

Variance Debate Highlights Cannery Row Parking Problem

Friday, 07 December 2012

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Maggie Wall/KMXT

The problem of parking downtown near the processing plants took up much of the Kodiak Island Borough Assembly's time during last night's regular meeting.

The assembly sat as a Board of Adjustment in an appeal of a recent planning and zoning commission decision to deny a local seafood processor a variance to have fewer parking spots than required by code.

KMXT's Maggie Wall has more.

--((Boro Ass Parking 4:41 “No one denies…to the variance. SOQ”))

No one denies that there's a parking problem on Shelikof Street. From the end nearest the Mall, all the way out to City Dock parking is a catch as catch can situation. Neighboring business have complained that Pacific Seafoods uses too many on-street parking spots for its cannery workers.

The Kodiak Island Borough Planning and Zoning Commission recently denied a variance request by Pacific Seafoods, formerly known as Island Seafoods, to be allowed to have fewer parking spots than required by code.

Pacific Seafoods's John Whiddon argued the inequity between his plant and the others on Cannery Row:

Parking 1 :48 “When we first bought…in the seafood industry.”

Several neighboring business owners testified against the variance. One was Chris Wing, who owns a business across the street:

Parking 2 :35 “This variance should be denied…seem equitable to me.”

Bill Alwert owns Pickled Willys:

Parking 3 :27 “I think you …aren't employees.”

Several of those testifying said that the fact that Pacific Seafoods grew and needed more space for the plant is a business issue, not a

public parking problem. Assemblyman Mel Stephens:

Parking 4 : 35 "The record shows...which creates this."

Ironically, some of the comments most supportive of Whiddon and Pacific Seafoods came from a competitor down the street. Assembly member Tuck Bonney, who works for Alaska Pacific Seafoods said the borough staff and others didn't seem to understand how processors worked:

Parking 5 : 52 "In all the fish meetings...this is about the processing industry."

In the end, the assembly approved a plan to require five retail spots, five van spots and 10 tandem parking spots.

Assemblywoman Chris Lynch excused herself from the proceedings since she was one of the neighboring business owners opposed to the variance.

"m Maggie Wall.###