

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

**REGULAR MEETING  
THURSDAY, August 17, 2023  
6:00 P.M. - COUNCIL CHAMBERS**

**A. CALL TO ORDER:**

The regular meeting of the Planning and Zoning Commission was called to order by Chair Peterson at 6:00 p.m.

**B. ROLL CALL:**

Present and constituting a quorum were Commissioners:

Casey Peterson, Chair  
Penny Mosher, Vice Chair  
Linda Combs  
Lisbeth Jackson  
John Murphy  
(Vacant)

Absence(s) excused without objection:

Kristy Thom Bernier

Also present were:

Brad Hanson, Community Development Director  
Kimberly McClure, Community Development Specialist  
Pam Whitehead, Recording Secretary (via Zoom teleconference)

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

**D. APPROVAL OF AGENDA:**

The agenda was approved as presented without objection by all members present.  
[Murphy, Jackson, Combs, Mosher, Peterson; *Absent:* Thom Bernier]

**E. MINUTES OF PREVIOUS MEETING(S):** Pending

1. Regular Meeting of October 20, 2022
2. Regular Meeting of January 19, 2023
3. Regular Meeting of March 16, 2023
4. Regular Meeting of April 20, 2023
5. Regular Meeting of July 20, 2023

**F. REPORTS:**

Staff Report: Director Hanson:

- Updated status of Library meetings with Wolf Architects;
- Sometime soon expect to have a presentation to all the boards and commissions.

**G. AUDIENCE PARTICIPATION:**

**Janet Kincaid**, long time Palmer business owner (since 1976, Valley Hotel, Colony Inn) expressed concerns over having a homeless shelter in Palmer.

**Jackie GoForth**, near Palmer resident, also expressed concerns over the homeless shelter situation

noting it is a serious problem to have a homeless shelter anywhere near residential areas and bringing violent crime and blight to Downtown; itemized statistics around the country, noting homelessness is a national problem that needs to be solved but it is not fair to put residents in harm's way to solve it.

**Michelle Kincaid**, Palmer business owner (Kosloski Center, Palmer Hotel), also spoke to problems regarding the homeless in Palmer – spoke to drug use in public bathrooms, hotel room destruction, theft, panhandling; spoke to the trials that the business community is up against.

**Lorie Koppenberg**, property and business owner in Palmer (Vagabond Blues, Purple Moose), also testified to the problems posed by the homeless situation having dealt with the problems for 8 to 12 years and that it has progressively gotten worse with harassment of guests and staff; noted we cannot absorb a homeless shelter in our small town and advocated for not allowing it to be permitted.

**Denise Stotz** also testified to the homeless situation related to associated drug use, mental health, malnourishment, and complex social issues.

**Shea O'Malley** (Denise Stoltz' daughter) also spoke against having a homeless shelter in Palmer; spoke to some of her experiences working downtown and not feeling safe; advocated for not allowing a homeless shelter in Palmer.

**H. PUBLIC HEARINGS:** None.

**I. UNFINISHED BUSINESS:** None.

**J. NEW BUSINESS:**

1. **IM 23-007:** Consideration of Recommendation of a Text Amendment to Amend Palmer Municipal Code Chapter 17.08 Definitions, Palmer Municipal Code Chapter 17.20 R-1 Single-family Residential, Palmer Municipal Code Chapter 17.24 R-2 Low Density Residential, Palmer Municipal Code Chapter 17.26 R-3 Medium Density Multifamily Residential, Palmer Municipal Code Chapter 17.27 R-4 High Density Residential, Palmer Municipal Code Chapter 17.52 R-1E Single-family Residential Estate, Palmer Municipal Code Chapter 17.54 RR Rural Residential, Adding Homeless Shelter and Homeless Shelter Emergency, and Amending Humanitarian Service in Commercial Land use Matrix Chapter 17.28.020, and review of draft ordinance to Enact Palmer Municipal Code Chapter 17.18.020 Residential Land Use Matrix.

Director Hanson provided a comprehensive staff report for people to understand the origin of the order and its implications (see Packet page 9 for a summary report on IM 23-015 (formerly IM 23-007). Definitions are provided on packet pages 11-28, and the proposed Text Amendment on pages 31-41. One of the major gaps upon which the City has received inquiries is Homeless Shelters. Currently there is no definition in the context of the Land Use Matrix so Homeless Shelter and Homeless Shelter-Emergency have been added. He emphasized these are definitions only, that it is up to the Commission as to how they are regulated. He also explained the other revisions, the reasons why, and responded to Commission questions related to and explained ADA Compliance as relates to the Residential District.

Community Development recommends approval of the proposed text amendment to enact Palmer Residential Land Use Matrix, amend definitions as appropriate, and forward same to the City Council with a recommendation for approval.

**Main Motion: For approval of IM 23-007.**

Moved by:	Jackson
Seconded by:	Mosher
Vote:	--
Action:	(postponed to the next meeting on September 14, 2023)

Discussion and questions/request for clarification followed regarding proposed amendments related to homeless shelter and humanitarian service (p. 36 under Public Assembly, delete CUPs for Central Business Overlay, Commercial General, and Public zone (leave blank which indicates it is not a permitted use)).

**Primary #1: To amend 17.28.020 Commercial Land Uses to remove conditional use permits (C) under Public Assembly for a Homeless Shelter under CBD Overlay, Commercial General and Public zone, and leave blank which indicates it is not a permitted use (P).**

Moved by:	Jackson
Seconded by:	Combs
Vote:	Unanimous [Murphy, Jackson, Combs, Mosher, Peterson; <i>Absent:</i> Thom Bernier]
Action:	Motion Carried

[The meeting recessed for a short break at 7:20 p.m.; reconvened at 7:26 p.m.]

Director Hanson noted there may be reason for additional amendments to the Land Use Matrix and Definitions before sending to City Council; suggested postponing final approval to the next meeting to further define Humanitarian Service and Shelter Facilities in a way the community desires. The Commission agreed.

**Main Motion: To postpone voting on the main motion for further review of IM 23-015 (formerly IM 23-007), as amended, until the next meeting on September 14, 2023 (2<sup>nd</sup> Thursday instead of 3<sup>rd</sup>).**

Moved by:	Mosher
Seconded by:	Combs
Vote:	Unanimous [Murphy, Jackson, Combs, Mosher, Peterson; <i>Absent:</i> Thom Bernier]
Action:	Motion Carried.

**K. PLAT REVIEWS:** None.

**L. PUBLIC COMMENTS:**

Michelle Kincaid thanked the Commission for their work, noting it was a very informative process.

Lorie Koppenberg commented that it makes a big difference when the community comes in to share their concerns, noting that tonight this Commission listened to their concerns. Well done.

Dusty Silva also thanked the Commission for the manner in which they addressed the concerns.

**M. COMMISSIONER COMMENTS:**

**Commissioner Peterson:**

- Thanked the public for coming and speaking their concerns; very much appreciate the feedback;
- Reminded the Commission that the next meeting has changed to September 14, 2023 (2<sup>nd</sup> as opposed to 3<sup>rd</sup> Thursday).

**Commissioner Mosher:**

- Thanked the community for coming, noting that we in Palmer are facing the same as every other community across America today, having to do with our homeless with behavioral and mental health issues; that we need to reach out to our congressional leaders as well as we face this together.

**Commissioner Murphy:**

- Thanked everyone as well, noting that the Commission does listen and works with the community and hear what everyone has to say in making our decisions and how we go forward.

**Commissioner Jackson:**

- Reiterated what everyone said and thanked them for coming. And thank you to Kimberly and Brad for their hard work on this matter tonight. We do want to have our code in compliance and up to date as much as possible.


**Commissioner Combs:**

- Also thanked the community for coming and commented that she really appreciates the public spending the time because that is what it takes to make Palmer the special community that it is.

**N. ADJOURNMENT:**

There being no further business, the meeting adjourned without objection at 7:39 p.m.

**APPROVED by the Planning and Zoning Commission this 21<sup>st</sup> day of December, 2023.**

  
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Casey Peterson, Chair

  
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Brad Hanson, Community Development Director