ASSEMBLY STANDING COMMITTEE
COMMITTEE OF THE WHOLE
Meeting Minutes – July 19, 2021

I. CALL TO ORDER

The Assembly Committee of the Whole Meeting, held in the Assembly Chambers and broadcasted virtually via Zoom, was called to order by Deputy Mayor Jones at 6:00p.m.

II. LAND ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

Assemblymember Christine Woll acknowledged that the City and Borough of Juneau is on Tlingit land, and the Assembly wishes 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*!

III. ROLL CALL

Assemblymembers Present: Loren Jones, Maria Gladziszewski, Wade Bryson, Alicia Hughes-Skandijs, Greg Smith, Christine Woll, Michelle Hale, and Mayor Beth Weldon.

Assemblymembers Absent: Carole Triem

Staff Present: City Manager Rorie Watt, Deputy City Manager Robert Barr, Assistant City Attorney Sherri Layne, Municipal Clerk Beth McEwen, Deputy Clerk Diane Cathcart, Finance Director Jeff Rogers, Engineering/Public Works Director Katie Koester, Deputy Parks and Recreation Director Michele Elfers, Community Development Director Jill Maclean, CDD Planning Manager Alix Pierce

IV. APPROVAL OF AGENDA

The agenda was approved as presented.

V. APPROVAL OF MINUTES

A. May 10, 2021 Assembly Committee of the Whole Draft Minutes

Hearing no objections, the minutes of the May 10, 2021 meeting were approved by unanimous consent.

V. AGENDA TOPICS

A. Tourism Manager, Tourism Survey, Visitor Industry Task Force (VITF) Implementation

Mr. Watt noted that staff would be tag teaming on this portion of the presentation between himself, CDD Planning Manager Alix Pierce and Parks and Recreation Deputy Director Michele Elfers.

Ms. Pierce provided an update to the Assembly on the information gathered about conducting a tourism survey. She explained that one of the key recommendations provided by the Visitor Industry Task Force was for the Assembly to collect data regarding community perceptions on tourism. Through the RFP process, CDD selected McKinley Research as the survey contractor. Ms. Pierce anticipated that the survey would be live by August. She added that one of their main objectives with this survey is to identify trends within public perception of visitor industry management. Ms. Pierce said that CDD is hoping to collect all of the survey results by October.

Ms. Gladziszewski asked Ms. Pierce to clarify how much the survey would cost. Ms. Pierce confirmed that the cost of conducting the survey would amount to $34,000.

Ms. Pierce answered additional questions from Assemblymembers regarding the mechanics of the survey, the types of questions and responses they expect, and comparing the questions to those questions featured in the 2016 survey.

Mr. Jones said he hoped that the survey would be available to anyone in the public that wished to provide comment, and to allow for comparison between various demographics. Ms. Pierce said that when they conducted the survey for the Parks and Recreation Master Plan, they used two survey models. One was a self-selecting survey that anyone who was interested in participating could go in and take. The second was a survey conducted by a survey firm using statistically valid survey methods. She said they then provided a synopsis of the results from both survey methods in an executive summary.

Ms. Elfers then provided a brief summary of the VITF recommendation implementation process, and said that many of the 2021 objectives could be accomplished either through an MOA with CLIAA or through CBJ staff.

Ms. Elfers also noted items that are broader based targeted for 2022 and 2023 that are related to ongoing issues which could be prioritized in the coming years. She described the recommendations as being a diverse range of objectives that target a wide scope that may require coordination between multiple entities. These recommendations target aspects such as design and planning, community development, construction, product development, marketing, wastewater, permitting, and cruise ship negotiations.

Ms. Elfers added that the VITF recognized the amount of recommendations and the capacity to accomplish these tasks. Due to these contributing factors, the VITF suggested a Tourism Manager position be created to coordinate the various pieces in one central entity.

Ms. Woll asked Ms. Elfers if there were any particular 2021 goals that she felt would be difficult to accomplish. Ms. Elfers said she believed that the City Manager’s collaborative work with CLIAA on the MOA will help accomplish some of these goals, but it will be hard to accomplish some of the items on the implementation list.

Mr. Jones mentioned one of the objectives, “Finish and Implement Blueprint Downtown”, and believes that the implementation of that project by 2021 did not seem likely. He cautioned the Assembly about the use of the term “implementation” of the VITF recommendations and advised them to use more realistic language for any Assembly actions taken on the recommendations.

Ms. Gladziszewski agreed with Mr. Jones’ comments, adding that VITF’s use of words like “require” would call for regulations to be put in place to ensure that those “requirements” were being met. She said that these recommendations should be interpreted as a ‘things to get started’ list.

Ms. Hale asked if these recommendations were using the language that had been delivered directly from the VITF. Ms. Elfers confirmed that the list provided to the Assembly is almost the exact same wording used by VITF in their report.

Mr. Watt provided an updated on his attempt to conduct the first MOA with CLIAA and the member lines for over a month. He mentioned that the VITF report recommended negotiating for changes, which has resulted in him working out an MOA which is practical and flexible.

Mr. Watt also addressed the Tourism Manager position, which he believed to be the largest recommendation from the VITF that centralized tourism functions. When people have a question about cruise ship tourism, Mr. Watt receives a large quantity of those phone calls. He said that Ms. Elfers, Ms. Pierce, and the Manager’s Office would benefit greatly from a centralized tourism position. Mr. Watt said that he hoped the Assembly would agree and be willing to fund that position. He described the Tourism Manager’s role in the scheduling of the Docks as an essential aspect of the position. He explained that cruise ships want to know a multitude of details: dock availability, access to shoreside support service, the time allotted at their dock, whether they have tour excursions for their passengers. The Tourism Manager position staffed through the Manager’s Office would provide for efficient port agreements that could allow for cruise ships to get back into service. Mr. Watt added that a Tourism Manager position would lead to a cleaner path for communication and would allow for Juneau’s tourism industry to be more successful.

Ultimately, Mr. Watt said that he was looking for the Assembly to forward to a motion of support to draft an appropriation ordinance to support the Tourism Manager position, using Marine Passenger Fee (MPF) Funds.

Ms. Woll had questions regarding the skillset needed for scheduling ships, and asked if that would be compatible with the larger management operations of the position.

Mr. Watt clarified that the Tourism Manager would not actually schedule the ships, and explained that a separate company manages scheduling the ships for all of Southeast Alaska. This position would provide a place at the table to participate in discussions about ship scheduling. He added that this position would take into consideration the impact that ship scheduling will have on the community, and whether any abatement measures would be needed.

Ms. Gladziszewski commented that the Tourism Manager position description and the hiring process are just the first steps in what this will eventually become. She felt that this position would need the authority to do the work, and believed it might not be entirely effective if the position only had the authority to simply request cooperation.

Mr. Smith asked about funding the position through the use of Marine Passenger Fees (MPF), and asked if CBJ was certain that would be an appropriate use of MPF. Mr. Watt confirmed that would be an acceptable use of MPF.

Ms. Hale asked for Mr. Watt to speak to Ms. Gladziszewski's comments, and to provide them with a more a thorough understanding as to what the position's authority would be across multiple entities. Mr. Watt described the position as being responsible for leading the public process, helping the Assembly organize its thinking, and directing ideas. He also spoke to the Tourism Manager focusing on internal communication through working with the Manager's Office and other CBJ departments.

As for the cruise ship companies, Mr. Watt said he would characterize them as ready and willing. He said that they understand the issues of concern in the community, and are willing to negotiate the needs of the community needs vs. the needs of the company.

Mayor Weldon thanked staff and VITF, and echoed what Ms. Hale and Gladziszewski said regarding putting all the pieces together for this position.

Mr. Jones reminded the Assembly that they are a policy body, not an implementation or administrative body. The Assembly hires the Manager to carry out the policies from the Assembly, and they do not direct any CBJ staff other than the Manager.

MOTION by Mayor Weldon to direct the City Manager to draft an appropriation ordinance in the amount of $150,000 using MPF to provide FY22 funds for a new CBJ position of the Tourism Manager. She asked for unanimous consent.

Ms. Gladziszewski asked if $150,000 was enough funding for the position. Mayor Weldon explained that she received that number from the City Manager. Mr. Watt added that the current amount is an educated guess, considering that it will be several months before they have the details in place for the position.

Hearing no objections, the motion passed by unanimous consent.

The Committee of the Whole took a break at 6:54p.m and resumed at 7:07p.m.

B. Ordinance 2021-26

C. Ordinance 2021-27

These ordinances were referred to the COW from the July 12 Regular Assembly meeting.

CDD Director Jill Maclean provided a staff report regarding the two ordinances. She said while it is unusual, it is not unheard of to have a different recommendation from the CDD Director vs. the Planning Commission recommendation.

She explained that the developer, Travis Arndt, had sought to rezone the property for commercial use, which is permitted through the Comprehensive Plan. She said it would be more in line with the Comprehensive Plan to rezone as a transitional zoning until improvements were made. She gave more details of the Planning Commission's decision to recommend changing from D-15 to light commercial. Ms. Maclean also mentioned that the Planning Commission required that CDD develop a land use map change at the same time.

Mr. Jones asked if anyone needed to see the presentation materials that had been included in the packet or if they wanted to hear from the manager. It was the group's consensus to hear from the manager.

Mr. Watt provided an explanation on why he recommended the staff's recommendation over that of the Planning Commission. When the Planning Commission took the issue up, they did not make new findings as to why they were deviating from the Comprehensive Plan. Moreover, he said that they added on that they also recommended a map change. If the Comprehensive Plan should change, then the Assembly should amend the Comprehensive Plan.

Mr. Watt said that the staff recommendation is not the only option available, but he felt it was a defensible path, as CDD staff had presented a procedural method that works. He mentioned that there were issues with the lack of findings by the Planning Commission that led to why he was recommending the CDD staff's recommendation.

Mr. Watt added that the Assembly could do multiple things, it is up to the will of the body to either go with the Planning Commission recommendation, go with CDD staff's recommendation, or it can send them back to Planning Commission for additional work.

Mr. Bryson defended the Planning Commission's decision to make recommendations that did not 100% align with the CDD staff policy requirements. He said that the reason why the policy recommendations differ is due to the two entities having two distinct responsibilities.

Mr. Smith asked if someone proposed to move this to D-18, would CDD staff have recommended also requiring conditions for road access. Ms. Maclean said that staff would have supported a D-18 zone change if that had been requested, because it conforms to the overall Comprehensive Plan. She also citied Chapter 11 of Land Use Maps, which states that all new zoning and rezoning are required to be substantially consistent with the Comprehensive Plan and

Land Use Maps. She further explained that the Comprehensive Plan is a 20-year proposal based on public input and Assembly policy decisions.

Mr. Smith asked if CDD staff's recommendation of rezoning D-18 to the Planning Commission would have been contingent upon improvements. Ms. Maclean said that staff would not have recommended any infrastructure improvements. They would have recognized requirements for D-20. She explained the reason they are recommending infrastructure improvements is because the light commercial zoning district allows for up to 30 housing units. She added that these improvements would allow for many commercial use opportunities, and there are several traffic and safety impacts that those commercial uses could bring. She did not find that a D-18 zone would have that same level of intensity.

Ms. Gladziszewski referenced past rezoning discussions between staff and entities, and spoke to the value in reviewing the past meetings that featured a difference of opinion for land use between CDD and the Planning Commission.

Mayor Weldon asked Ms. Maclean if she would determine the likelihood of the DOT approving of a turn out lane or sidewalk improvements, and which entity would be burdened with the cost of those improvements. Ms. Maclean shared that DOT submitted comments of concern regarding the rezoning project. She was not entirely sure who would be financially responsible for the project, although she noted that in other communities that burden falls upon the developer.

Ms. Maclean also spoke to the Atlin Drive rezone that Ms. Gladziszewski referenced. She found that the Atlin Drive project not to be applicable to this case, as it was not precedent-setting and involved a completely different situation.

Mr. Bryson believed that this request did meet the Comprehensive Plan, and pointed out the land in question was directly behind a general commercial zone, and found that to be in agreeance with the Comprehensive Plan. Mr. Bryson noted that allowing for the applicant to conduct business on this commercial area would generate additional property tax and sales tax for the community.

Ms. Woll asked if Ms. Maclean could to speak to the general commercial property adjacent from the property in question. Mr. Jones explained that specific general commercial property was grandfathered in there, and would not be permitted under current land use codes.

Mr. Watt explained the history of the zoning in the area, starting when the municipal water and sewer was installed along the waterfront. He also confirmed that the cost of improvements would be the responsibility of the developer. Mr. Watt said that it is up to the Assembly to decide what type of zoning and uses are developed in the community in those areas.

Ms. Woll asked if there were any other similar high density areas on North Douglas.

Ms. Maclean clarified that there were no high density areas on Douglas at all. The table of permissible uses includes all those uses in the industrial areas. She encouraged the Assembly to become familiar with the TPU. She advised the Assembly that it is very difficult to deny a CUP.

Mr. Smith mentioned that residents from North Douglas wrote in with concerns about safety, specifically about being on a blind corner. He asked if those issues be would addressed during the CUP process. Ms. Maclean explained that safety would be taken into account of the decision, although some light commercial uses are subject to CDD director approval, some are subject to Planning Commission approval. CDD would also ask for DOT comments.

Ms. Hale asked if the first ordinance (Ord. 2021-26) were to pass, would the Assembly still be required to decide upon the second ordinance (Ord. 2021-27). Ms. Maclean clarified that if Assembly decided to rezone to Light Commercial, then the map change would be required. If the Assembly wanted to make that decision, they would first need to approve the map change from medium density residential to high density residential; the zone change would need to be implemented 30 days after the map change.

Ms. Gladziszewski explained the motion at the Assembly meeting was to refer it to COW and set it for Public Hearing at the August 2 Regular Assembly meeting, therefore the Assembly did not need to make a motion tonight.

Mr. Jones said that if the Assembly were to end this discussion and adjourn, both ordinances would be up for Public Hearing for the August 2 Regular Assembly Meeting.

Mr. Jones shared that he had spent the past few days listening to and reading documents from the Planning Commission meeting. He agreed with the Manager's decision to make a different recommendation, as he felt that the Planning Commission was not ready to take staff's recommendation. He mentioned that he is the only Assemblymember that was there during the Atlin appeal. He recalled there was a minority opinion on that appeal that were not in favor of that rezone, and he was one of those four members with that minority opinion.
Mr. Jones said that the potential use of property during rezone should not be part of the rezone application process. For him, he felt that the Planning Commission was not listening or thinking about what might be possible on that particular piece of land. He referenced Mr. Bryson's comment that pointed out the General Commercial property nearby, however that property has a condition that requires it to only be used for automotive repair.

Mr. Jones noted that the Assembly now has the opportunity to decide what type of zoning and development should be considered for that area. He encouraged the Assembly to seriously consider this request, adding that he had strong concerns about this. He said if the Assembly were to keep this D-15 or light commercial, they would effectively preserve the past public comment opportunity for CUP. However, he said if Assembly were to allow general commercial development by rights that would eliminate public process. Mr. Jones asked the Assembly to consider if they want to allow residents to have the opportunity to provide public comment on potential development in their neighborhood.

VI. ADJOURNMENT

There being no further business to come before the Assembly, the Committee of the Whole meeting was adjourned at 7:52p.m.

Minutes drafted by Administrative Assistant Lacey Davis and respectfully submitted by Municipal Clerk Beth McEwen this 9th day of August, 2021.