

Approved May 7,
2004

MEETING MINUTES
PORTSMOUTH ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT COMMISSION

April 2, 2004

Conference Room A

7:30 a.m.

Members Present: Dana Levenson, Chairman; John Hynes, Scott Pafford, Mark Simpson, Steve Alie, William Gladhill, Everett Eaton, Edward Hayes, John Bohenko, City Manager

Members Absent: Paul Harvey Sr. (excused), Cliff Taylor (excused)

Minutes

Commissioner Eaton moved and Commissioner Hayes seconded the motion to approve the meeting minutes of March 5, 2004 as amended. The motion passed unanimously.

Chamber of Commerce Quarterly Report on Tourism and eCoast

Marge Hubbard, Tourism Manager and Ginny Griffith, Business Development Manager for the greater Portsmouth Chamber of Commerce reported on the Tourism and eCoast Programs activities for the period January 1, 2004 to March 30, 2004 (reports attached). Ms. Hubbard also reported results of an analysis of the public relations (PR) value of written media coverage of Portsmouth in 2004. According to the Chamber's research, the advertising value equivalency of the 2003 articles written is \$156,000. The PR value is \$624,572.

In their respective reports, Ms. Griffith and Ms. Hubbard noted the success of the advertising effort for this year's *Guide to the Seacoast* and the Chamber's participation in the Save the Shipyard (STS) effort. The eCoast Board will be working with the Chamber staff and local businesses on developing and hosting the STS site. Mr. Bohenko reiterated that the Chamber would be working over the next 18 months on the effort as the BRAC prepares to identify bases and shipyards for closure. Mr. Levenson thanked Ms. Hubbard and Ms. Griffith for their reports.

Chamber of Commerce Request for Extension of City Partnership

Chamber President Peter Hamelin and Chamber Board of Directors Chair John Tabor gave a presentation on the benefits of the City/Chamber partnership over the past year and distributed a written request for continuation of the partnership for a fifth year. Mr. Hamelin talked about the value added to the City's Economic Development efforts including the Business Leadership Council, the Big Fish/Little Fish Program, ProPortsmouth partnership and the \$36,000 raised from Tourism businesses and State grants to market the City outside of the state.

Goals for the upcoming years include the STS Campaign mentioned by Ms. Griffith, continued promotion of the cultural community through Arts after Hours, participation on the Art-Speak Board, and Business Development Committee facilitation of business/cultural organization partnerships. Other goals include working with the Downtown Business

Association on issues specific to the central business district such as downtown business advocacy, the “Summer in the Street” Project and partnering with ProPortsmouth on downtown events.

Mr. Tabor thanked the EDC for its past support and said that the \$40,000 from the City is 5% of the Chamber's overall budget. He underscored the importance of this component of the budget because it goes to the salaries of the Tourism and Business Development Managers and is critical to the ongoing technology, tourism and Save the Shipyard programs. He said that the *Guide to the Seacoast* is working, the upgraded Chamber website is working and that the City's tourism sector was the economic “hero” when the City's technology sector suffered during the period of 2001-2003. He said the Chamber continues to invest in its website (\$8,000) and now has the capacity to allow on-line registration for local lodging and tourist business offerings. He highlighted the success of the eCoast board in bringing together technology companies and investors and raising \$1.6 million in capital for local technology firms.

At a time when the STS effort needs an entity to take the lead in communicating the benefit of the Portsmouth Naval Shipyard to the area economy, the Chamber has begun working with businesses, municipalities and other Chambers on this cause.

Mr. Levenson thanked the Chamber for the presentation and asked for a motion from the Commission on the Chamber's request. Mr. Alie moved to recommend to the City Council that the City/Chamber partnership be extended at the \$40,000 level for FY 2004/05. Mr. Hayes seconded the motion stating that, in his opinion, the City derives great benefits from the partnership. Chairman Levenson echoed the point and thanked the Chamber for an excellent presentation that clearly illustrates the value the City gets from the partnership. The motion passed unanimously.

FY 2005 UDAG Budget

Ms. Carmer distributed copies of a revised draft budget that includes the suggestions made at the previous meeting to use of the City's Parking Impact Revenue Fund rather than UDAG funds to pay for streetscape improvements near the High Hanover Parking Garage. Following a brief discussion of specific line items, Commissioner Simpson moved to approve the proposed UDAG budget. The motion passed unanimously without discussion.

New Business

Sheraton Subcommittee Mr. Bohenko reported that City staff has held a couple of meetings with the Sheraton representatives to discuss technical and feasibility issues related to development of expanded conference facilities, a parking garage and additional hotel rooms on the Sheraton's surface parking lot. The Sheraton has a conceptual plan for the development and is looking to create a public/private partnership with the City for additional structured parking on the site. Until now, the meetings concerned technical issues and included primarily staff. One meeting of the Sheraton and the EDC subcommittee was held to begin the work on a Partnership Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) regarding concerns such as required land swaps, utility and infrastructure modifications, and cost sharing.

The Manager said that the preliminary course of events is for the draft MOU to go to the City Council after EDC review. The MOU will allow the project to advance without totally binding either party. As the partnership evolves, the Manager expects the EDC Subcommittee to bring various elements back to the entire EDC before making recommendations to the City Council.

Chairman Levenson said that the Sheraton appears anxious to move this project along and noted that the proposed expansion will be a catalyst for other development in the Northern Tier. He added that the City's participation is not just about parking, but about maintaining the City's economic vitality. Commissioner Alie concurred stating that the project has potential to enhance the City's arts and cultural offerings.

Update on City Council Referral on Parking Impact Fees Chairman Levenson summarized the work of the subcommittee in a draft interim report that he distributed to the EDC (attached). The Subcommittee has met weekly on the City Council referral and made several findings. Because the subcommittee's task is complex, and because it has the potential to significantly impact parking for future development in the Central Business District, the Subcommittee is requesting an extension to make a recommendation back to the City Council. Commissioner Pafford feels that the interim report is a good summary of the subcommittee's work thusfar. He said that whatever recommendation ultimately comes from the Council referral, it should be linked to a long-range parking plan. The EDC consensus was to send the interim report as written to the City Council.

Public Comment

With no public comment and no further business, Commissioner Hayes moved to adjourn the meeting at 9:00 AM. Seconded by Commissioner Pafford. Vote to adjourn is unanimous.

Respectfully submitted,
Nancy M. Carmer
Community Development Program Manager