

# City of Valdez

*212 Chenega Ave.  
Valdez, AK 99686*



## Meeting Minutes - Final

**Tuesday, November 2, 2021**

**7:00 PM**

**Regular Meeting**

**Civic Center Conference Room**

**City Council**

**REGULAR AGENDA - 7:00 PM****I. CALL TO ORDER**

Mayor Scheidt called the meeting to order at 7:00 p.m. in the Civic Center Conference Room.

**II. PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE**

The City Council led in the Pledge of Allegiance to the American flag.

**III. ROLL CALL**

Present: 7 - Mayor Sharon Scheidt  
Council Member Todd Wegner  
Council Member Susan Love  
Council Member Dawson Moore (*by teleconference*)  
Council Member Jimmy Devens  
Council Member Dennis Fleming  
Mayor Pro Tem Alan Sorum

Also Present: 6 - City Manager Mark Detter  
Assistant City Manager Nathan Duval  
Assistant City Manager Roxanne Murphy  
City Clerk Sheri Pierce  
Deputy City Clerk Allie Ferko  
City Attorney Jake Staser (*by teleconference*)

**IV. APPROVAL OF MINUTES****1. City Council Special Meeting Minutes of September 23, 2021**

The City Council special meeting minutes of September 23, 2021 were approved as presented.

**2. City Council Regular Meeting Minutes of September 21, 2021**

The City Council regular meeting minutes of September 21, 2021 were approved as presented.

**V. PUBLIC HEARINGS****1. Public Hearing - Solicitation of Public Comment Regarding the Submission of a Community Development Block Grant (CDBG) Application to Fund Extension of Water, Sewer and Drainage Infrastructure for a Senior Living Apartment Facility**

Ms. Martha Barberio, Economic Development Director explained the CDBG program to the City Council and the listening public. The CDBG is a flexible source of competitive funding for a broad range of community development activities. Grant funding is available for the following three project categories; Community Development, Planning, and Special Economic Development.

Ms. Barberio explained an applicant can apply for a maximum amount of \$850,000 in grant funds during a funding cycle to address eligible community needs. The City is currently partnering with Cordes Development to build low-income senior housing, consisting of 28 to 32 newly constructed units. The City's proposed project, if awarded this grant, would include extending water, sewer, drainage, curbs, gutters, streetlights, and electric to the property line of the new senior living housing project.

Ms. Barberio explained housing for seniors qualifies as a basic rule for limited clientele within this grant project. The Valdez Senior Center's current senior housing facility currently has a waitlist of 24 individuals. The new senior living apartments will bring much-needed additional units to provide affordable living for local seniors.

Ms. Barberio asked members of the public attending the meeting if there were any alternative grant-qualifying project proposals they would like to bring forward that were needed in Valdez. The public made no comments or alternate suggestions.

Ms. Barberio outlined the next steps in the grant application process.

Mayor Scheidt invited members of the public to provide testimony on the City's intent to apply for the grant and the proposed grant project.

Dr. Kathy Todd, Valdez resident, stated she supported the project. She asked if the City would be applying for the maximum grant amount or another specific amount. She stated she also was interested in how the project team determined how many units would be needed in the new facility. Mr. Detter explained the City was applying for the full grant amount based upon preliminary cost estimates for the infrastructure needed. The City planned to donate the land on which to build the complex. Mr. Detter further outlined the cost estimates for the project, opportunities for federal tax credits, and grant application options. He stated the number of units in the new complex is based off several housing and other studies recently conducted by the City.

Ms. Deborah Plant, executive director of the Valdez Senior Center, stated the Senior Center had attempted in the past to expand their facility several times to meet community needs. However, they did not have the proper resources at that time to make it happen. Ms. Plant stated she was very supportive of the City's new senior housing project as there are many local seniors who were in desperate need of quality, affordable housing with adequate heating and plumbing. She stated she also appreciated the location of the complex was next to the local hospital and Senior Center.

Several Council members commented housing was the number one priority for Council and the senior housing project was a step in the right direction to addressing current community need.

**VI. PUBLIC BUSINESS FROM THE FLOOR**

No member of the public appeared to provide testimony from the floor.

**VII. CONSENT AGENDA**

1. **Appointment to the Prince William Sound Aquaculture Corporation Board of Directors (Three-Year Term)**
2. **Acceptance of Resignation from Valdez Museum & Historical Archive Board of Directors (Tom McAlister)**

Council Member Sorum thanked Mr. McAlister for his years of work on the Board of Directors and his contributions to the museum. Council asked the Clerk's Office to begin working on special recognition for Mr. McAlister's years of service to the community.

3. **Proclamation: 39th Annual Christmas Tree Lighting Ceremony**

MOTION: Council Member Devens moved, seconded by Council Member Fleming to approve the Consent Agenda.

VOTE ON THE MOTION:

Yays: 7 - Mayor Scheidt, Council Member Wegner, Council Member Love, Council Member Moore, Council Member Devens, Council Member Fleming and Mayor Pro Tem Sorum

MOTION CARRIED.

**VIII. NEW BUSINESS**

1. **COVID 19 Emergency Update**

Ms. Murphy updated Council on the new vaccination option for 5-11 year olds, including the arrival of pediatric vaccines in Valdez and her ongoing community outreach plan. She encouraged the community to get tested at the first sign of symptoms and to respond to DHSS contact tracers when contacted.

Council Member Wegner asked if there were any resource requests from the medical community which had not yet been obtained. Ms. Murphy explained Emergency Manager Aaron Baczuk was in touch with the medical community and filling resource requests as they were submitted.

Dr. Angela Alfaro, physician with the Alfa Doc, explained testing and oxygen supplies, as well as acquisition methods were currently stable.

Ms. Terri Lynch, Valdez Public Health Nurse, was pleased to report case counts in Valdez were on a downward trend. She encouraged the community to use all mitigation tools available. She updated Council on the pediatric vaccine PODs. She reminded the community to also get their flu vaccines. She stated the flu vaccine could be given at the same time as the COVID vaccine.

Council Member Devens reminded the community to get tested as soon as symptoms began to appear. Early identification of active cases helps to anticipate future needs of local medical facilities and helps reduce spread.

Dr. Alfaro updated Council on the current crisis standard of care and capacity in hospitals around the state, including Providence and Alaska Native Medical Center. She encouraged mitigation efforts to reduce the strain on the medical community both locally and statewide.

Council Member Devens asked if there were any patients in Valdez who had received a lesser quality of care because of the changes to hospital capacity. Dr. Alfaro stated she had not personally seen it, but could not speak for all the local physicians.

Ms. Pauline Doucet, Providence Valdez Medical Center Director of Clinical Services, stated Providence was still in the middle of crisis and the only reason things were still flowing was because it was being managed. She said they could not let their guard down at this point and shared a case where they had to consider transferring a patient to Seattle due to lack of in-state hospital bed availability. She stated Anchorage was still repurposing hospital units for COVID-19 patient overflow.

Dr. Kathy Todd, Valdez Medical Clinic, stated one of the reasons Seattle did not want to take a recent patient was because they had been afraid the patient would die in the air. She said, in Anchorage, surgical patients who may end up needing ICU beds were not being accepted in an effort to maintain the ICU beds for emergencies. She said there were all kinds of things being postponed, including colonoscopies and elective surgeries. She thanked Emergency Manager Baczuk for maintaining local testing supplies. She encouraged community members to test as soon as they have symptoms. She explained now was the time to push over the top of the hill to get the case count down and then the community could relax for a while.

Council Member Devens requested verification Dr. Todd had to send a patient to Seattle who would have normally been sent to Anchorage. Dr. Todd confirmed that in a normal scenario the patient would have been sent to Anchorage.

Council Member Fleming asked why the local COVID case count dashboard no longer showed vaccination status of new cases. Ms. Ferko explained vaccination status information was no longer being provided by the state for reporting at the local level. However, the state was reporting aggregate vaccination status information within the DHSS Response Hub website if citizens were interested in that data.

## **2. Approval of Extension to Valdez Local Public Health Emergency Mandate 004 (Community Mask Mandate)**

MOTION: Council Member Love moved, seconded by Council Member Fleming to approve extension to Valdez Local Public Health Emergency Mandate 004 (Community Mask Mandate)

Council Member Love stated transmission was still high, masking helped slow the spread. She stated she supported extending the mandate.

Council Member Wegner stated he was not in favor of extending the mandate. He explained he had not seen a lot of change in the community stemming from the mandate. He explained he had seen more positive change occur as a result of the recent Council COVID-19 Proclamation passed prior to the mandate. He encouraged Council to allow businesses and citizens to make their own responsible decisions.

Mr. Dakota Rajala, Valdez resident, explained he believed when he was not at work he should be able to decide whether or not to wear a mask.

Ms. Lorna Wise, Valdez resident, asked what science and studies had been conducted which had proven masks were more effective than taking vitamin C or other options. She played a video by Dr. Simone Gold for Council. She encouraged Council to consider alternate methods of assisting residents stay healthy, such as giving out vitamins to assist with healthy immune systems.

Mr. Daniel Price, Valdez resident, shared his concern over continuing the mandate. He played a video by Liz Wheeler. He thanked Council for their consideration of all viewpoints on the topic.

Mr. Ray Tapp, Valdez resident and pastor of Faith Harbor Fellowship, shared his love of Valdez and his gratitude for those serving on Council. He shared his concern over continuing the mandate. He explained the mandate was causing a great division in the community and many relationships were being needlessly broken by the effort to mandate something which was a human choice concern. He believed by putting an unenforceable, divisive mandate in place, the Council was causing confusion, anger, fear, and noncompliance in the city. He stated he felt the mandate was sowing seeds of division which he had not seen in the city in forty years. He advised Council to put more focus on a positive wellness campaign. He encouraged care of the elderly and unhealthy population. He stated the last year and a half had been highly toxic and poisonous in the mental health areas in the community. He asked if the community wanted to sow a generation of fear, division, strife, and anger or if time should be taken to look at every possible way to mitigate not just a dangerous virus, but also saving the city from division and negative impacts to mental health. He stated mental health issues could be just as dangerous as a deadly virus.

Mr. Bill Wise, Valdez resident, shared a video by Dr. Kevin Stillwagon. He shared his concern over children being forced to wear masks, causing what he believed to be an oxygen deficient environment. He asked if masks worked, why they insisted other people wear them. He asked if masks didn't work, then why make people wear them.

Dr. Todd explained masking blocked respiratory droplets containing the virus. She explained there were population studies done. She stated, in Kansas for example, each county had decided whether or not to have a mask mandate and each county with the mandate had notably fewer cases than those without.

Mr. Joe Prax, Valdez resident, stated the mandates were harmful because they created distrust. He stated vaccination was still the best approach for adults, possibly combined with social distancing. He encouraged those with questions to discuss vaccination with Dr. Todd. He explained it was hard to build community trust with a mandate.

Mr. Nate Smith, Valdez resident, stated if the mandate extension passed or did not pass, the community would continue to manage themselves and not enforce the mandate. He stated at some point Council would have to start treating people like adults again.

Ms. Gigi Obren, Valdez resident, quoted Mother Theresa saying "None of us can do great things, but we can do small things with great love." She explained masking had science behind it, and if they didn't work she didn't understand why surgeons and doctors had used them for years. She said masking was not perfect, but it was a small thing people could do to help. She explained the mandate was one more little push for people to keep track of each other. She asked for people to wear a mask to protect her, and she would wear a mask to protect others.

Council Member Devens agreed everyone was entitled to their own opinions, but no one was entitled to their own facts. He stated a lot of things said at the meeting were not factually correct and he hoped people would take the time to learn about the scientific method and the peer review process when doing their own research. He stated Dr. Kevin Stillwagon was not a medical doctor, but a retired chiropractor. He stated, when doing independent research, it was important to look for peer reviewed studies and listen to medical doctors.

Dr. Alfaro stated masking and social distancing was about decreasing the amount of spread in respiratory particles. She shared a word of caution on certain treatments being offered by strictly telemedicine doctors. She encouraged people to be extremely cautious as not every telemedicine doctor may have the patient's best interest in mind.

Council Member Fleming stated whether he believed in masking or not did not matter. He stated he did not support the mandate because of the division it created in the community. He explained everyone had different definitions of what constituted an emergency. He said, in his view, a real emergency would warrant a mandate with enforced consequences for non-compliance. He hoped no one in the community was being bullied from either wearing or not wearing a mask.

Council Member Moore said he did not like wearing a mask. He explained he did not see a difference between the mandate and the proclamation. He said the mandate was divisive and asked if those identifying its divisiveness were causing more division or helping to ease it.

Council Member Love stated, in terms of community division, it was important to acknowledge there was a level of division with or without the mandate. She stated the mandate would not change the culture around the pandemic, which was the real reason behind the divisiveness.

Mayor Scheidt stated she would not vote in favor of the mandate. She believed masking made a difference and she believed masks work. She stated, however, she did not believe the mandate was getting the desired effect. She explained she still believed asking the community to use every caution, as was outlined in the proclamation, would have more positive, forward progress.

## VOTE ON THE MOTION:

Yays: 4 - Council Member Love, Council Member Moore, Council Member Devens, and Mayor Pro Tem Sorum

Nays: 3 - Mayor Scheidt, Council Member Wegner, and Council Member Fleming

MOTION CARRIED.

**3. Appointments to City Parks & Recreation Commission (Two Vacancies, Each for a Two-Year Term)**

MOTION: Council Member Wegner moved, seconded by Council Member Devens to appoint Sharry Miller and Benjamin Rush to each serve a two-year term on the City Parks & Recreation Commission.

## VOTE ON THE MOTION:

Yays: 7 - Mayor Scheidt, Council Member Wegner, Council Member Love, Council Member Moore, Council Member Devens, Council Member Fleming and Mayor Pro Tem Sorum

MOTION CARRIED.

**4. Approval of Change Order with Harris Sand & Gravel for 10 Mile Dike Maintenance in the Amount of \$425,000.00**

MOTION: Council Member Sorum moved, seconded by Council Member Fleming to approve change order with Harris Sand & Gravel for 10 Mile Dike maintenance in the amount of \$425,000.

Council Member Wegner asked if there had been other applicants for the initial contract who had originally bid higher on the project because they knew this work would become necessary. Mr. Duval stated he did not know specifics of applicant bidding strategies. He stated the unit price for the class three riprap was a competitive number. He explained every applicant provided a price per cubic yard based on the criteria provided by Capital Facilities.

## VOTE ON THE MOTION:

Yays: 7 - Mayor Scheidt, Council Member Wegner, Council Member Love, Council Member Moore, Council Member Devens, Council Member Fleming and Mayor Pro Tem Sorum

MOTION CARRIED.

**5. Approval of Change Order #2 with Harris Sand and Gravel for the 10 Mile Dike Maintenance Project in the Amount of \$472,136.00**

MOTION: Council Member Devens moved, seconded by Council Member Sorum to approve change order #2 with Harris Sand & Gravel for the 10 Mile Dike maintenance project in the amount of \$472,136

Council Member Love asked if three feet could be attained and if it would still be



a goal down the road to add an additional three feet of height to the dike. Mr. Duval said they would like to continue pursuing the design work for a dike raise. He explained the dike raise was contingent on being able to extract gravel from the riverbed. Movement on permit approval from the Department of Natural Resources had been minimal and he did not fully expect to receive approval at this stage of the game.

Council Member Fleming verified the project was still under budget even with the change orders. Mr. Duval confirmed this as correct.

Council Member Love asked if the Flood Mitigation Task Force had any specific objections to the change order. Mr. Duval said there were no spoken objection to doing the first portion. The only concern expressed was over the second half of the project, the second three feet.

Mayor Scheidt asked if there was any foreseeable reason the project would come in over budget. Mr. Duval explained the conservative approach to the project. He stated using irregular imperfect materials always had some level of variability. However he felt confident in the contingency added to the contract.

Mr. Joe Prax, Valdez resident, stated his very first City Council meeting was on dike work due to Lowe River flooding. He suggested Council review the progress of the project beginning with its origin before considering funding it further.

**VOTE ON THE MOTION:**

Yays: 7 - Mayor Scheidt, Council Member Wegner, Council Member Love, Council Member Moore, Council Member Devens, Council Member Fleming and Mayor Pro Tem Sorum

**MOTION CARRIED.**

**6. Approval of Contract Award with Wolverine Summit JV for the Robe River Well House Project in the Amount of \$282,000.00**

**MOTION:** Council Member Wegner moved, seconded by Council Member Love to approve contract award with Wolverine Summit JV for the Robe River Well House project in the amount of \$282,000

Council Member Fleming shared his appreciation for the project.

Council Member Wegner asked if any other company had bid on the project. Mr. Duval stated Wolverine Summit was the only bidder on the project.

**VOTE ON THE MOTION:**

Yays: 7 - Mayor Scheidt, Council Member Wegner, Council Member Love, Council Member Moore, Council Member Devens, Council Member Fleming and Mayor Pro Tem Sorum

**MOTION CARRIED.**

**7. Approval of a Contract with Wolverine Summit JV for the Library Restroom Renovations Project in the Amount of \$607,000.00**

MOTION: Council Member Love moved, seconded by Council Member Sorum to approve contract with Wolverine Summit JV for the Library restroom renovation project in the amount of \$607,000

Council Member Fleming expressed concern over the vast difference between the proposed cost of the project and the original engineer's estimate. Mr. Duval explained the two factors which made an impact were HAZMAT and the need to cut out the concrete floor in the basement of the library in the process of replacing the bathrooms. He explained the companies were also padding their bids in response to supply shortages to make sure they were able to purchase necessary materials.

Council Member Fleming asked if it would be prudent to postpone the renovation in anticipation of supply costs dropping. Mr. Duval stated this was a project where no was an option, but he was not able to speak to being able to get a better price or value in the future.

Council Member Love asked how long the request had been pending. Mr. Duval explained it had been on the projects list since at least 2017 when he began working with the department.

**VOTE ON THE MOTION:**

Yays: 5 - Mayor Scheidt, Council Member Love, Council Member Moore, Council Member Devens, and Mayor Pro Tem Sorum

Nays: 2 - Council Member Wegner and Council Member Fleming

**MOTION CARRIED.**

**8. Approval of a Contract with M-W Drilling Inc., for the New Municipal Well #5 in the Amount of \$306,508.00**

MOTION: Council Member Love moved, seconded by Council Member Fleming to approve contract with M-W Drilling Inc, for the new municipal well #5 in the amount of \$306,508.

Council Member Devens asked if there was an increased risk of failure at well #4 triggered by the high demand of the fish processors in the summer. Mr. Duval stated it was a well which had been in service for quite some time and had produced well. However, with the increase in demand there was an issue of not being able to supply enough water with the well.

Mr. Duval reminded Council drilling the well would not be the full scope of the project, which down the line would include building additional infrastructure, including a well house and additional piping to hook into the current system.

Council Member Fleming shared his support of the project. He explained if it was done it would allow the processors to use additional water with less strain on the system. He stated it would also extend the life of the pumps.

Council Member Devens asked if the feasibility of cavitation being solved by

additional water storage had been looked into. Mr. Duval explained additional storage would not help if the storage locations could not be filled at the rate required to meet the water need.

Mr. Rob Comstock, Public Works Director, explained the added storage would help. However, well #4 overproduced in regards to original expectations and would still run the risk of cavitation due to current usage without another well helping fill the storage. He explained the added well would offer an opportunity to redevelop well #4, possibly increasing water output.

Council Member Devens asked if the well #5 project included an additional storage tank. Mr. Comstock stated the new well would be piped into the current storage tank.

Council Member Devens requested the timeframe for the project based on an approval from Council at the current meeting. Mr. Duval explained completion of the project, including the tie in to the current system, would take approximately two to three years.

Council Member Devens asked what the methodology for the aquifer study had been for the placement of the well. Mr. Comstock explained the engineers' approach, including the site being outside of the radius of the draw down for well #4.

Council Member Devens asked if there would be benefit in placing well #5 farther away, or if the cost of materials would negate said benefit. Mr. Comstock stated the site selection had been ideal for pipe-laying, maintenance, and was already owned by the City. The site also met all ADEC criteria.

Mr. Comstock explained the project had been on the Public Works project list for over 20 years. He stated it was the redundancy needed to keep the system running flawlessly.

Ms. Pierce, on behalf of a Valdez resident, asked if the large number of private residential wells in the area would be affected by well #5. Mr. Comstock stated the location was in an area without any residential wells. Well #4 was closer to the Blueberry Hill and Homestead Road neighborhoods. Council Member Wegner asked if it would affect the supplemental pump pressure to his home on Meals Hill. Mr. Comstock stated they would not notice any difference in water pressure.

#### VOTE ON THE MOTION:

Yays: 7 - Mayor Scheidt, Council Member Wegner, Council Member Love, Council Member Moore, Council Member Devens, Council Member Fleming and Mayor Pro Tem Sorum

MOTION CARRIED.

**9. Discussion Item: Feasibility Study Multi-Use Indoor Recreation Center Final Report**

Mr. Detter and Mr. Nick Farline, Parks & Recreation Director, briefly reviewed the feasibility study and executive summary included in the agenda packet.

Council Member Fleming asked where permanent employment numbers for companies such as Alyeska and Silver Bay Seafood had come from. Mr. Farline explained consultants had been hired to conduct the study and an extensive amount of work had been done to engage with local stakeholders and visitors. He stated the study was good for five years.

Council Member Wegner stated during the pandemic the Parks & Recreation department had not been able to access school facilities for recreation programs. However, he felt with creativity, some of those issues could be resolved moving forward. He said the school age demographic already had their needs being met by school supported programs. He said there had been a rock wall in the pool area and he did not know where the wall was stored now. He believed there were opportunities for programing without the need for a new facility. He said several of the proposed areas for the facility already had new amenities on them, such as parks, a dog park, and the community garden. He asked if the new things would have to be torn down to support a new facility. Mr. Farline explained there would be some labor involved, but it would be possible to move things like the fence around the dog park. He explained the goal of the multi-use facility was to allow opportunity for people to recreate through the winter. He stated there were a number of excellent facilities already, but gaps had been identified through the process and the facility would fill those needs.

Council Member Devens asked how much consideration had been put into building a micro recreation center similar to the Homer SPARC Center. He did not understand the cost difference between the gymnasium in the SPARC Center and the gymnasium proposed in the feasibility study. Mr. Farline explained the list of desired amenities created the scope of the project.

Council Member Devens shared concern over the methodology of the study. He stated only 43 surveys had been returned. He stated the study specified to have a target not exceeding \$15 million, but had not specified to have a target of the lowest number of dollars to meet the desired needs. He asked why there was a necessity for each item being a different line item. He asked why a turf field and playground could not be a shared space. Mr. Farline stated most line items did share space. He explained the cap had been applied to try and reduce scope creep. He agreed the amount of surveys had been minimal, but a lot of conversations had also occurred to develop the preferred options.

Council Member Devens asked if it would be possible as a future exercise to take a model like the SPARC Center and figure out how many of the needs could be

check marked in one or two spaces similar to it. Then the model could be given to the public for opinion. Mr. Farline agreed it could be presented that way if Council expressed the desire to move forward during the project session.

Council Member Wegner said it seemed like the analysis occurred the same way as other proposed city projects. The concept would be developed, then set aside and never acted upon because in reality there was only so much funding for projects.

Mayor Scheidt applauded Mr. Farline for going through with the study because it was an effort to listen to the public as a community priority captured in the Parks & Recreation Master Plan. She appreciated him trying to move priorities from the Master Plan forward, but unfortunately did not feel a new recreation facility was a priority for her and would probably be set on the shelf for now.

Council Member Wegner stated he was the Parks & Recreation Director during the indoor ice skating rink feasibility study, which also did not pan out due to funding and other factors. He encouraged Mr. Farline to not take feedback from Council as a loss.

Mr. Prax said back when he was on Council and they had discussed the now built middle school, they had to run the project through a consultant to take the project to the Commissioner of Education and have it approved for a state funding match. He stated they had been at the end of the design process when wrestling team came and requested a wrestling room. So the room was added, increasing the budget by \$1 million. When the consultant was asked if he thought it could still go through for a state funding match, his response had been he believed so. However Valdez had more per square foot gym space than any other community in Alaska. Mr. Prax wondered how many times feasibility studies had come back saying a project would not work. He understood Mr. Farline went through the process as requested by the community, but he felt the process was biased towards funding big projects. He stated he appreciated Council's caution.

## **IX. RESOLUTIONS**

### **1. #21-43 - Supporting the Valdez Senior Center Transportation Grant Program**

MOTION: Council Member Sorum moved, seconded by Council Member Love to approve Resolution #21-43.

Ms. Deborah Plant, Valdez Senior Center Director, thanked Council for their support of the transportation program. She said the Senior Center had been in the role as the lead agency for transporting seniors and disabled individuals, providing transportation services and attempting to fill gaps for five years. She explained the pandemic had triggered a decrease in ride requests. However, they were experiencing expansion in the types of rides being requested to

include mail pickups and grocery shopping. She stated thus far in 2021, they had provided over 2,000 rides, compared to over 5,000 rides in 2019.

Council Member Devens said the program had been invaluable to the community.

Ms. Gigi Obren, Providence Valdez Medical Center, shared her support for the program. She stated it was an asset to have the program available for those who needed rides to the physical therapy program at the hospital.

**VOTE ON THE MOTION:**

Yays: 7 - Mayor Scheidt, Council Member Wegner, Council Member Love, Council Member Moore, Council Member Devens, Council Member Fleming and Mayor Pro Tem Sorum

**MOTION CARRIED.**

**2. #21-44 - Adopting "Plan Valdez" the 2021 Comprehensive Plan**

**MOTION:** Council Member Sorum moved, seconded by Council Member Love to approve Resolution # 21-44.

Planning Director Kate Huber explained the plan was designed to capture the community's vision for the next twenty years. It established a blueprint for future land use and infrastructure development and was meant to be an important and useful tool for Council, Staff, and the Commissions. The plan revision was a long time coming. She outlined the public input process. She explained the plan was intended to be revisited every five years for updates moving forward.

Ms. Meilani Schijvens, Rain Coast Data Director, reviewed the economic elements of the Plan, contained on pages 4-5 in the agenda packet.

Ms. Wende Wilbur emphasized the information for the place types had been taken directly from data provided by Ms. Schijvens. She explained the goal of the place types had been to guide how Valdez should grow incrementally and transition over time.

Mr. Chris Mertl, Corvus Design, shared his enthusiasm for the project. He explained one of the key things his company heard from the public was to make sure they represented Valdez and make the plan implementable with action items. He briefly outlined Chapter 6, "Goals and Actions", of the revised Comprehensive Plan included in the agenda packet.

Ms. Huber summarized the public hearing held with the Planning & Zoning Commission and reviewed recommendations made by the Commission. Based on feedback from the public, the Planning & Zoning Commission recommended an amendment during their meeting to action 2.1c of the plan, as well as changes to the importance level and metric for the action. This amendment was detailed in the Council agenda packet materials. The Commission voted unanimously for the implementation of the Plan and recommended changes to action 2.1c.

Mr. Detter stated it had been five years putting the Comprehensive Plan together. He shared his enthusiasm for the document. He stated his only comment was Council had stated the high priority items list was too extensive and would be

difficult to accomplish. He said there was a two-year guideline to rework Title 17, but anything shorter, as was recommended by the Planning & Zoning Commission, would be tough. He said city staff would work hard to try and push forward the recommended changes, but felt it needed to be recognized the short timeline goal set may not be attainable. The plan revision involved not just the work of city staff, but also a fifteen-member community steering committee. He recommended approving the plan as originally presented. He urged Council not to accelerate any of the goals or set unrealistic timelines.

Council Member Sorum stated he appreciated the implementation plan. He explained it would be the responsibility of Council to make sure the Planning Department had the resources they needed to accomplish the actions set forth in the plan. He agreed the six-month timeline recommended by the commission was likely not feasible.

Council Member Devens verified Mr. Detter believed prioritization, metrics for completion, and the body tasked with each goal was defensible. Mr. Detter stated it was both defensible and also ambitious. He said the Planning Department and others on the list had their work cut out for them. He explained when he was hired, completing the Comprehensive Plan revision was one of the top priorities he had been given. He explained the timelines and goals were things Administration would have to regularly check-in on with department directors to both hold them accountable for progress and assess operational needs were being met.

Council Member Devens asked if there was a situation where two goals with a similar priority were competing with each other, if it would be up to Council, Administration, or City departments to decide which should receive focus. Mr. Detter explained it would be item specific. However, if it related to Valdez Municipal Code, it would fall on Council to decide. If it were a matter of workflow priority, it would fall on the city manager and his staff.

Council Member Fleming shared his concern over all the high priority items in the plan. He understood there was an implementation plan to move forward. However, he was concerned there was not enough Council involvement as checks and balances. He was concerned the Planning Department may fall behind on day-to-day things while trying to attain unrealistic project goals. He shared his worry over overwhelming the Planning Department. He did not want to set city staff up for failure. He requested a meeting with the Planning Department to discuss priorities, goals, timelines, and the department's needs.

Mr. Detter said there might be other issues brought to Council and Administration in the future which were not on the priorities list. He stated it would be appropriate to have a discussion about how those other issues would impact or delay current items on departmental work lists. He explained his preference would have been to wait and develop the Waterfront Master Plan and the Parks & Recreation Master Plan until after the Comprehensive Plan was complete. However, he understood why the departments had gone ahead with their plans. He did not see anything in the Comprehensive Plan that fell in conflict with the recent departmental master plans. He stated the Comprehensive Plan would be the guiding document and items in the departmental master plan might not rank as high a priority.

Mayor Scheidt agreed it would behoove Council and Administration to set up a

timeline for regular progress check-ins. She said she viewed the Comprehensive Plan as a roadmap to guide decisions and funnel efforts towards a larger goal. She thanked the C-PAC members, Planning & Zoning commission, city staff, all of the consultants, and all of the members of the community who participated in the process. She appreciated the document had actionable steps and priorities that would guide the community forward. She was proud of the work accomplished.

Mr. Nate Smith, developer of East Peak Resort, requested Council give his group a chance to help accelerate some of the timelines in the plan. He stated city staff should not be exclusively responsible to achieve results and members of the community could help in the effort. He explained his company was working with their attorney on a draft for the resort overlay district. He did not see any reason why the city could not accelerate approval of the specific rewrite of Title 17 related to that district. He explained the rewrite of Title 17 did not need to be completed all at once, it could be done in more manageable sections. He said the initial draft revision from their attorney was about two weeks from completion. He said accelerating the timeline for Valdez Municipal Code revisions was what the public wanted and needed. He stated he agreed six months was too ambitious of a timeline and suggested changing the metric to one year to allow breathing room while maintaining forward progress. He stated he appreciated Council's support.

Mayor Scheidt asked what Mr. Smith felt his group could do to help move the process forward. Mr. Smith explained his team had developed a draft for the resort overlay district portion of Title 17. Rather than wait for a city contractor to rewrite the entirety of Title 17, he felt his team could offer what they had already drafted to help move the process forward. He said his team was spending their own money to help develop recommended zoning code for the resort overlay.

Mayor Scheidt stated she thought the Comprehensive Plan stated, prior to designating a resort overlay district, a master plan of the East Peak property area should be developed. She asked if Mr. Smith's team had worked on a creating a master plan. Mr. Smith explained his team had put a lot of work into the process, but not to the professional level of a formal feasibility study.

Mayor Scheidt stated she believed the area was to be zoned Residential/Recreational and then the overlay would go over the top of that zoning district. She asked if rezoning to Residential/Recreational would suffice to allow Mr. Smith's team to get to the point where they could sell land for residential use or if the overlay was necessary for land sales to occur. Ms. Wende Wilbur clarified, if the land was purchased purely to develop subdivisions for residential use, the overlay would not be necessary. However, if property buyers intended to develop hotels and lodging on the land, an overlay would be necessary.

Mr. Smith said it was necessary to start somewhere. He outlined missed opportunities and explained he was just asking to get the Title 17 revision process started.

Mr. Prax stated he understood the revised plan would be approved by Council. He explained situations with delays in permitting and development due to zoning issues demonstrated why the revised plan would not work. He explained time was money and developers were frustrated when dealing with City regulations.



He said Council had brought in an Alaska company to create the Plan. He stated the project team should have capitalized on incorporating the impact of the Alyeska Pipeline Terminal instead of ignoring it. He stated he felt the first five pages of the plan rewrite should have been Alyeska-support specific, including how training could be offered in Valdez to their employees, how staff could be kept here instead of living elsewhere and coming to Valdez only while on-shift, and what other businesses could be created to support the terminal. He explained he felt Valdez could not diversify away from the oil industry.

Mr. Prax explained to offset revenue collected from Alyeska's property taxes, the City would need 416 Totem Inn's, or 4,167 Prospector buildings, or 8,333 average \$300,000 homes. He shared his frustration that the Alaska-based contractor who helped revise the Plan completely missed Alyeska. He said, without Alyeska the community would lose the U.S. Coast Guard, Prince William Sound College, RCAC, and property tax revenue would go away. He said the goals and timelines set in the plan revision were also impossible to ask of the city manager. He shared his concerns over housing. He said, in a survey conducted several years ago, 85% of those surveyed were happy with the house they were currently living in. He said it did not matter what type of house was built in Valdez, people would buy it. He explained if a more expensive home was built, then someone would move and their current home would become available.

Mayor Scheidt verified the vote would be on the Comprehensive Plan as presented, not with the amendments proposed by the Planning & Zoning Commission. Ms. Pierce confirmed that a member of Council would have to make a motion to amend the plan if they wanted to include the recommendations of the commission. A motion to amend the plan was not heard.

**VOTE ON THE MOTION:**

Yays: 6 - Mayor Scheidt, Council Member Love, Council Member Moore, Council Member Devens, Council Member Fleming and Mayor Pro Tem Sorum

Nays: 1 - Council Member Wegner

**MOTION CARRIED.**

**3. #21-45 - Authorizing the Submission of a Community Development Block Grant Application for the Valdez Senior Living Apartment Project**

**MOTION:** Council Member Devens moved, seconded by Council Member Fleming to approve Resolution # 21-45.

**VOTE ON THE MOTION:**

Yays: 7 - Mayor Scheidt, Council Member Wegner, Council Member Love, Council Member Moore, Council Member Devens, Council Member Fleming and Mayor Pro Tem Sorum

**MOTION CARRIED.**

**X. REPORTS**

1. **Procurement Report: Contract Award with New Horizons Telecom, Inc. for Valdez Public Safety Radio Repeater Upgrades Design Build Project in the Amount of \$64,764**
2. **Monthly Treasury Report: September 2021**
3. **Report: Change Order Meals Hill Master Plan Contract**

**XI. CITY MANAGER / CITY CLERK / CITY ATTORNEY / MAYOR REPORTS****1. City Manager Report**

Mr. Detter updated Council on the Alaska Housing Finance Corporation extended deadline for the senior housing application.

Mr. Detter shared good news, explaining the bed tax came back reflecting a successful tourism season due to the hard work of the entire community.

**2. City Clerk Report**

Ms. Pierce explained Brena, Bell, and Walker has agreed to dedicate attorney Jack Wakeland to assist staff with the comprehensive revision of Title 17 of Valdez Municipal Code.

She informed Council she would be attending the Alaska Municipal League Conference and teaching parliamentary procedure for local government for newly elected officials. She would also be attending the Alaska Municipal Clerks Conference and teaching parliamentary procedure there as well.

She stated she would be presenting three ordinances hopefully by the end of the month, once she finished collecting information and consulted further with the city attorney and police chief.

She provided a brief update on the return to Council Chambers, including working completed with the Chariot Group, the City Information Technology Department, and Capital Facilities Department to confirm all aspects of the remodel were fully operational prior to moving meetings back into Chambers.

**3. City Attorney Report**

Mr. Staser reviewed current cases and topics his firm is working on behalf of the City, including redistricting, the C-Plan, Pacific Pile & Marine, Alaska Trappers, BP Hilcorp, RCA appeal, and escaped property.

**4. City Mayor Report**

Mayor Scheidt outlined the recent successful Valdez Mariculture Conference, highlighting former Governor Bill Walker's presentation to conference attendees and attendance by leaders in the maritime culture industry from across the country.

Council Member Sorum complimented Martha Barberio, Jeremy Talbott, and

Tommy Sheridan for their hard work towards holding such a successful event.

## **XII. COUNCIL BUSINESS FROM THE FLOOR**

Council Member Moore thanked Mr. Detter, the Planning Department, and the contractors for a well-presented Comprehensive Plan revision.

Council Member Love shared her invitation from PVMC Infection Preventionist Olivia Foster to attend the 0-3 Alliance meetings moving forward. She asked her Council colleagues if it would be appropriate for her to attend in her capacity as a Council Member, as a parent in the Valdez community, as a member of the Valdez Co-Operative Preschool Board Member, or as all three. Council provided consensus they felt it would be appropriate for Council Member Love to attend 0-3 Alliance meetings as a Council representative in addition to her other personal roles.

Council Member Devens stated while there were certain small elements of the Comprehensive Plan which did not line up with his vision for Valdez, he believed due diligence had been put into the revision. He said the primary concern he had heard from citizens was that it was too ambitious.

## **XIII. ADJOURNMENT**

There being no further business, Mayor Scheidt adjourned the meeting at 11:08 p.m.