

MINUTES

Planning Commission
CITY AND BOROUGH OF JUNEAU
Mike Satre, Chairman

Committee of the Whole Meeting
Juneau Economic Plan

December 16, 2014

I. ROLL CALL

Mike Satre, Chairman, called the Committee of the Whole meeting of the City and Borough of Juneau (CBJ) Planning Commission (PC), held in the Municipal Conference Room of the Municipal Building, to order at 6:00 pm.

Commissioners present: Mike Satre, Chairman; Dennis Watson, Vice Chairman; Bill Peters, Karen Lawfer, Ben Haight, Nicole Grewe, Dan Miller, Paul Voelckers

Commissioners absent: Gordon Jackson

Staff present: Hal Hart, Planning Director; Eric Feldt, Planner II, Tim Felstead, Planner I

Participants: Jim Calvin, Managing Principal and Senior Economic Analyst for the McDowell Group; and Barb Sheinberg, Sheinberg Associates

II. REGULAR AGENDA

Discussion of the of the Juneau Economic Plan's recommended initiatives.

Mr. Calvin provided a brief overview of the development of the Juneau Economic Plan, stating the process began about a year ago, and that they are now reaching the conclusion of the process. He said they have distilled mountains of information into what they believe will provide a viable plan for Juneau's economic development over the next 10 years.

They looked at all of the key industries in Juneau and all of the demographic trends as well, to see where the community was pointed from an economic and demographic perspective, explained Mr. Calvin.

A large portion of the project involved public engagement in which they surveyed 400 households as well as online surveys and business surveys. In addition they conducted numerous stakeholder meetings including several town meetings and meetings with high school students, said Mr. Calvin.

They also did case study research which involved looking at other communities and economic development in those communities to try to learn from those communities and to see what they could apply to Juneau. Based upon all of the public input they developed a vision statement for the community, said Mr. Calvin, as well as 10 guiding principles which he said he believes the community can all agree upon. Over the past couple of months they have been busy developing specific economic development initiatives, he said.

They settled upon eight initiatives which they think are important for the community to touch on from an economic development perspective, said Mr. Calvin. They're taking all of this information and distilling it into the final plan, he said, which if all goes well will be presented to the Assembly on December 29, (2014). After that they will be working with the Assembly for the next few weeks responding to their input on the draft, he said.

The draft of the Juneau Economic Plan is currently available at:
<http://www.juneaueconomicplan.org/>.

Mr. Calvin and Ms. Sheinberg briefly addressed the eight initiatives:

❖ ***Protect and Enhance Juneau's Role As Capital City***

Alaska is what drives our economy, said Mr. Calvin. We have 4,000 state government workers in Juneau, he said, with \$250 million in annual payroll. With all of the multiplier effects that is 40% of our annual economy, he said.

Support the Alaska Committee and make sure that we do all we can to ensure we are the best capital city, he said.

Build on our role as capital city by branding our community as a great place to live, said Mr. Calvin.

❖ ***Attract and Prepare the Next Generation Workforce***

They first need to understand what the needs of the employers are, said Ms. Sheinberg. Increasing the availability of child care is of primary importance, she said. Housing and childcare need to be available to both attract and retain workers in Juneau, she said.

Our educational system needs to be able to prepare youth to participate successfully in

the Juneau workforce with vocational and professional jobs, she said. Thirty eight percent of our private sector workforce is currently composed of nonresidents. A goal is to convert some of that workforce into a resident workforce, said Ms. Sheinberg.

❖ ***Revitalize Downtown***

This is the area that the million of visitors that arrive in Juneau each year notice first and it is where they form their first impressions of Juneau, said Ms. Sheinberg. While there are some exciting things going on in our downtown sector said Ms. Sheinberg, the number of dilapidated buildings and aging infrastructure do not contribute to a good first impression of the community. There are a number of things that vibrant downtown areas have that Juneau does not have, said Ms. Sheinberg.

❖ ***Recognize and Expand Juneau's Position As a Research Center***

There are 20 different research centers or activities conducted in Juneau such as the Forestry Science lab, the Ted Stevens lab, the weather service, the university, and the Rain Forest Center, said Ms. Sheinberg. These research centers are based upon the natural resources which we have, such as forestry and fisheries, she said.

The first objective would be to recognize what is already going on and to get the word out about that, said Ms. Sheinberg. But added to that, she said, there close to 300 Alaskan fisheries research management and science jobs of which 65 are located in Juneau and the rest are located in Seattle. The mayor has a task force on this effort to locate some of these jobs in Juneau, she said. Focused political leadership is a big part of what needs to happen to accomplish this, she said.

❖ ***Promote Housing Affordability and Availability***

Affordable housing is critical for economic growth in Juneau, said Ms. Sheinberg. Also housing for seniors will become increasingly important as the senior population grows, and housing for the inebriate population in downtown Juneau is a current and growing need, she said.

❖ ***Build the Senior Economy***

Facilitate the development of the services and facilities necessary for residents to comfortably and affordably retire in Juneau.

❖ ***Build on Our Strengths***

This involves doing what Juneau needs to do as a community to build and expand business opportunities taking advantage of our natural resources and creating wealth, said Mr. Calvin. With world-class assets as a visitor destination, said Mr. Calvin, we can continue to build upon that by attracting independent visitors, he said. Our role as an arts and cultural hub can be expanded upon, said Mr. Calvin. Mining is the highest wage job in Juneau, said Mr. Calvin, and every miner that we can convince to live in Juneau is

an increase to the economy, he said.

❖ ***Enhance Essential Infrastructure***

The cost of getting things to the community on a barge is closely tied to the cost of all goods in the community, said Mr. Calvin. Also closely connected to the essential infrastructure initiative is giving the community room to grow which can be accomplished by gaining access to the thousands of acres on West Douglas. That is a tremendous asset that the community does not currently benefit from, said Mr. Calvin. Improved access to West Douglas is key in terms of long-term development for the community, said Mr. Calvin.

Commission Comments and Questions

Mr. Voelckers said he thought the study was deep and well thought out. He asked Ms. Sheinberg's and Mr. Calvin's opinions on how the study could get traction in terms of implementation of the initiatives and goals.

Mr. Calvin responded they are now in the process of taking the eight initiatives, objectives and actions and identifying their recommendations.

Mr. Miller stated that promotion of housing affordability does tie in with other initiatives. He stated it may be helpful to have definitive pointers within each initiative to where it specifically relates to the other initiatives. Mr. Miller stated this is a great piece of work and that it had his total support.

Mr. Calvin stated that housing would clearly be at the top of their list and that it does relate to most of the other initiatives and that without success in housing there would not be success with many of the other initiatives.

Mr. Watson asked Mr. Calvin and Ms. Sheinberg what their first, second and third priorities would be in terms of the initiatives.

Ms. Sheinberg responded that they are currently in the midst of that exercise.

Mr. Calvin responded that for the long term growth success of the community that the west side of Douglas island needs to be accessed. He added that this is a long-term initiative and that with the extension of the Douglas Highway that progress towards this initiative has begun.

Ms. Sheinberg answered that with more than half of our work force being linked to the state that everything that we do to maintain our capital and a well-trained workforce that lives here is of utmost importance.

Ms. Grewe said she would like to see the Commission get together after the holidays to pick out their top three initiatives.

III. **OTHER BUSINESS** - None

IV. **REPORT OF REGULAR AND SPECIAL COMMITTEES** - None

V. **ADJOURNMENT**

The meeting was adjourned at 7:00 p.m.