

MEETING MINUTES
PORTSMOUTH ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT COMMISSION

October 7, 2005

Conference Room A

7:30 a.m.

Members Present: Dana Levenson, Chairman, William Gladhill, John Hynes, Edward Hayes, Robin McIntosh, Everett Eaton, John P. Bohenko; City Manager

Members Excused: Mark Simpson, Paul Harvey Sr., Cliff Taylor

Staff present: Nancy Carmer, Economic Development Program Manager

Minutes

Commissioner Hynes moved and Commissioner Gladhill seconded the motion to approve the meeting minutes of September 9, 2005. 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 June 30 – September 30, 2005. Ms. Hubbard distributed a written summary and provided several examples of seacoast promotional advertisements and articles (*Yankee Magazine, Boston Globe, Ottawa Citizen, American Style and Country Living*) that ran regionally and which continue to generate many leads and inquiries about travel to Portsmouth.

The Portsmouth Peace Treaty celebration generated many special tours and events that contributed to an influx in visitors to the City over the summer. Ms. Hubbard reported that *Guide to the Seacoast* requests have been brisk and only 5,000 copies remain from an original run of 110,000. Next year they may expand the amount produced. Lastly, in September the Tourism Committee applied for and received a Joint Promotional Program grant from the State for \$28,400 to support advertising and promotion for FY 2006.

Ms. Griffith distributed a summary of business development activity. The major accomplishment reported was the success of the Save the Shipyard efforts. She also reported on the work of the eCoast and the work she and Ms. Carmer have accomplished regarding business relocation inquiries.

Report from City Cultural Commission a/k/a Art-Speak and discussion of proposed update of Arts Economic Impact Study

Jane James, President of Art-Speak and Beth Shepard-Rabadam, Art-Speak Coordinator presented a summary of the cultural commission activities. The report focused on the activities that enhance the city's cultural and creative business vitality such as Overnight Art, work/live space for artists and the artist certification.

They noted that Art-Speak is working with the Planning Department to implement some of the cultural and land use goals in the new Master Plan such as percent for art, creation of an arts

district along Islington Street and creative zoning for artist live/work space. In preparation for this work, Art-Speak conducted an artist and cultural workforce survey to gather information about the needs of this sector of the city's workers.

At the request of the City Manager, Art-Speak is currently working on a study aimed at understanding the expenses associated with the South Meeting House.

The organization has worked collaboratively with the Chamber of Commerce and NH Micro-Credit on a Creative Business Strategies Seminar series targeted to small cultural and creative businesses and led by expert speakers in the various disciplines from local businesses. Seminars are held at the West End Theatre and have consistently sold out the 70-seat facility. Topics include Promotion and Public Relations, Internet, Retirement Planning, Insurance and Project Management. The EDC watched a two-minute video clip of one of the panelist at the Arts Marketing seminar.

Art-Speak is currently working on funding an update of the American for the Arts Economic Impact Study completed in 2000. Work with a group of UNH Whittamore Business School Graduate students, the 2000 study will be update and will include for-profit cultural businesses as opposed just non-profit businesses that were the sole focus of the previous report. An application to The Provident Bank for a grant to partially fund the work has been submitted. Art-Speak would like to request the balance of \$2,000 from the EDC.

Chairman Levenson congratulated the group on the excellent work they have done to date and said the EDC will take up the funding request at its November meeting.

Updates and Discussion

- *HarborCorp Conference/Hotel/Parking Project Update* – The City Council authorized the City Manager to negotiate a Joint Development Agreement for moving ahead with the public private partnership for a parking garage associated with the proposed hotel and conference center. The hope is to go to the next City Council meeting with an agreement for approval and then to follow that with a request for a bond resolution at the subsequent meeting. If all proceeds as planned, the next step is for the developer to go to the land use boards for permits.
- *Progress on Business Construction Activity* - Building Inspector Rick Hopley and Planning Director David Holden provided an update on major projects underway citywide. There were over 962 building permits issued in the past year for a total value of \$89.3 million. Of those permits, 811 were permits for remodeling and had a value of \$32 million and 151 were new construction projects with a value of \$ 56.4 million. A significant source of the investment noted comes from the \$21 million dollar PSNH wood chip facility and the \$9 million Hilton Garden Inn.

City Manager Bohenko noted that with so many private investment projects underway in the downtown, the city postponed several public projects such as Court Street improvements in an effort to minimize disruption.

New Business

- *Citywide WI-FI Inquiry* - In response to a letter of inquiry from Joe Arnstein about exploring citywide wireless fidelity (Wi-Fi), the City Council referred the matter to the EDC. A subcommittee of Ed Hayes, Dana Levenson, Ginny Griffith and Nancy Carmer will meet to discuss the referral.
- *Paul Dobles Reserve Center* - The City has written letters to Senator Gregg and Sununu to express interest in acquiring the Cottage Street property which was listed on the BRAC closure list.
- *Islington St. Corridor/Schultz Brewery Redevelopment – Discussion of future EDC study and schedule site tour for November.* – In view of the recent sale of several parcels in this area and of the Mater Plan focus on redevelopment opportunities in the same, the EDC has identified this area for further study. Ms. Carmer will arrange for a site visit of the Islington Street Corridor and site visits of the Schultz Brewery Complex and former Public Works property as an introduction to additional feasibility and master planning for this area.
- *Parking Impact Fee*- In response to recent news articles related to the relocation of The Den and Café Kilim, the City Council has received several inquiries regarding the parking impact fee. The City Council referred the matter to the EDC. The subcommittee will reconvene to discuss the matter and develop a response to the City Council.
- *EDC Member Resignation*- Scott Pafford has resigned from the EDC.

Public Comment Period

Harold Whitehouse informed the Board that there was an early morning fire at a condominium construction site on Madison Street.

Confirm Next Meeting Date

Next Meeting will be November 4, 2005.

Respectfully submitted,
 Nancy M. Carmer
 Economic Development Program Manager