

MEETING MINUTES
PORTSMOUTH ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT COMMISSION

March 11, 2005

Conference Room A

7:30 a.m.

Members Present: Dana Levenson, Chairman; Cliff Taylor, William Gladhill, Everett Eaton, John Hynes, Paul Harvey Sr., Scott Pafford, Mark Simpson, Edward Hayes, Robin McIntosh, John P. Bohenko; City Manager

Staff present: Nancy Carmer, Economic Development Program Manager

Minutes

Commissioner Taylor moved and Commissioner Hynes seconded the motion to approve the meeting minutes of February 4, 2005. The motion passed unanimously.

Old Business

Sheraton Hotel & conference Center Expansion

City Manager Bohenko informed the EDC that the project is scheduled for the Historic District Commission (HDC) on March 30th for a work session on preliminary design concepts. Site feasibility work is scheduled for completion in mid-April.

The project includes 200 hotel rooms, restaurant, pool and health amenities, an 11,800 square foot exhibit hall, breakout conference rooms and 668-space parking garage. The project includes some road intersection reconfigurations and an elevated walkway connecting the existing Sheraton with the new Westin Hotel complex.

Some preliminary proforma figures are being developed for negotiations between the City and the property owner for the garage component. The garage will be financed with 50% tax exempt and 50% non-tax exempt bonds. This split is required when there is more than 10% private use of the facility. Mr. Bohenko urged the EDC to attend the upcoming HDC meeting or to tune in to the meeting on the cable network.

Graffiti Subcommittee Report and Recommendation

Commissioner Cliff Taylor said that the EDC Subcommittee completed their work on the graffiti issue in Portsmouth and turned the implementation over to city staff. Ms. Carmer reported that on February 14th City Council accepted the report with accolades for the EDC subcommittee and authorized the City Manager to implement the recommendations in the report. Next steps are procurement of a vendor for the summer 2005 pilot project and partnering with the Chamber of Commerce on public education starting at the Downtown Business Association in April.

Cruise Ship Industry

Chairman Levenson said that in response to a letter sent to Pease Development Authority (PDA), he met with PDA Executive Director George Bald to discuss marketing the Port of Portsmouth to cruise ships companies. There will be a follow-up meeting on the topic with Ms. Carmer representing the City.

Draft EDC 2005 Action Plan

Hearing no new comments on the draft plan distributed at the February meeting, Mr. Hynes moved to approve the plan as written seconded by Dr. Harvey. The motion passed unanimously.

2005/2006 UDAG Budget

Revised copies of a draft 2006 UDAG budget were distributed. Ms. Carmer summarized the revenues and expenditures in the budget. She explained the program funds to be encumbered and the funds to be reprogrammed into revenues for the upcoming year. She noted that the administration and overhead portion of the 2006 budget reflects a change in that the City's Community Development Block Grant will no longer be carrying 30 percent of the economic development budget administration and overhead costs.

Discussion ensued on the UDAG policy which caps the amount of UDAG revenues at 75% of the program interest earned in the prior year. Mr. Bohenko said that this policy could be amended if there is an important economic development initiative that requires additional funding above the budget cap. The City Council must waive the 75% cap on UDAG interest. Members discussed possible ways to increase revenues such as low-risk economic development loans.

There was discussion on the impact of the change in administration expenses will have on EDC activities in the upcoming year. Also, several projects included in the Capital Improvement Plan (CIP) were discussed such as sidewalk improvements, granite crosswalks in Market Square, Court Street re-paving and the streetscape improvements planned for the new public transit station on Hanover Street. It was decided that at the April EDC meeting staff will make a presentation on infrastructure projects scheduled for this summer in the city's core as well as an overview of proposed revitalization projects included in the 2006-2011 CIP.

Hearing no further discussion, Chairman Levenson called for a motion on the budget. Commissioner Taylor moved and Commissioner Harvey seconded the motion to approve the 2006 UDAG budget as presented. The motion carried unanimously.

Other Business

Seacoast Shipyard Association (SSA) Update

As part of the SSA letter-writing campaign to the Secretaries of the Navy and Defense Ms. Carmer will work with Mr. Levenson to send a letter on behalf of the EDC.

Lower Congress St.

In anticipation of the upcoming City Council hearing on the CIP, a letter has been drafted to the Mayor and City Council from the EDC in support of the CIP projects in the CBB including the lower Congress St. sidewalk improvements.

Parking Rate Study

Mr. Bohenko summarized the consultant's findings from part one of the ongoing parking rate analysis. He said that overall the city is doing very well with great meter turnover, garage use and turnover. Parking fines are down as a result of the increase in fines and there are more long-term parkers in the garage. Recommended changes include a maximum fee for parking in the garage over a 24 period and tweaking the hours for the underutilized resident parking pass in the garage.

Next EDC Meeting is April 1, 2005.

Public Comment

City Councilor Whitehouse commented on the granite crosswalk replacement in Market Square, urging the City to "make sure we do it right," referring to the installation, coloration and drainage of the new materials to be employed in the replacement process. Mr. Bohenko assured Mr. Whitehouse that with the new materials to be used, the effect would be very different that the crosswalks at State

and Church Streets that Mr. Whitehouse referenced in his remarks.

With no further business, Commissioner Hynes moved to adjourn the meeting at 9:00 AM. Seconded by Commissioner Taylor. Vote to adjourn is unanimous.

Respectfully submitted,
Nancy M. Carner
Community Development Program Manager