

MEETING MINUTES
PORTSMOUTH ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT COMMISSION

November 3, 2006

City Hall Conference Room A

7:30 a.m.

Members Present: Dana Levenson, Chairman; Everett Eaton, Vice-Chairman; Lisa DeStefano, Robin McIntosh, Edward Hayes, Ned Raynolds, William Gladhill, Paul Harvey Sr., John P. Bohenko; City Manager

Members Excused: Michael Murray, Thomas Ferrini, Cliff Taylor

Staff present: Nancy Carmer, Economic Development Program Manager

Vice-Chairman Eaton opened the meeting at 7:35 a.m.

Minutes

Commissioner Hayes made a motion to accept the minutes of October 6, 2006. Motion was seconded by Commissioner Harvey and passed unanimously.

Presentation: Seacoast Local Group

Karen Marzloff of *The Wire* newspaper and Tom Holbrook, owner of River Run Books in downtown Portsmouth made a brief presentation on a new organization working on a buy local initiative. The core mission of the group is to develop a network of locally owned and independent businesses working to build a strong economy and vibrant community. By working collaboratively with local for and non-profit businesses including the agricultural sector of locally grown food, the hope is to strengthen the various networks that make Portsmouth a unique and prosperous community.

The group is affiliated with a similar national effort called **BALLE** which stands for **B**usiness - **A**lliance - **L**ocal - **L**iving - **E**conomies, a national membership organization that assist communities in the mutual efforts to create sustainable communities, environments and social fabric. Seacoast Local believes that it is important to educate the community about the benefits of keeping consumer dollars within the community and how this can lead to preservation of local character. Cambridge is an example of a community in the region that affiliated with BALLE and launched a similar buy local effort. A copy of the Cambridge "Local First" brochure was distributed to EDC members.

The Seacoast Local group incorporates Portsmouth as the core of communities from York to Hampton. The group has started raising awareness through the sale of T-Shirts and a street fair in downtown Portsmouth in September. The Downtown Business Association (DBA) is interested in learning more about the organization for future collaboration.

The City Manager asked what the city and specifically the EDC can do to assist Seacoast Local. Mr. Holbrook indicated that participation in awareness raising events such as the upcoming DBA fashion show as well as individually and collectively changing purchasing habits to buy locally. He praised the city's sustainability efforts underway and noted that is exactly the type of participation that the group envisions.

Mr. Levenson thanked Ms. Marzloff and Mr. Holbrook for the presentation and asked to be kept informed of the events and activities that the group develops.

Old Business and Updates

New Parking Manager- City Manager Bohenko introduced Jon Frederick, the city's new Parking Manager. Jon has a master's degree in public administration and has been with the city for three weeks. He is charged with managing and overseeing all of the public parking facilities and parking enforcement activities as well as working with the city's Parking Committee. He will be working closely with Ms. Carmer on parking issues that impact the business community.

Manager HarborCorp Partnership Update – The City Manager said that the developer continues to work on its land use permit applications. Currently there have been a series of work sessions with the Historic District Commission. Ocean Properties Inc. continues to challenge each step of the process with the most recent challenge being the zoning change approved this summer by the City Council.

Review of Islington Street Corridor Study - Ms. Carmer distributed copies of a draft outline for a Request for Proposals for the Islington Street Corridor Study. The representatives from Art-Speak were invited to the table to join in the discussion of the goals of the study and the tasks associated with accomplishing the same. The draft is a work-in-progress and the document will be reviewed by the city's planning consultant Taintor and Associates as well as the Planning Director in an upcoming meeting on November 9th.

The draft project goals include the following:

1. to create a planning strategy and graphic footprint for the area consistent with the goals and objectives outlined in the City's Master Plan, the Cultural Plan and the Islington Street Improvement Plan.
2. to maximize the success of existing activities in the corridor
3. to create a mixed use district that fully supports housing, retail, commercial, and cultural uses along the corridor.
4. to create a conceptual design for the Islington Street/Bartlett Street intersection commercial node that functions as a gateway to the West End from the Route 1 Bypass and Route 33.
5. to incorporate the route and safety of pedestrian and bicycle transit along the corridor.
6. to create strategic connections to abutting neighborhoods and business areas such as the former Department of Public Works site, the Schultz Brewery, Cate Street businesses, the North Mill Pond and the Hanover Street area.
7. to identify options to buffer conflicting uses so they can comfortably function in close proximity.
8. to define and brand an Arts District that includes the creative and cultural businesses and activities currently operating in the corridor and improves the long term viability of the same.
9. to identify a comprehensive and innovative funding strategy for implementation of the corridor plan including, but not necessarily limited to, TIF, Business Improvement Districts, etc.

It was agreed that a goal should be added about opportunities to improve business facades along the corridor. It was also agreed that the goals for the study should be posted on the website and that there is a need for education about what is form-based zoning and on the new state law that provides for tax relief for rehabilitation of buildings in the central business districts.

Art-Speak President Russ Grazier asked that the RFP include some attention to design of a smoother transition between Congress Street and Islington at the Maplewood Avenue traffic node.

Other Business

Notice of Towns and Developers Forum on regional workforce housing – Ms. Carmer distributed a flyer about a forum on November 8, 2006 at the Sheraton Hotel regarding what is being done locally about workforce housing opportunities. City Councilor Dwyer will be one of the speakers at the forum.

Public Comment Period

David Choate encouraged members to attend the Towns and Developers Forum and to sign up on the website ASAP as space is limited. With regard to the Islington Street Corridor Study, he also encouraged the City to include stakeholders such as Old Port Traders to be included in the study findings.

City Councilor Dwyer addressed the Board as a Planning Board member and encouraged the EDC to learn more about form-based zoning by inviting Rick Taintor to make a presentation that the public could attend as well. She also encouraged the Board to learn more about the City's new residential density bonus for below market units incorporated in a development in the general residence A and B districts.

Next Meeting Date

December 1, 2006 is the next scheduled meeting date. The meeting will be held at the Pease Tradeport in the conference room of the Pease Development Authority.

The meeting adjourned at 9:00 am.

Respectfully submitted,
Nancy M. Carmer
Economic Development Program Manager