ASSEMBLY COMMITTEE OF THE WHOLE WORKSESSION MINUTES

December 02, 2024 at 6:00 PM

Zoom Webinar Only

A. CALL TO ORDER – *Deputy Mayor Smith called the Assembly Committee of the Whole Worksession to order via Zoom at 6:00 p.m.*

B. LAND ACKNOWLEDGEMENT – *read by Assemblymember Adkison*

We would like to acknowledge that the City and Borough of Juneau is on Tlingit land and wish to honor the indigenous people of this land. For more than ten thousand years, Alaska Native people have been and continue to be integral to the well-being of our community. We are grateful to be in this place, a part of this community, and to honor the culture, traditions, and resilience of the Tlingit people. Gunalchéesh!

C. ROLL CALL

Assemblymembers Present: Deputy Mayor Greg Smith, Mayor Beth Weldon, Alicia Hughes-Skandijs, Christine Woll, Paul Kelly, Ella Adkison, Neil Steininger, and Maureen Hall

Assemblymembers Absent: Wade Bryson

Staff/Others Present: City Manager Katie Koester, Deputy City Manager Robert Barr, City Attorney Emily Wright, Municipal Clerk Beth McEwen, Visitor Industry Director Alexandra Pierce

D. APPROVAL OF AGENDA – *agenda approved as presented*

E. APPROVAL OF MINUTES – *minutes approved as presented*

1. January 25, 2024 Assembly Worksession with Legislative Delegation-Draft Minutes

F. AGENDA TOPICS

2. **Update of Visitor Industry Task Force Public Process** (verbal report by Visitor Industry Director Alexandra Pierce)

Ms. Pierce opened the discussion noting that in March it would be 5 years since the VITF report was completed in what had been a good and respected process that led to many recommendations. It gave her clear marching orders on where to focus her energy and now that the City has achieved most of the major VITF recommendations, it's time to get a similar group back together to build on that work and update the recommendations. Ms. Pierce will work with Mayor Weldon on the composition of a new VITF group and would likely hold meetings over the winter before tourism season starts.

Ms. Hughes-Skandijs stated she would be interested in the new composition of who would sit on this VITF and would like to weigh in on those choices where appropriate.

Ms. Woll agreed with Ms. Hughes-Skandijs that a lot has changed in the last 5 years since the last VITF and it would be nice to see a different composition of the task force reflecting those changes.

Ms. Hughes-Skandijs asked Ms. Pierce if she was imagining the same magnitude of meetings as the previous VITF went through.

Ms. Pierce stated she anticipated a shorter VITF process with fewer meetings, and a focus on a robust public discussion process seems to be what is important and needed right now.

Mayor Weldon agreed that public process is the most important piece, and that this VITF group would be a different makeup of members but wouldn't have to start at the very beginning; they would start with reviewing the recommendations already in place and see if we need to add to them rather than the group having to start from scratch.

Chair Smith thanked Ms. Pierce for the VITF process update and closed this topic noting the importance of continuing engagement with the community on community impacts related to tourism.

3. Lease process for Huna Totem

Ms. Pierce noted the purpose of the discussion tonight was to establish a public process for a Tidelands lease with Huna Totem and would be asking the Assembly for approval on two things. One, to move forward with a public process as outlined in the memo included in the packet; and two, for the Assembly to articulate the elements of the site that have been discussed to date that the Assembly thinks have the most community benefit and should be included in the lease that would ultimately come before the full Assembly.

She highlighted the spreadsheet and memo in the packet. These were issues that CBJ staff and other agencies had identified through the conditional use permit (CUP) process. Many of those issues did not end up in the CUP since most were design concerns that didn't rise to the level of being included in the lease but are being addressed and cared for.

Ms. Pierce introduced Susan Bell, representing Huna Totem; as well as Sandy Weir from Norwegian Cruise Lines.

Ms. Bell walked the Assembly through her presentation starting with a map of the property noting that one of the great benefits of the site is the intersection with a traffic signal already in place. On the upland side of the property will be a welcome center, retail dining, a public park, underground parking and a floating dock. She shared that Huna Totem is partnering with Sealaska Heritage to create a new indigenous knowledge, science and cultural center.

Ms. Bell shared that Huna Totem's goal with design is to create an area that can be utilized year-round with a strong focus on incorporating Tlingit Culture and highlighting cultural and scenic views. The other key consideration is pedestrian flow; as passengers come off the ship they flow easily into the site to their tours and into the downtown area. Having the already established intersection will make for efficient vehicle traffic flow and removes traffic previously .

Ms. Bell also highlighted the benefits of moving from ships at anchor to ships at dock, cutting down the need for lightering vessels coming into Marine Park. Creating a dock with shore power capability which will reduce emissions by 40%.

Lastly, Ms. Bell outlined Huna Totems community commitment to incorporating public input through a collaborative and transparent process as well as the permitting process they are working through with multiple government agencies at the federal, state and local levels.

Mayor Weldon had concerns that one of the slides shows the potential Seawalk going through retail and dining spaces. Ms. Bell noted that there would be two different levels, Passengers come into the plaza level and the Seawalk would be contiguous with the water so passengers and residents or other non- cruise visitors will have a clear separation between the retail space and the Seawalk.

Ms. Hughes-Skandijs asked if Huna Totem had reached out to the Coast Guard, since they would be Huna Totems neighbor on the waterfront, to get their input on navigation and if any of the design elements would impact the Coast Guard, specifically when the Ice Breaker is stationed at the Coast Guard dock. Ms. Bell responded that Huna Totem is working with the Coast Guard as part of the requirement of the navigability study that is part of the CUP.

Chair Smith and Mr. Kelly asked similar questions regarding year round use of the site as well as potential housing at the site. Ms. Bell outlined that with the indigenous knowledge, science and cultural center Huna Totems intention is to work with the school district and university on strengthening cultural knowledge and education in the community but also working with our retail, dining and other smaller organizations to help meet the year round mission of the site. In regard to housing, after review of options it wasn't found to be compatible for several reasons, such as expensive construction costs, height limitations, and parking needs for housing are different and compatibility with the Coast Guard to ensure it's a secure site.

Ms. Woll asked about potential traffic congestion and if that is being cared for. Ms. Bell hoped to deliver the traffic impact analysis report from Dowl Engineering soon and reiterated the benefit of already having a signalized intersection at Whittier and Egan.

Both Mayor Weldon and Chair Smith asked Ms. Bell questions related to AELP Avista's dock, potential beach access and Huna Totems plan for dock electrification.

Ms. Bell responded that Huna Totem is in discussions with AELP on the derelict dock; there is an expense associated with removing it however it would open up that site for potential beach access recreation or other future development. Regarding dock electrification, they are working with AELP on what those costs and lead time would look like; best guestimate for a transformer for the site is roughly $2 million with an approximate lead time of 2 years.

Chair Smith thanked Ms. Bell and Ms. Weir for their participation, the committee took a short break then came back into session to discuss the two requests Ms. Pierce brought forward at the beginning of the meeting: moving forward with public process and what the Assembly feels should be included in the lease agreement.

Ms. Pierce recommended the Assembly follow the timeline outlined in her packet memo for public process which includes holding at least two open houses after the survey results are completed in January and input staff compiled from the Assembly is ready. There would be a second Committee of the Whole review in Spring before a final lease is submitted to the Assembly for approval or denial.

MOTION: by Mayor Weldon to direct staff to initiate a CBJ led public process incorporating the notes we provided the Visitor Industry Director this evening for a Tideland Lease with Huna Totem Corporation an ask for unanimous consent. ***Hearing no objection, motion passed by unanimous consent.***

After additional discussion regarding what should be added to a lease agreement Chair Smith asked each Assemblymember to share what they would like to see in the agreement.

Ms. Woll, in reviewing Ms. Pierce's list and the discussion tonight, housing, downtown passenger shuttle and meeting space seemed like easy ones to cross off the list but would like to keep or add traffic considerations if we are dissatisfied with the traffic study.

Mayor Weldon agreed with Ms. Woll and in addition to the navigability study would like to see what Huna Totem is considering for dock electrification.

Mr. Kelly would like to see the city have some sort of say in scheduling in order to care for community concerns around cruise ship and passenger limits.

Ms. Hughes-Skandijs agreed with the other points raised and the need for year round activities at the site as well as what was stated in VITF recommendations: managing best ship for best dock. Her main priority is the Coast Guard and that the dock project doesn't impact the Coast Guard or the Ice Breakers' ability to homeport in Juneau.

Ms. Hall echoed Ms. Woll's thoughts on what could be removed from the list.

Mr. Steininger echoed fellow Assemblymembers thoughts. He noted that he was thinking of things that would have an impact to the city and the use of adjoining properties such as the Seawalk and year round access so the area doesn't become a dead zone during the winter however having a stipulation like that in what could be a 35 year lease could be problematic in the long term.

Ms. Adkison also echoed what was already mentioned and agreed with Ms. Hughes-Skandijs that emphasizing working with the Coast Guard is key in being a good community partner.

Chair Smith concurred with everything fellow Assemblymembers stated and asked Ms. Pierce if she had enough information to move forward and thanked her for the discussion and updates.

4. 'Aak'w Landing Update by Huna Totem Corporation

Clerk's Note: *Items 3 & 4 on the agenda ran together as one topic with a presentation by Susan Bell representing Huna Totem starting the conversation and the Assembly moving into the lease and public process after the presentation.*

5. Mid-Year Update - In preparation for the Assembly Retreat

Finance Director Flick gave a fiscal update to the Assembly in preparation for the upcoming Saturday Assembly Retreat and requested Assemblymembers send her questions or requests for additional information that staff can have ready for Saturday discussions.

Ms. Flick noted that since approval of the budget in June, there's been approval for $6.5 million of various fund balance uses whether via new appropriations, de-appropriations or reappropriated funds to other needs.

G. EXECUTIVE SESSION

6. Collective Bargaining

MOTION: by Mayor Weldon that the Assembly enter into executive session to discuss matters, the immediate knowledge of which could have a detrimental effect on city finances, specifically, an update on collective bargaining and asked for unanimous consent. ***Hearing no objection, the Assembly closed the open session portion of the meeting and moved into Executive Session at 8:50 p.m.***

H. STAFF REPORTS - *None*

I. NEXT MEETING DATE – *January 27, 2025 at 6:00 p.m. in Assembly Chambers and via Zoom.*

J. SUPPLEMENTAL MATERIALS - *None*

K. ADJOURNMENT

There being no further business to come before the committee in open session, Chair Smith adjourned the meeting at 8:50 p.m.