

MEETING MINUTES**PORTSMOUTH ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT COMMISSION**

October 6, 2006

City Hall Conference Room A

7:30 a.m.

Members Present: Dana Levenson, Chairman; Robin McIntosh, Thomas Ferrini, Cliff Taylor, Edward Hayes, Michael Murray, Ned Reynolds, William Gladhill, Paul Harvey Sr., John P. Bohenko; City Manager

Members Excused: Everett Eaton, Vice-Chairman; Lisa DeStefano

Staff present: Nancy Carmer, Economic Development Program Manager

Chairman Levenson opened the meeting at 7:35 a.m.

Minutes

Commissioner Taylor made a motion to accept the minutes of September 8, 2006. Motion was seconded by Commissioner Harvey and passed unanimously.

Presentation: The Housing Partnership (THP)/ Workforce Housing Coalition- Bryan Wyatt, David Choate

As a follow up to the presentation on workforce housing given in June by David Moore of the Portsmouth Community Development Department, the Housing Partnership and Workforce Housing Coalition asked to make a presentation to the EDC from a service provider's perspective. Executive Director Bryan Wyatt introduced himself and Board member David Choate. Since his employment last year, Mr. Wyatt has focused his efforts on the organization's role to advocate for affordable and workforce housing as well as to create new housing and revitalize neighborhoods in the seacoast region including York County, Maine.

He praised the city for its efforts in expanding the base of elderly and affordable housing. He outlined the many challenges innate in creating workforce and affordable housing including the procurement of willing sellers of land and buildings, the time required to garner approvals for land use boards, the time required to receive low-income tax credits, the need to educate the legislature of the critical shortage of workforce/affordable housing, and the "NIMBY" factor. He also discussed the long-term impact of insufficient workforce housing on economic development in the area.

Mr. Choate distributed an income chart which illustrates that the THP target homeowners are those buyers with household incomes up to 120% of the area mean income. He provided examples of current successes and ongoing projects including a project with Chinburg builders in Exeter, and others in the region. He and Mr. Wyatt also described efforts that did not succeed such as local legislation aimed at creating affordable housing in Greenland and York. The pair highlighted the challenges inherent in the local Atlantic Heights mixed-income project on the property owned by Sean Mahoney off Kearsarge Way. The project has taken considerable time, but is now moving forward with the help of a newly proposed density bonus incentive ordinance drafted by the City's Planning Department.

The EDC discussed the critical need for a regional approach to make an impact on this issue. They also pledged to work with the organization in areas where the EDC is concentrating its efforts such as the Islington Street corridor and the re-use of city-owned properties such as Lafayette School, Rock Street Garage, the Library or others. The group offered to assist in writing the legislature to support appropriate statewide legislation to create additional workforce and affordable housing.

City Councilors Ferrini and Reynolds agreed that that many City Councilors believe that there is more that could be done by the City to increase workforce housing. Councilor Reynolds noted that is important to address this

issue if we want to keep a diverse community and a vibrant economy. Commissioner McIntosh feels that the City's Planning Department is doing a great job on the density incentive ordinance. The City Manager will work with city staff to post the draft ordinance on the city website for public review and information. Chairman Levenson thanked Mr. Wyatt and Mr. Choate for the presentation.

Art-Speak Update – Jane James, Russ Grazier, Sue Cobler

Introduction of New Coordinator and New Board President – Outgoing Board President Jane James introduced newly elected Board President Russ Grazier and the newly hired Art-Speak Coordinator Sue Cobler.

Status report on Americans for the Arts Economic Impact Study - Ms. James provided a report and highlighted the following actions

- Art-Speak, in collaboration with the national organization *Americans for the Arts* is coordinating the follow-up study of the impact of non-profit arts organizations on the local economy. This is an update of the original study done in 2000.
- Kick off was at Strawberry Banke visitor center this spring with speaker Randy Cohen, Vice President of Research and Communications at *Americans for the Arts*.
- The surveys of the non-profits organizations contributions to the local economy have been completed and sent to *Americans for the Arts*.
- The audience surveys will continue through the end of the calendar year.
- A report is due out in early 2007.

Other economic activities undertaken by Art-Speak include the Creative Business Strategies seminars. This was a collaboration between Art-Speak, the Chamber of Commerce and NH Micro Credit. The A/S coordinator worked with the business partners to reach out to the arts community to provide a series seminars aimed at improving the business acumen of the creative community. These events were well attended 30-70 attendees and were enthusiastically received. Topics included:

- The Art of Promoting Your Art Online
- Retirement planning for artists and creative bus.
- Client and Project Management
- Insurance for Artist and Creative Businesses

Upcoming Initiatives – Ms. James pledged to work with the EDC and the City on the following:

- advocate for artist live/work space
- partner with the EDC on a study of the Islington Street corridor
- work towards the second Over Night Art! For spring 2007
- publish the results of the *Americans for the Arts: Arts & Economic Prosperity II* old one or more seminars to familiarize the surveyed organizations, city officials and the business community with the date and ways it can be used to further the City's reputation as an arts destination and cultural center in the North east.
- maintain and enlarge the website/directory for use by the arts community and the public at large

Old Business and Updates

- *WiFi Subcommittee Report*
Because Ginny Griffin was unable to attend the meeting, discussion on this agenda item was postponed to the November 3, 2006 EDC meeting. However, Ms. Carmer informed the EDC that the EDC WiFi subcommittee met on September 19th. At that time the figures for Wi-Fi usage were provided for this year. Unique users increased from 1400 to 3800. The group is outlining a strategy for a phased expansion of year-round WiFi in the central business district for discussion at the November meeting.
- *UDAG Challenge Grant to North Church*
Mr. Bohenko informed the EDC of the \$100,000 challenge UDAG grant that the City Council approved for the North Church Steeple Restoration Fund. The action was in response to a request from the steeple

fund-raising committee and was approved by the City Council last month. The City Council approved the request because it conforms to the UDAG Expenditure criteria and because the City owns the clock in the tower. Also, the Council agreed that the steeple and clock tower are unique city landmarks and part of what many in the city consider a critical part of the city's commitment to historic preservation and community. The City Manager stated that the timing of the request precluded him from bringing it to the EDC first. He said that Jamie French of the steeple fund-raising committee reported to the City Council the previous night, that as a result of the challenge, they have already raised 2/3rds of the money needed to release the UDAG funds. The current balance in the UDAG account is \$3,519,000 and would be reduced to \$3,419,000 when the grant is disbursed.

Other Business

- *Islington Street/Bartlett Street Initiative*
The EDC discussed development of a RFP for the Islington St. corridor study. Included in the scope of work would be incorporation of the arts district development study as part of an overall streamlining of the multiple zoning districts along the roadway. Also included would be incorporation of the strategies in the 1998 Islington Streetscape Study, the improvement to the Bartlett St. intersection, and a workforce housing opportunities analysis of the Schultz Brewery, the former DPW and the rail corridor properties. A draft RFP will be developed and sent to the EDC for review prior to the November meeting.
- *October 11, 2006 Downtown Business Association (DBA) Meeting*
Representatives of the DBA visited Portland, Maine recently and will be reporting on their findings and hosting an exchange with Portland representatives at the next DBA, Oct. 11, 2006, 8:30 am at the Gaslight upper lounge. EDC members are encouraged to attend.
- *Pease Development Authority Annual Report at November 3, 2006 EDC Meeting*
The EDC had invited new PDA Executive Director Dick Greene to its November meeting which was scheduled to be held at the PDA Board Room. However, given the items on the agenda, it was decided to postpone the Mr. Greene's introduction to the December meeting and to hold the November meeting in City Hall.

Public Comment Period

David Choate provided an update on development activity citywide. With respect to the Northern Tier, he informed the EDC that the Seacoast Newspaper and 31 Raynes Ave. buildings have been sold and are being considered for redevelopment. He also noted that the owners of the Parade Mall are in the preliminary stages of redevelopment planning for that site. And, he also reminded the EDC that the Ralph's Trucks site on Lafayette Road has been approved for a multi-family residential development in the rear of the parcel. Finally, Southgate Plaza has sold and will be improved.

He asked the status of the Market St. gateway project. City Manager Bohenko reviewed the list of capital improvements scheduled for the corridor including a major redevelopment of the Deer St. sewer pump station and pedestrian street crossing improvements for that corner. Also, included in the Capital Improvement Plan (CIP) are design funds for streetscape improvements to Market St. extension. The City is currently in the process of contracting an engineering firm to design changes to the Exit 7 interchange.

Next Meeting Date

November 3, 2006 is the next scheduled meeting date.

The meeting adjourned at 9:00 am.

Respectfully submitted,
Nancy M. Carmer

