

MEETING MINUTES

PORTSMOUTH ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT COMMISSION

November 4, 2005

Conference Room A

7:30 a.m.

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

Members Excused: Mark Simpson

Staff present: Nancy Carmer, Economic Development Program Manager

Minutes

John Hynes made a motion to accept the minutes of October 7, 2005 as written. Motion was seconded by Robin McIntosh and passed unanimously.

Old Business

HarborCorp Update

The proposed Joint Development Agreement between HarborCorp and the City is on the agenda for November 14th. This agreement describes the terms of the public/private partnership and will bind the developer and the City to the terms outlined in the agreement. The presentation on November 14th will have three segments. The first will be a short introduction by Dana Levenson, Chairman of the EDC (see enclosed letter from EDC to City Council) followed by Steve Griswold, President of HarborCorp and finally, remarks by the City's hospitality consultant, Robert J. Crawford, Jr. of Hospitality Resolutions, Inc. The City Manager invited members of the EDC to attend the meeting to show support for the project and to write letters to the editor if members are so inclined.

Chairman Levenson stated that in light of recent news editorials, the City Manager, EDC Vice-Chair Everett Eaton, Ms. Carmer and he met with the Portsmouth Herald editorial board to provide information on the project. An article in the morning paper captured the essence of the message that the partnership is first and foremost an economic development project as outlined in the 1999 Northern Tier Study. It is not and was never intended to be primarily a parking project. The parking garage will be ancillary to the 1,000-seat conference facility. The public benefits anticipated from the project include: 1) the ability to host a conference of up to 1,200 persons, 2) \$16 million in indirect spending for the project that will benefit local businesses, 3) over \$700,000 in new property taxes, 300 new jobs, ownership of a second public garage on the edge of the city gateway and, 4) 300 new full and part-time jobs.

Mr. Hayes said that there are certain businesses like Yoken's that have an important place in a community and he believes the proposed conference center will more than replace what was lost when Yokens closed. Ms. McIntosh noted that she recently attended a conference in the Mt. Washington Valley that was too large for the current Portsmouth conference market. The proposed HarborCorp conference center will increase the market share of the Seacoast to attract larger gatherings. Mr. Bohenko noted that eventually a large capacity facility will be located in the region and this is a great opportunity for Portsmouth to be that location rather than other nearby cities.

Art-Speak Request

Ms. Carmer presented a request from Art-Speak for \$2,500 in UDAG funds to support the update of the 2000 American for the Arts Economic Impact Study. The study would be completed by

graduate students at the UNH Whittemore Business School under the direction of Professor Dr. Ross Gittell. The study will replicate the information gathered in 2000 and expand it to include creative economy for-profit businesses. If approved, funds for the study will come from the UDAG Budget contingency line item. There is currently \$7,370 in the fund. Approval of the study will leave a balance of \$4,870.

Mr. Hynes moved to approve the request. The motion was seconded by Ms. McIntosh and passed unanimously.

City Council Referrals

Parking Impact Fee

Mr. Bohenko reminded the EDC that this item was re-referred to the Commission by the City Council for review with regard to the impact on small business. Mr. Levenson noted that he is looking for one or two more members of the Commission to join Mr. Hayes and himself on the subcommittee for this task since Scott Pafford is no longer on the EDC. Dr. Harvey and Robin McIntosh volunteered to assist in the effort. Mr. Levenson said the intention is to host a focus group of property owners, tenants and other stakeholders in the city to review the current ordinance. The goal is to report back to the City Council promptly after holding the input and deliberation meetings.

Wi-Fi

Ms. Carmer said that the WiFi subcommittee has had one brief meeting to exchange background information. The subcommittee intends to meet with Ginny Griffith of the Portsmouth Chamber in the next week to prepare a report back to the City Council in December.

Public Comment

Mr. Choate announced that in the past week the next Northern Tier project went live online at www.31Raynesave.com requesting development proposals for the former Coldwell Banker site. He believes this project will be a “referendum” on future development values and opportunities in downtown and the Northern Tier.

In conjunction with the project, Mr. Choate requested that he and Mr. Holt, the owner of 31 Raynes Ave. have an opportunity to meet with the EDC Parking Impact subcommittee to discuss the 31 Raynes Avenue project. He requested that City Planner Lucy Tillmann be included in the meeting as well. Mr. Bohenko said that Lucy was in fact on the subcommittee.

Schultz Brewery Site Visit

The EDC spent the balance of the meeting at an on-site visit to the former Frank Jones Brewery and Schultz Hotdog manufacturing site off Islington. Development partners Steve Stapinski and King Weinstein as well as ColdStream Realtors David Choate, Julie Porter and Jennifer Slade joined them. Upon conclusion of the site visit the meeting was adjourned at 9:00 PM.

Next Meeting Date

Next Meeting will be December 2, 2005.

Respectfully submitted,
Nancy M. Carmer
Economic Development Program Manager