

**MEETING MINUTES**  
**PORTSMOUTH ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT COMMISSION**

January 6, 2006

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., Thomas Ferrini, John P. Bohenko; City Manager

Members Excused: Cliff Taylor, Mark Simpson

Staff present: Nancy Carmer, Economic Development Program Manager

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**New Members**

Chairman Levenson welcomed new Commissioner Michael Murray as a member of the EDC. Mr. Murray is a Thaxter Road resident who attended UNH and Boston College. He is employed by UBS and works in the firm's Market Square office. Chairman Levenson also welcomed Thomas Ferrini as the new City Council representative to the EDC.

**Minutes**

Commissioner Eaton made a motion to accept the minutes of December 2, 2005 as written. Motion was seconded by Commissioner Hayes and passed unanimously.

**Chamber of Commerce Quarterly Report on Tourism**

Marge Hubbard, Tourism Manager for the Greater Portsmouth Chamber of Commerce reported on Tourism activities for the period October 1 –December 30, 2005. Ms. Hubbard distributed a written summary of activities and provided several examples of seacoast promotional advertisements and articles (*Yankee Magazine, Boston Sunday Globe Magazine*) that ran regionally and which continue to generate many leads and inquiries about travel to Portsmouth. Ad sales for the *Guide to the Seacoast* exceeded last year by \$3,000. Planning for the 2006 Tourism Summit is underway for the April 3, 2006 event, which will be a ½ day program at The Music Hall, featuring a “town meeting” format. EDC members are welcome to attend.

Commissioner Gladhill asked if the Chamber of Commerce connects with the film industry in Hollywood, California. Ms. Hubbard responded that the State Office of Cultural Tourism has a Film Office that makes those connections. Chairman Levenson thanked Ms. Hubbard for her report.

**Old Business**

*HarborCorp Update*

City Manager Bohenko thanked the Commissioners that spoke at the recent public hearings and meetings on the HarborCorp expansion project. At the December 19, 2005 Bonding Resolution for the HarborCorp project the City Council voted 8-1 to approve the Bond Resolution. The next step is for the project to go to the land use boards for permitting. The first Board review will be the Board of Adjustment for the height variance request. The meeting is scheduled for January 17, 2006 at 7 PM in City Council Chambers. EDC members are welcome to attend and speak to the project.

Councilor Ferrini added that the City Council appreciates the effort the EDC has spent on this proposal and on City Council past policy referrals made to the EDC.

*City Council Referral – Unmet Parking Need Credit*

The members of the parking impact fee subcommittee have developed three draft alternatives to the existing credit and will gather stakeholder input on the proposed alternatives at an upcoming meeting on January 12, 2006.

**Discussion of 2006 EDC Action Plan**

City Manager Bohenko distributed copies of the draft EDC priorities for the 2006 Action Plan. The 2006 action items are: the Islington Street Corridor Feasibility Study, The Schultz Brewery Redevelopment project, The Northern Tier Redevelopment partnerships, McIntyre Building Redevelopment project, the Chamber of Commerce Partnership and Workforce Housing. It was the consensus of the Commission is to incorporate these projects into the 2006 Action Plan and bring it back for adoption at the February EDC meeting.

During EDC Action Plan review Jane James, President of Art-Speak (A/S) was asked to speak to the Islington Street Corridor Study. She asked that the EDC consider partnering with Art-Speak and include an Arts District component in the Corridor Study. Doing this would incorporate goals identified in the Master Plan. She said that the Art-Speak Board agreed to contribute up to \$15,000 of the grant funds committed for an Arts District Study from a \$12,000 National Endowment for the Arts Grant and from a \$4,000 Public Service of New Hampshire (PSNH) grant for the same. She also requested a “seat at the table” during the discussions of the plan.

Ms. James also updated the Board on three other A/S items. First, Provident Bank agreed to fund \$2,750 for the Cultural Economic Impact Study with UNH graduate students. The Bank made the award with the hope that the study will induce future city funding of Art-Speak. She also reported that A/S received IRS approval of its application for tax exempt status under section 501-(c) (3) of the federal tax code. Lastly, she reported that A/S has applied to the Federal Home Loan Bank for participation in the Affordable Housing Competition. Chairman Levenson thanked Ms. James for her input and said that the EDC intends to prepare a project budget for the Islington Street Corridor Study to be included in the FY07 budget. A/S will be kept apprised of action on this item.

In discussing the 2006 Action Plan priorities, Ms. Carmer proposed that the City apply to the Plan NH program for technical assistance for the Exit 7 Gateway project. If successful, the City could receive professional design expertise for a planning charette. The program requires a contribution of \$2,500 from selected communities.

Regarding the Northern Tier action item, David Choate of Grubb and Ellis Coldstream RE Advisors told the EDC that they have received five bids for the Esposito property at 31 Raynes Avenue. The Portsmouth Herald Building is under contract and will close in the next six months. Other properties will most likely be sold in the near future and Mr. Choate feels that the city needs to work hard to assure that the Northern Tier vision is adhered to using “gentle persuasion.” Councilor Ferrini noted that this could occur by implementing the goals in the Master Plan in an accelerated manner.

Regarding the Chamber of Commerce Partnership action item, the City Manager feels that it has been an effective and cost effective way to deal with Tourism and Business Development. He referenced the work of Ms. Hubbard as well as that of Ms. Griffin and Mr. Ingram in the Save the Shipyard effort.

Suggested additions to the Plan include wayfinding /signage, and advocacy for improvements to the General Sullivan Bridge and to the Route One Bypass.

**FY 05/06 UDAG Budget Review**

Ms. Carmer distributed copies of the FY 06 Budget showing the status of funds expended to date. City Manager Bohenko reviewed the current UDAG policy of expending 75% of the interest earned on UDAG principal and mentioned that the policy may need to be discussed to allow for some of the projects discussed in the Action Plan such as the Islington Street Corridor Study. A draft FY 07 Budget will be prepared for review and discussion at the February 3<sup>rd</sup> EDC meeting.

**Public Comment Period**

There were no public comments made.

**Next Meeting Date**

Next meeting will be February 3, 2006.

Respectfully submitted,  
Nancy M. Carmer  
Economic Development Program Manager