

MEETING MINUTES
PORTSMOUTH ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT COMMISSION

September 8, 2006

City Hall Conference Room A

7:30 a.m.

Members Present: Everett Eaton, Vice-Chairman, Cliff Taylor, Edward Hayes, Michael Murray, Ned Reynolds William Gladhill, Paul Harvey Sr., Lisa DeStefano, John P. Bohenko;
City Manager

Members Excused: Dana Levenson, Chairman, Robin McIntosh, Thomas Ferrini

Staff present: Nancy Carmer, Economic Development Program Manager

Vice-Chairman Everett Eaton opened the meeting at 7:35 am and stated that because Chairman Levenson is on vacation he will act as Chair.

Minutes

Commissioner Taylor made a motion to accept the minutes of May 5, 2006 as amended. Motion was seconded by Commissioner Gladhill and passed unanimously.

Presentation: Quarterly Reports on Tourism and Business Development for the period April 1-September 1, 2006

Marge Hubbard, Tourism Manager, Greater Portsmouth Chamber of Commerce and Ginny Griffith, Business Development Manager, Greater Portsmouth Chamber of Commerce distributed report packets and described the tourism and business development activities during the reporting period. Travel writer articles on Portsmouth and the Seacoast area has been prolific. Tourist businesses reported slower than normal activity in June (perhaps due to the inclement weather), but unusually brisk activity in July and August.

Old Business and Updates

• *HarborCorp Update*

City Manager Bohenko told the EDC that the City Council approved the all requested amendments to the zoning ordinance from HarborCorp LLC and recommended by the Planning Board. A rehearing request has been submitted by Dover Realty Trust. Despite the request, the applicant will continue to pursue land use approvals with the first application being Historic District (HDC) approval. The project is scheduled for a work session with HDC on September 13th at 7 PM in City Council Chambers.

• *WiFi Subcommittee Report*

Ms. Carmer informed the EDC that the EDC WiFi subcommittee met this summer to continue work on the concept to enlarge the current WiFi zone in the central business district. City staff, Chamber of Commerce representatives and service providers are focusing on the best locations and equipment to make the service year-round and to develop a program and web portal that will add value to the city's economic development efforts other than just providing free WiFi service. There has been a favorable response from a small group of business owners consulted about the program. Next steps include portal development, cost refinement, sponsorship strategies.

Other Business

1. Ms. DeStefano has been watching the construction of the new brick sidewalks in the downtown, specifically in and around the new intermodal transportation center and the alley adjacent to the parking garage. She commends the city on its efforts to design and construct important and safe pedestrian walkways and connections throughout the city and specifically to the Northern Tier.
2. Vice-Chairman Eaton informed the EDC that there will be a public hearing on the NH DOT Little Bay Bridges expansion project on Tuesday September 12, 2006 at 7 PM at St. Thomas High School auditorium in Dover. This expansion has significant environmental and socio-economic impacts that have been widely discussed as the project is developed. City staff will attend the meeting.
3. Mr. Eaton asked the City Manager about the forgiveness parking ticket that the Downtown Business Association asked the City Council to evaluate. The City Manager told the EDC that the Council referred the request to the Parking Committee for cost analysis. The Committee did not make recommendations, but rather presented the City Council with several forgiveness parking ticket options along with associated cost impacts.
4. Commissioner Hayes reported that a group of businesses have been meeting in the interest of establishing a West End Business Association. The group has held a couple after hours meetings including one in which city staff provided insight into how to work with the city on issues related to government interaction on infrastructure, events and economic development. Currently the group is working on a mission statement and on collaborating with Pro Portsmouth on bringing some First Night and potentially other events to the West End.

Public Comment Period

No members of the public wished to comment.

Next Meeting Date

October 6, 2006 is the next scheduled meeting date.

The meeting adjourned at 8:35 am.

Respectfully submitted,
Nancy M. Carmer
Economic Development Program Manager