MUNICIPALITY OF ANCHORAGE

Mayor Dave Bronson

Director's Interpretation Memo 2022-01

DATE: July 14, 2022

TO: Planning Department

FROM: Craig H. Lyon, Planning Director

SUBJECT: Interpretation of AMC 21.06.030D.6.a. *Height Exceptions* to include totem poles as similar to flag poles for the purpose of exceptions to the accessory structure height restrictions.

Question: Are totem poles accessory structures and subject to the accessory structure height limitations in AMC 21.06.?

Short Answer: No. Totem poles are similar to flag poles and must meet the height restrictions of the principal structure per AMC 21.06.030D.6.a.

Interpretation:

AMC 21.14.040 *Definitions* provides the following definition of "flag:"

Flag

Any fabric, banner or bunting containing distinctive colors, patterns or symbols, used as a symbol of a government, political subdivision, corporate or commercial entity, or institution. A corporate or commercial or institutional flag may only display the name, trademark, or logo of the business or institution on the parcel and such flag may not be used for other business or advertising purposes.

The totem pole is akin to a flag. The flag is a Western (European) heraldic symbol of membership in a kin/group, and the totem pole is a kinship/heraldic symbol for the Native American clans in Southeast Alaska. Both convey a sense of community, recognition, pride, culture, history, and/or values, with deeper meanings beyond the artistic layer. Totems are also similar to a flagpole in its shape: a pole with perhaps some of the upper parts being a wider symbol (e.g., a crest animal with wings). AMC 21.06.030D.6.a. allows flag poles to conform to the height restrictions of the principal structure, rather than the height restrictions of an accessory structure. Totem poles are similar to flag poles in size and shape and are generally used for equivalent purposes.

The Planning Department has determined that totem poles shall be included in the height exception of 21.06.030D.6.a.