



Legislation Text

File #: ORD 21-0009, **Version:** 1

ITEM TITLE:

#21-09 - Establishing the City Beautification Commission. Second Reading. Adoption.

SUBMITTED BY: Allie Ferko, MMC, Deputy City Clerk

FISCAL NOTES:

Expenditure Required: N/A

Unencumbered Balance: N/A

Funding Source: N/A

RECOMMENDATION:

Approve ordinance #21-09. Second reading. Adoption.

SUMMARY STATEMENT:

Ordinance #21-09 is presented for second reading and adoption. If approved at second reading, the City Clerk's Office will begin advertising for citizens interested in applying to serve on the commission. Staff anticipate candidate applications will be presented to Council for appointment in late October or early November. Once seven commissioners are appointed, the first commission meeting will be scheduled.

Background: The Mayor's Beautification Task Force was first commissioned by Mayor Dave Cobb in 2012 to address a coordinated, all-season beautification and revitalization effort throughout the community. Mayors Larry Weaver, Ruth E. Knight, Jeremy O'Neil, and Sharon Scheidt continued this effort.

The Beautification Task Force worked diligently since 2012 to enhance the aesthetics of the local human built environment to reflect the beauty of the surrounding natural environment.

They developed multiple successful and highly visible aesthetic programs since 2012, to include:

- The "Welcome to Valdez" sign near milepost 18 of the Richardson Highway,
- The City of Valdez Beautification Matching Grant Program, and
- The Egan Drive Streetscape Enhancement Project, which created intersection pocket plazas, decorative pedestrian lighting, and a now highly photographed welcome arch over the Richardson Highway.

In late 2019, Jeremy O'Neil (the Mayor at the time) requested the Beautification Task Force begin having discussions about the future of the group, as city task forces are intended to be limited in time and/or scope. Since the Beautification Task Force had been in place since 2012, former Mayor O'Neil charged the task force members to thoughtfully consider if the task force had (a) accomplished its objectives and should therefore sunset or (b) still had enough future or ongoing work to justify codification as a city commission.

After a brief delay in 2020 due to the community's COVID-19 response, the Beautification Task Force worked together over the course of many months to develop a recommendation to City Council regarding the future of the group.

This recommendation (outlined below) was informally presented during the City Council's 2021 summer strategic planning retreat and then discussed again during the City Council boards and commissions planning work session on August 31, 2021.

City Council provided direction to staff to bring forth an ordinance creating a Beautification Commission for further discussion.

Multiple current Beautification Task Force members will be present at the meeting to answer questions about their process thus far and their recommendation below.

Please note, if City Council decides not to transition the Beautification Task Force into a commission, the task force will automatically sunset. Current task force members are aware this is the case.

Beautification Task Force Recommendation

- **Name/Type:** Beautification Commission
- **Composition:** Seven commissioners each to serve a ~~three-year~~ two-year term. A chair and chair pro tempore will be elected at the first meeting of the commission.
- **Representation:** Commissioners should not be assigned specific sectors so as to not limit interested participants. However, Council could consider maintaining a variety of stakeholder representation during the commission selection/appointment process.
- **Staff Advisor:** Clerk's Office. However, due to existing workload of the department, commissioners must/will be actively involved in performing the work of the commission.
- **Meeting Schedule:** Commission should continue to meet once per month at their regular meeting time - noon on the last Monday of the month.

- **Commission Mission Statement:** The Beautification Commission advocates for, promotes, and enhances the aesthetics of the community's human built environment to reflect the beauty of the surrounding natural environment and build a sense of place and civic pride.

- **What commission success looks like in ten years:** Positive momentum towards passionate, sustained community engagement and pride in the aesthetic environment of our community.

- **Commission Responsibilities** (in no particular order):
 - Serving as an advisory commission to the city council.
 - Building community, a sense of place, and civic pride through beautification projects, educational programming, and activities focused on the aesthetics of town, including but not limited to design, landscaping, and public art.
 - Serving as a collection point for public feedback regarding aesthetics of the community and associated needs/wants.
 - Advising on the aesthetic components of city projects and public-private partnership projects, as requested.
 - Advising on code enforcement efforts related to community aesthetics, as requested.
 - Administering city-funded beautification grant and incentive programs.
 - Facilitating applications to obtain outside beautification grant funding.
 - Consulting with other city boards and commission on their work as it relates to community aesthetics.
 - Participating in the comprehensive planning process as it relates to community aesthetics.
 - Providing recommendations to city council thru the city budget process regarding beautification program or beautification project priorities for funding.

- **Commission Goals:** These will be set during the first couple of meetings once the commission is established. The task force did not want to get into too much detail or spend too much time on goal setting until they received confirmation the Council wanted them to continue their work in the form of a commission.

They did provide a few examples of goals, including but not limited to:

- Setting up a process to collaborate with other commissions, code enforcement, capital facilities, etc. after commission creation. Perhaps through joint work sessions. Collaboration process in place by January 2022. Commission would then know what

their role would be with each. Other entities would also know how/when the commission could help.

- Administer the beautification matching grant program annually, as long as funding and interest from property owners continue. Perhaps emphasizing landscaping or art in future years.
- Gathering input thru a variety of avenues on where the public believes the focus should be for beautification efforts moving forward. Done by the end of 2021. Does not need to be done by a contractor - can be a grassroots effort. Have this be an annual occurrence. Discussion about having a 2-3 person team of commission members staffing vendor booths at events to gather input using a paper survey of some sort. Would have to think out process to ensure we meet compliance with statute and have strict guidelines for the commissioners participating.
- Commission develops a public art/mural program. Solicitation to artists to envision where and what type of art would best be suited for different areas of the city. Brainstorming session in early 2022 and future plan, with request for funding if necessary, by budget time in 2022.
- Commission develops an interactive presentation on the economic and social benefits of beautification by the end of 2021. Commission members use the presentation to do outreach to 5-10 community organizations in 2022.
- In late 2021 or early 2022, begin discussing/revisiting the “Valdez Home and Garden Show” concept. With the goal to help property owners with the resources and ideas needed to improve the aesthetics of their property. During the show, connect home/property improvement vendors with property owners, provide educational sessions on types of landscaping/plants that do well in our climate, provide educational sessions on basic home improvement skills in a home show type setting, etc. This may be a potential partnership opportunity with PWSC and other private entities.
- There continues to be discussion on the need for a centralized “town square” or centralized outdoor gathering/community use space in the core downtown area to pull together the pedestrian experience and overall aesthetic of town. So this is likely to be one type of project championed by this group in the future.