

KETCHIKAN GATEWAY BOROUGH

Planning Commission/Platting Board Meeting Minutes

2/11/2025

The regular meeting of the Ketchikan Gateway Borough Planning Commission/Platting Board was called to order at 6:00 p.m., Tuesday, February 11, 2025 by Chair Michael Martin, and the roll was called.

CALL TO ORDER - PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE – ROLL CALL

PRESENT: Chair Michael Martin, Vice Chair Jos Govaars, Planning Commissioners Robb Arnold and Michael Medford. Commissioners Darlene D-Svenson and Diane Gubatayao appeared via Webex.

ABSENT: Commissioner Trevor Shaw

STAFF PRESENT: Planning Director Frank Maloney, Associate Planner Alethea Johnson, and Platting/Zoning Clerk Crystal Vail

PRESENTATION OF MINUTES – PC Meeting Minutes of January 14, 2025

M/S: MEDFORD/ARNOLD to adopt the Planning Commission meeting minutes of January 14, 2025.

DISCUSSION

none

Upon roll call the vote on the MOTION was:

YES: ARNOLD, GOVAARS, MEDFORD, D-SVENSON, GUBATAYAO, MARTIN

MOTION DECLARED CARRIED

SPECIAL ORDERS

none

CORRESPONDENCE

Chair Martin asked the commissioners to look over the on the table documents, which were sent through email to the commissioners participating via Webex.

PERSONS TO BE HEARD

none

UNFINISHED BUSINESS/ PUBLIC HEARINGS

none

NEW BUSINESS/PUBLIC HEARINGS

Martin described the procedures for public hearings and appeals of decisions of the Planning Commission/Platting Board. He read the agenda published on February 7, 2025, into the record.

Case 25-006 is a request to rezone Lots 1, 2 and 3; Subdivision of Lot 81, U.S. Survey 2403, and Lot 113, U.S. Survey 3385; located on the north side of the terminus of Powerhouse Road; Ketchikan Gateway Borough from the Low Density Residential (RL) zone to the General Commercial Zone (CG) (Resolution 4488)

Planner Johnson presented information on Case 25-006

Commissioners asked staff questions and discussed with staff about the following:

- Rezoning the proposed property may or may not alleviate the congestion in the state right of way on Powerhouse Road.
- The applicant applied for a rezone previously and the application was withdrawn before it was introduced to the assembly.
- A previous study was drafted to investigate the issues and identify possible mitigation strategies. The process was not adopted by the Assembly and other direction was given to a liaison program to be present in the problem area to mitigate issues on site. The program has been discontinued.
- Problems existed before the realignment of the Herring Cove bridge, which may have contributed to the issues not being addressed.
- Obtaining permission to park on private properties, such as at residences across the highway or on the Rainforest Sanctuary property, could be helpful in reducing the amount of traffic in the state right of way.

PUBLIC COMMENT

Nils Utterback, the applicant, presented a packet of photos to the commissioners and stated information regarding his request which included:

- The rezone request will provide a solution to traffic and vehicle congestion in the state right of way, giving legal parking spaces for tourism vehicles.
- The commercial zone does have limits of use, he proposes to keep his property available for tourism use with no charge to users.
- In the Herring Cove area, there are no options for tourism use outside of private properties.
- Herring Cove has become a requested destination for tourists to see native wildlife.
- If the rezone is approved, his plan is to provide a restroom, trash clean-up, trash receptacles and a small retail store for snacks.
- It is unclear to him why this proposal is recommended for denial.
- He has spoken with multiple tour and taxi companies and they have expressed their favor of his proposal.
- He is willing to work within guidelines to limit the uses on his property.

- He is currently under investigation for using his property for tour use and refuted the accusation.
- The current trend of tourists is to need close and convenient accommodations.
- There are commercial uses around his property on Wood Road and at the fish hatchery.

The commissioners asked questions of the applicant and he answered, regarding:

- Would the rezone create more illegal activity in the state right of way? The applicant asserted that his proposal would alleviate the illegal activity by providing a parking lot on his property and a designated turn around.
- Would the applicant be open to limitations, possibly created in part by neighboring property owners? The applicant answered he would be open to limitations.
- Has the applicant talked with Alaska Department of Transportation about performing maintenance on Powerhouse Road? The applicant stated he had not spoken with them about him performing maintenance on the road.
- Has the applicant considered building homes on his property since it is zoned residential? The applicant stated he had not on this property.

Chair Martin asked if there were any other remarks from the public to be made on this case. No other remarks were made and the public hearing was closed. He reminded the commissioners that a motion to adopt 4488 B is a motion to forward a recommendation of denial to the Assembly.

M/S: MEDFORD/D-SVENSON to adopt Resolution 4488 B

DISCUSSION

Medford agreed on the applicant's plan but stated he was opposed to the rezone because of the lack of information about traffic impacts and because the opposition of neighboring property owners.

Gubatayao stated she sees a lack of alignment with the current comprehensive plan and the lack of an impact study is concerning.

D-Svenson agreed that the applicant's plan may be effective, but more information is necessary to confirm that the infrastructure of the road can handle the traffic that would be allowed to travel on Powerhouse Road.

ROLL CALL:

YES- D-SVENSON, ARNOLD, GUBATAYAO, MEDFORD, MARTIN

NO- GOVAARS

MOTION DECLARED CARRIED

Martin described the timeline appeals of decisions of the Planning Commission/Platting Board

CONSENT AGENDA

None

REGULAR BUSINESS

None

REMARKS

DIRECTOR'S REPORT

Director Maloney reported on the following subjects:

- Comprehensive Plan Open House scheduled for February 18th in the Ketchikan High School Commons. Planning staff will meet with high school government students, discuss comprehensive planning with them and encourage them to take a survey.
- Comprehensive Plan working group meeting February 19th.
- Planning Staff review the code and base the recommendations for approval or denial on the criteria in the applicable code, evidence from agencies as well as testimony from neighboring property owners.
- There is interest from planning staff to encourage a neighborhood study of Herring Cove, including a traffic study.

COMMISSIONERS' COMMENTS

- Arnold thanked planning staff for the information presented on the rezone case.
- Gubatayao reported that the Historic Preservation Commission is considering applying for a certified local government grant for the purpose of writing a Comprehensive Historic Preservation plan. They are working on support for the Pioneer Hall, EC Phillips and St, John's Episcopal Church to obtain historic recognition. She commented on the important work to do regarding Herring Cove and the management of tourism activity in the area.
- D-Svenson thanked planning staff for allowing her to participate virtually.
- Martin announced that he would not be renewing his seat on the Planning Commission and he appreciated the time spent with the commission. He stated his intention and hope to return to a commissioner's role in the future.

ADJOURNMENT

M/S: MEDFORD/GOVAARS moved to adjourn.

With no objection, the meeting was adjourned at 7:33 p.m.



 Crystal Vail, Platting/ Zoning Clerk
 Planning Commission/Platting Board



 Jos Govaars, Chair
 Planning Commission/Platting Board