes; Lucas-yes; Petty-yes; Maxwell-yes]

J. PLAT REVIEWS: (Per amended agenda)

1. **IM 14-030** Preliminary Plat Review: The request is to:
  - a. Re-subdivide Tract A Golden Glenn Estates Phase I and Tract C-1, The Highlands Phase II, into 2 tracts to be known as Fred Meyer Subdivision, located inside Palmer city limits;
  - b. Vacate a portion of W. Dogwood Avenue within proposed Tract A, Fred Meyer Subdivision, located inside Palmer city limits;
  - c. Eliminate a 25' screening and buffer easement within proposed Tract A, Fred Meyer Subdivision, located inside Palmer city limits.

Ms. Garley provided a staff report, calling attention to vicinity map on page 72 of the packet. The abbreviated plat for subject project was distributed through city staff who either commented that no changes were necessary or had no comment. Ms. Garley pointed out that there is a 25-foot screening easement placed in 1980 on Tract A and at the time Tract B was slated to be residential but was never finalized. That property remains vacant and there are no development plans at this time. The new parcel, however, would be separated from Tract B for residential zoning purposes by the new extension of Dogwood. The screening easement and buffer would not be needed between the commercial and residential as the extended Dogwood would serve that

purpose. Brief discussion ensued.

The Commission had no additional comments or questions.

H. UNFINISHED BUSINESS:

1. Continue Discussion of Central Business District.

Ms. Garley called attention to revised draft CBD ordinance (page 59) in the packet, noting highlighted language is the result of the Commission's comments, that FYI, this is the document that will be forwarded to the Council. Comments were all in favor applauding staff for a job well done.

I. NEW BUSINESS:

1. **Resolution No. 15-002:** A Resolution of the Palmer Planning and Zoning Commission Recommending City Council Request the Matanuska Susitna Borough to Collaborate with City of Palmer and Adopt Urban Standards Similar to City of Palmer Standards.

Ms. Garley reported this is the result of the Commission at its last meeting asking for a resolution to initiate a dialog between the Borough and City to create similar zoning standards for subdivisions developed near city boundaries.

Commissioner Maxwell commented in favor of the resolution, applauding staff's effort and noted appreciation of the fact that it references the comprehensive plan which has public support and public input. All other comments were in favor of the resolution.

**Commissioner Lucas** moved, seconded by **Commissioner Petty**, to adopt Resolution No. 15-002 and move it forward to the City Council.

**VOTE ON MOTION: Carried Unanimously.**

K. PUBLIC COMMENTS: There were no public comments.

L. STAFF REPORT:

Ms. Garley announced the City Council appointed Douglas Cruthers as a new member to the Planning and Zoning Commission; he is expected to be at the next meeting.

M. COMMISSIONER COMMENTS:

**Commissioner Maxwell** commented it was a great meeting; is pleased to help the Fred Meyer store move forward; and was pleased to pass the resolution.

**Commissioner Lucas** commended staff for doing a fine job in the preparation for the Zoning Map Amendment for Fred Meyer and the resolution to the Borough.

**Commissioner Petty** also thanked staff and is looking forward to the new Fred Meyer store.

**Commissioner Kircher** made note of a new business in our city located on the first floor in Mr. Wolf's new building on the other side of the Fire Station; believes it is a nonprofit that helps people acquire housing with low income loans.

**Chairman Kerslake** commented in agreement with other commissioners that it will be a great addition to our city having Fred Meyer expand its operations here; he also appreciates the great work that staff has done to date.

N. ADJOURNMENT:

There being no further business, the meeting was adjourned at 7:32 p.m.

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William Kerslake, Sr., Chairman

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Kimberly A. McClure  
Planning and Code Compliance Technician