

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

---

**REGULAR MEETING  
THURSDAY, AUGUST 19, 2021  
7:00 P.M. - COUNCIL CHAMBERS**

**A. CALL TO ORDER:**

The regular meeting of the Planning and Zoning Commission was called to order by Vice Chair Tudor at 7:00 p.m.

**B. ROLL CALL:**

Constituting a quorum, present in person were Commissioners:

Josh Tudor, Vice Chair  
Linda Combs  
Lisbeth Jackson  
Pamela Melin  
Sabrina Shelton

Absence(s) excused without objection:

Casey Peterson, Chair  
Kristy Thom Bernier

Also present were:

Brad Hanson, Community Development Director  
Nichole Degner, Community Development Specialist  
Pam Whitehead, Recording Secretary (via teleconference)

**C. PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE:** The Pledge was performed.

**D. APPROVAL OF AGENDA:**

The agenda was approved as presented by roll call vote of all members present.  
[Shelton, Melin, Jackson, Combs, Tudor; Absent: Peterson, Thom Bernier]

**E. MINUTES OF PREVIOUS MEETINGS:**

1. The minutes of the **July 15, 2021 Regular Meeting** were unanimously approved as amended by roll call vote of all members present, correcting under Commissioner Comments that it was Commissioner Jackson, not Melin, regarding invite to the Valley Community Recycling Center.  
[Shelton, Melin, Jackson, Combs, Tudor; Absent: Peterson, Thom Bernier]

**F. REPORTS:**

Director Hanson reported:

- They are working on the Annual Conditional Use Permit review for the October meeting;
- Extended thank you to Pam for taking on the City Council meetings and minutes in addition to the City boards and commissions in the interim until the City Clerk position is filled.

**G. AUDIENCE PARTICIPATION:** None.

**H. PUBLIC HEARINGS:**

1. **Resolution No 21-005:** A Resolution of the Palmer Planning and Zoning Commission Recommending City Council Approve a Zoning Map Amendment for Lot 7 Block 6, Snodgrass-Newcomb #2 Subdivision to be Rezoned from R-4, High Density Residential to CG-General Commercial, Located within Section 33, Township 18 North, Range 2 East, Seward Meridian, Alaska.

Vice Chair Tudor inquired of the Commission as to any ex parte contacts. None were disclosed.

Staff Report: Director Hanson reported general and background information on the requested rezone, including site information, parcel size, existing zoning, surrounding land uses, particular considerations, code requirements, and findings of fact. Public notice and publishing requirements pursuant to code have been met. A total of 6 comments were received in response, with 2 in favor, 1 opposed, and 3 no objection. Two comments were received on the table. The Applicant is Palmer Food Bank. They wish to convert this residential facility to a food bank.

Findings of Fact: Pursuant to PMC 17.80.036.C, the Report of the Commission shall give consideration as to what effect the proposed change would have on public health, safety, welfare and convenience, and for a map amendment show whether:

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

Staff finds the following support in the Palmer Comprehensive Plan:

- a) Goal 1 of Chapter 6, Land Use, of the Palmer Comprehensive Plan, under Objective A recommends guiding growth and development patterns by providing adequate space for expansion of commercial uses along the Glenn Highway. The subject property is located on Arctic Avenue, which becomes the Old Glenn Hwy.
- b) Goal 4 of Chapter 6 from the Comprehensive Plan encourages new commercial developments so residents of Palmer, residents of surrounding areas, and visitors can find the goods and services they need in Palmer. Objective B notes the importance of encouraging high quality, larger scale commercial uses along the Palmer-Wasilla Highway, and several other local highways.
- c) Chapter 7, Objective A of Goal 3 also mentions the need to provide space for commercial expansion; set high standards to ensure quality development. Objective A also notes that commercial growth is essential to Palmer's quality of life and economic health.
- d) The proposed change would support the objectives and goals of the City's Comprehensive Plan by encouraging commercial development, expansion and commercial use along W. Arctic Avenue (the old Glenn Highway) which is a major transportation link in Palmer road system.

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

Staff finds:

- a) The property for the proposed rezone is contiguous to CG zoning to the North, as well as on the West side of the lot. The East and South sides of the property are zoned R-4 Residential.
- b) Among other commercial land use in the subject area are other small businesses such as a retail and gift shop, hair salon, food trucks and a kombucha brewery, as well as a church across the street located on E Arctic Avenue.
- c) If rezoned to CG-General Commercial, this parcel would continue to be compatible with surrounding zoning districts and would allow the space to expand the Palmer Food Bank.

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

Staff finds:

- a) This property is adjacent to two main roads, East Arctic Avenue and South Denali Street, and would be adequate to meet any increased traffic demand in the area. Public facilities such as schools and utilities would have little to no impact to the potential rezone and are able to support the proposed change since there are several other compatible General Commercial uses in the surrounding area.

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

Staff finds:

- a) The proposed rezone request would match the zoning of the surrounding area of this property. Direct access onto S. Denali St from E. Arctic Avenue supports the flow of traffic onto the parcel and would be compatible with the surrounding commercially zoned properties in the area.

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

Staff finds:

- a) The proposed change does not grant the owner any special privilege as the property in question is contiguous to existing residential zoning and commercial development.
- b) The proposed change is consistent with the public welfare by permitting the future use of this property to be developed for commercial activity for the benefit of Palmer residents and visitors.

Staff Recommendation: (Resolution 21-005)

Based on the information provided by the applicant and comments received from the public, staff recommends approval of the requested rezone. Staff also finds the request to rezone Lot 7, Block 6, Snodgrass-Newcomb #2 Subdivision from R-4, High Density Residential to CG-General Commercial, is consistent with, and in conformance with the Palmer Comprehensive Plan.

If following the Public Hearing, the Commission finds that the applicant's proposal conforms to the Palmer Comprehensive Plan and Zoning Code provisions, then staff recommends that the Commission approve this request for rezoning Lot 7, Block 6, Snodgrass-Newcomb #2 Subdivision from R-4, High Density Residential to CG-General Commercial and forward a recommendation for approval to the City Council.

Public Hearing: (Resolution 21-005)

Vice Chair Tudor opened the public hearing at 7:10 p.m.

Applicant's Presentation:

**Tom Sojka**, representing the Palmer Food Bank and **Jeanne Borega**, Palmer Food Bank Director:

- Testified in support of the rezoning request noting the Food Bank was so happy to find the requested location in the core area of Palmer.
- Spoke to the location, explaining that many the Food Bank clients are in this area and many of them walk, so this is definitely the best location and the Food Bank definitely needs a bigger area that would include ample parking along with easier access in and out.
- Responded to Commissioner questions, regarding primary access. The primary entry into the food

bank will be Denali, but they will also have access out onto Arctic.

Written testimony was received and read into the record by Ms. Degner, from:

Anna Hanson, Palmer resident, in support of the requested rezone.

Detlef Wanke, Palmer resident, in support of the requested rezone.

There being no others to testify, Vice Chair Tudor closed the public hearing and brought the matter back before the Commission:

The Commission reviewed and unanimously approved Findings of Fact 1-5 as proposed by staff in support of Resolution 21-005 by roll call vote of Commissioners present.

[Shelton, Melin, Jackson, Combs, Tudor; Absent: Peterson, Thom Bernier]

Vice Chair Tudor called for the Motion:

**Main Motion: For approval of Resolution No. 21-005, recommending City Council approve a Zoning Map Amendment for Lot 7, Block 6, Snodgrass-Newcomb #2 Subdivision to be Rezoned from R-4, High Density Residential to CG-General Commercial, located with Section 33, Township 18 North, Range 2 East, Seward Meridian, Alaska, to include adoption of Findings of Fact 1-5 as recommended by staff in support of Resolution 21-005 and as reviewed by the Commission.**

Moved by:	Combs
Seconded by:	Jackson
Vote:	Unanimous ( <i>Absent:</i> Peterson, Thom Bernier)
Action:	Motion Carried by roll call vote.

**I. UNFINISHED BUSINESS:**

1. Committee of the Whole: Discussion of IM 21-016 regarding Palmer Municipal Code Chapter 17.59 T Transitional District (note: action may be taken by the Commission following committee of the whole).

**Main Motion: To enter Committee of the Whole for open and ease of discussion regarding IM 21-016.**

Moved by:	Jackson
Seconded by:	Shelton
Vote:	Unanimous (Absent: Peterson, Thom Bernier)
Action:	Motion Carried.

[The Commission entered Committee of the Whole at 7:25 p.m.; exited at 8:05]

Director Hanson updated the Commission from previous meetings regarding the T Transitional District, highlighting written report in the packet (p. 33). A draft Ordinance (Chapter 17.59 T Transitional District) has been prepared for the Commission’s review incorporating the changes discussed to date (see packet p. 35-38).

Committee of the Whole, discussion included:

- At-length Commission review of the draft Ordinance and open discussion for revisions and the process for implementation of the T District, concentrating on the yellow-highlighted sections;

- Director Hanson responded to questions and emphasized that before any zoning district is approved, following annexation, there will be a series of public hearings on land use for the people to come in and testify.
- Debate occurred regarding 17.59.080 D to become C. Director Hanson will rework the language on all of the suggested changes and bring back for approval at the next meeting.

[The Commission exited Committee of the Whole at 8:05 p.m.]

**Main Motion: To amend the sections of the T Transitional Zone as discussed in Committee of the Whole and direct the Community Development Director to do so.**

Moved by:	Combs
Seconded by:	Melin
Vote:	Unanimous (Absent: Peterson, Thom Bernier)
Action:	Motion Carried by roll call vote.

**J. NEW BUSINESS:** None.

**K. PLAT REVIEWS:**

1. **IM 21-020:** Pre-application plat request to create two lots from Tax Parcel A28 (Parcel #2, MSB Waiver 2001-70-PWm) to be known as Lucas Acres.

Director Hanson reported the plat request has been distributed to city department heads, who had no changes; responded to Commissioner questions.

The Commission reviewed and had no additional comments.

2. **IM 21-022:** Pre-application routing slip to create two lots from Tract A-1, ASLS 96-004, Plat No. 99-62.

Director Hanson, Community Development, commented that the one lot stretches from Denali to Valley Way; the petitioner is requesting to divide the lot into two. The lot is zoned Industrial with Special Limitations for a brewery and accessory uses. The new lot will require a different zoning designation which has been communicated to the petitioner.

The pre-application package has been distributed to city department heads: Comments from Public Works: Will need to obtain a suitable driveway permit, and the new lot will have to have public utilities installed.

Commissioner Combs commented that the development of this area has been and continues to be an important part of development, particularly for business in Palmer, and this seems to fit right in with the school of thought that's been around for quite a while. She has no objection because it has obviously been well thought out.

There were no additional Commissioner comments.

**L. PUBLIC COMMENTS:** None.

**M. COMMISSIONER COMMENTS:**

**Commissioner Combs:**

- Updated regarding the Senior Center, that with the up-tic in the Covid variant, has decided to go back to requiring a mask, noting however that no one is policing but caution is recommended.
- Encouraged everyone to come to the State Fair Parade this coming Saturday.

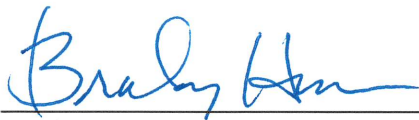
**Commissioner Melin:**

- Shared that she works for Providence and commented that compassion fatigue has really set in and to be aware that we are in a crisis right now with available caregivers because of the many political aspects injected into the overall public/private health crisis; commented that if anyone knows of anyone looking for work, many of the hospitals and nursing homes are looking and are short-staffed; fatigue is definitely setting in and we don't need this to happen in our healthcare system.

**N. ADJOURNMENT:**

There being no further business, the meeting adjourned without objection at 8:25 p.m.

**APPROVED by the Planning and Zoning Commission this 21<sup>st</sup> day of October, 2021.**



Brad Hanson, Community Development Director



Josh Tudor, Vice Chair