

PLANNING & ZONING COMMISSION
CITY OF PALMER, ALASKA
REGULAR MEETING
THURSDAY, January 19, 2012
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 Madar at 7:00 p.m.

B. ROLL CALL, DETERMINATION OF QUORUM:

Present and constituting a quorum were Chairman Madar, Commissioners Campbell, Kircher, and Prosser. Commissioner Kerslake was excused and Commissioner Pack was absent. Also present were Sandra Garley, Community Development Director, and Ron Anderson, Recording Secretary.

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

D. APPROVAL OF AGENDA: The agenda was approved as submitted.

E. MINUTES OF PREVIOUS MEETING(S):

1. The minutes of the Regular Meeting of December 15, 2011 were approved as submitted.

F. PERSONS TO BE HEARD:

1. There was no 'Persons to be Heard' scheduled for this meeting.

G. PUBLIC HEARING:

1. There was no Public Hearing scheduled for this meeting.

H. UNFINISHED BUSINESS:

1. Discussion of a proposed revision to the Palmer Municipal Code, Title 14, Signs.

Commissioner Madar asked for a Staff Report.

Mrs. Garley stated that there were several questions raised during the previous month's meeting during the discussion on the sign code. Not all of these questions were directly related to banners and staff made an effort to address each of these concerns.

The first question concerned the use of the robo-calling system to contact all of the businesses when an issue was before the Commission that concerned them. This is an appropriate use of the system. The system is now structured to call all of the telephone numbers in Palmer. To tailor the notification to just businesses would be labor intensive.

Within the City of Palmer there are almost 1500 business licenses. Each business would have to be entered by hand into a new register to be contacted. For the present, this may not be a cost effective way for an outreach effort.

There was a concern about signs and banners being maintained. This issue has already been addressed in the Municipal Code in 14.08.04, Maintenance:

- All signs shall be properly maintained. Exposed surfaces shall be clean and painted if paint is required. Defective parts shall be replaced. The building official or his designee shall have the right to order the repair or removal of any sign which is defective, damaged or substantially deteriorated.

The building inspector has reviewed this section of the Code and feels this adequately addresses the issue.

A concern was voiced that a banner regulation might accidentally prohibit a person from displaying a flag. Mrs. Garley referred the commission to the Clarkstown section of their packet. This section of their code addressed banners, flags and pennants, but also clarified the issue of national flags:

- Any cloth, bunting, plastic, paper, or similar non-rigid material ... not including official flags of the United States, the State of New York, and other states, counties, municipalities, official flags of foreign nations and nationally or internationally recognized organizations.

This was well written and part or all of this definition could be included in Palmer's Code to protect this right to display a flag.

Arcadia Sign Code addressed non-profit organizations and a way to grant extra time for display of a banner. This extension was to be granted by the Commission on a case by case basis. Bend, Oregon sign code limited the display of a banner to twice per year, for 30 days each period.

Commissioner Madar asked the Commission what was their wish?

Commissioner Kircher made a motion, seconded by **Commissioner Prosser** to enter into the Committee of the Whole.

The Commission entered into the Committee of the Whole at 7:07 p.m.

Commissioner Madar expressed his concern that the Commission had not received any input from the business community concerning any issues they might have with the current sign code. He also expressed his concern that any revision to the code is fair and it not grant any special privileges to any one group. However, Palmer is known for its large number of non-profit organizations. Because of the nature of their fund raisers and outreach programs, it is fitting to occasionally allow extra time for advertizing. Arcadia's code was an example of how this might be accomplished.

Some additional concerns raised during this discussion include:

- Clarifying the right to display a flag.
- Holiday sales time frame for display.
- The code needs to be uniform but fair.
- Off premise signs such as yard sale signs on light poles.
- Banners along the right of ways at the intersection of the Glenn Highway and the Palmer-Wasilla Highway.
- Should banners have an identifying sticker?
- Banners should require a permit but no fee for a permit.
- Enforcement is very important for any sign code to be effective.

The Commission was asked to please review the sign code handout and provide any additional comments at the next meeting. Staff would prepare a draft revision to include all changes that have already been suggested. This would allow the revised sign code to be ultimately forwarded to City Council in a timely manner.

Commissioner Kircher suggested that each member of the Commission review the existing Code to see if it could possibly be condensed and still maintain its clarity. He was also concerned that the present code adequately addresses the issue of a legal non-conforming sign and what issues might jeopardize this status.

Commissioner Prosser suggested a 'Cliff Notes' style handout to help businesses understand and comply with some of the more pertinent sections of the Code. He was also concerned that perhaps sign design standards be increased to prevent extremely high winds from damaging sign faces. This could result in property damage and injury to individuals as well.

Mrs. Garley stated that requests such as a 'Cliff Notes' project or robo-calling project are ones that could be forwarded to City Council for funding. Also the building inspector would be invited to the next meeting to address some of these additional issues.

Commissioner Campbell made a motion, seconded by **Commissioner Prosser** to leave the Committee of the Whole.

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

2. Review and prioritize the areas to be considered for possible annexations. Review process outline for annexation as developed by Agnew::Beck. Establish a time line for completion of draft package and presentation to City Council for consideration.

Commissioner Madar asked for a Staff Report.

Mrs. Garley stated that in the Commission packet that was mailed to each Commissioner included a series of four maps. The maps were part of the Palmer annexation Study conducted by Northern Environmental. The first map is the original map from this study. The second map is an attempt to capture the area the Commission had indentified in prior meetings for initial consideration. The third map adds a section to the map that includes a second gravel pit. This area seemed to lend itself for inclusion. The final map would indicate the total area for annexation if the small addition was viewed favorably.

The area to be considered runs south from Palmer along the west side of the Glenn Highway to its junction with the Parks Highway. The boundary then runs west along the Parks Highway to just past its junction with Trunk Road, then north and slightly west of Trunk Road to its junction with the Palmer-Wasilla Highway and finally back to Palmer along the south side of the Palmer-Wasilla Highway.

Commissioner Madar asked the Commission what was their wish?

Commissioner Kircher made a motion, seconded by **Commissioner Prosser** to enter into the Committee of the Whole.

The Commission entered into the Committee of the Whole at 7:46 p.m.

During the discussion the Commission identified several points in favor of the properties identified for consideration to be annexed first:

- Most of the area is already serviced by City water and, to a large extent, also has City sewer service.
- This area probably will have the least impact on City infrastructure and cost to the City.
- This area might also serve as a model for future annexations and help residents to understand that there are benefits to becoming part of the City of Palmer.
- Park areas are included which will improve the quality of life for residents.
- This area includes several, well established businesses such as the College and the Hospital.
- The next step would be to establish a time-line to begin annexation.

Commissioner Kircher made a motion, seconded by **Commissioner Campbell** to leave the Committee of the Whole.

The Commission left the Committee of the Whole at 8:00 p.m.

Commissioner Kircher made a motion, seconded by **Commissioner Campbell**, to forward to City Council, the Planning and Zoning Commission recommendation for properties to be annexed, as indicated by map #4 bordered in white.

Commissioner Kircher felt that this plan was well thought out and the Commission should move forward with its recommendation. The issue of mandatory water service would need to be addressed to help facilitate the annexation process.

Commissioner Campbell also liked the properties identified during the discussion. He also felt it was time to move forward with this next phase of annexation.

Commissioner Prosser also thought the recommendation was correct and the Commission should move it forward to City Council.

Commissioner Madar also indicated strong support for this recommendation. He, too, felt it was appropriate to send this recommendation forward to City Council.

ROLL CALL VOTE ON MOTION [recommending approval of original motion]:

Campbell	Kerslake	Kircher	Madar	Pack	Prosser	Vacant
Y	--	Y	Y	--	Y	--

VOTE ON MOTION: the motion passed unanimously.

I. NEW BUSINESS:

1. Review of the notification by AT&T, to add three additional units on an existing 100' monopole located on Tract C-1, Palmer Industrial Park Subdivision; 1320 S. Industrial Way, Palmer, Alaska.

Commissioner Madar asked for a staff report.

Mrs. Garley stated that in August of 2002, the Planning and Zoning Commission had granted AT&T a Conditional Use Permit (CUP) to construct a 100' monopole communications complex at 1320 S. Industrial Way, Palmer, Alaska. There were four conditions to be addressed to remain in compliance with the CUP. Condition number 4 stated;

- That the tower be used specifically for cellular communications and that AT&T Wireless Services must notify the Planning and Zoning Commission sixty (60) days prior to any co-locator use.

The CUP Application included in the Commissioner's packet was to serve as 60 day notification to the Commission of this new project.

This minor modification was well within the intent of the initial CUP. Co-location of services is the best use of existing facilities and helps to reduce the number of towers within our community. The project is to add an additional three antenna to the tower along with several surge protectors in the existing maintenance building. AT&T would also be required to obtain a building permit for this work. No public hearing is required and no formal action is required of the Commission, unless the Commission feels a new Conditional Use Permit be required for this action.

There were no objections voiced from the Commission and staff was instructed by the Chair to notify AT&T of this conclusion.

2. There was no Board of Economic Development Report to be presented at this meeting.

J. PLAT REVIEWS:

1. There was no Plat Reviews scheduled for this meeting.

K. PUBLIC COMMENTS:

1. There was no Public Comments scheduled for this meeting.

L. STAFF REPORT:

Mrs. Garley reported that the City Council had met on the previous evening and was working toward establishing several goals meant to improve the overall function of the City. These goals were hoped to be accomplished over the next two or three years.

1. Work toward better communications with the Community. This would allow for more input from the people affected by City government and improve the climate for all. Perhaps the use of the Robo-calling, as suggested by one of the Commissioners, would accomplish this goal for the Commission and allow the Commission to reach out to the Community as well.
2. Goal two was to work on the misconception that perhaps Palmer is not business friendly. This would hopefully encourage businesses to consider locating to Palmer.
3. The remaining goal was to work on improving internal issues to make the local government more efficient. For example, improving the look and use of the City web page.

Commissioner Prosser asked why businesses might have this misconception about locating in Palmer.

Mrs. Garley said that a delay in commercial business license approvals may be a problem. The Community Development Department usually reviews and processes an application in under three weeks. Simpler plans require less time of course. The delay is with the State Fire Marshal. Do to that department's work-load; it often takes four to six weeks for the State to process an application. The City is working on several options to eliminate this delay.

Businesses currently outside of the City do not have to pay a City Sales Tax. This is sometimes viewed as a hindrance to doing business in Palmer.

Mrs. Garley stated that the list of specific goals would be available soon and a copy would be forwarded to each Commissioner. This would give the Commission the opportunity to see how it can work along with the City to achieve these goals.

M. COMMISSIONER COMMENTS:

Commissioner Campbell made a motion requesting to add to the Planning and Zoning Commission Agenda for the regularly scheduled meeting of February 16, 2012 a review of:

Palmer Municipal Code Section 08.36.025, Noise, and

Palmer Municipal Code Section 17.32.025, Large Retail Establishment.

The motion was seconded by Commissioner Prosser. Chair then asked staff to include this review for the regularly scheduled meeting in February.

Commissioner Campbell had no additional comments.

Commissioner Kircher addressed the issue of lot development, both inside and outside of Palmer City limits. Contractors object to having to include curb & gutters and sidewalks in new subdivisions. This is currently required inside of Palmer but not by the Borough. To commissioner Kircher, this seemed short-sighted. If there is an additional cost, this could be

passed on to the buyer, who would likely be willing to pay this additional expense. Sidewalks and improved roads add to the livability of an area. It gives the children a safe way to walk to their house.

Commissioner Prosser had no comments for the Commission.

Commissioner Madar echoed Commissioner Kircher's thoughts about subdivision requirements. He felt that if a developer wanted to build on a 7000 square foot lot, it should be permitted, if the remaining 1500 square foot of lot size now required, would be used for trails or bike paths or perhaps parks.

N. ADJOURNMENT:

There being no further business, the meeting was adjourned at 8:25 p.m.

Michael W. Madar, Chairman

Ron Anderson, Recording Secretary