

MEETING MINUTES
PORTSMOUTH ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT COMMISSION

December 1, 2006

City Hall Conference Room A

7:30 a.m.

Members Present: Dana Levenson, Chairman; Everett Eaton, Vice-Chairman; Thomas Ferrini, Michael Murray, Cliff Taylor, Lisa DeStefano, Robin McIntosh, Edward Hayes, , William Gladhill, Paul Harvey Sr., John P. Bohenko; City Manager

Members Absent: Ned Reynolds

Staff present: Nancy Carmer, Economic Development Program Manager, Steve Parkinson, Public Works Director

The meeting was held at the offices of the Pease Development Authority (PDA). Chairman Levenson opened the meeting at 7:30 a.m.

Minutes

Commissioner Taylor made a motion to accept the minutes of November 3, 2006. Motion was seconded by Commissioner Hayes and passed unanimously.

Old Business and Updates

Sarah Long Bridge Closure Update – Department of Public Works Director Steve Parkinson explained the short and long-term bridge repair strategies. A spare cable has been donated from the State of Maine Dept. of Highways and will be installed as a temporary repair until a new cable can be manufactured. The new cable could take up to 6 month to manufacture. In the short-term, the goal is to have the bridge operational by December 31st. The unique characteristics of the river such as current speed, depth and weather conditions make repair logistics difficult for divers. The bridge will need to be closed for two weeks again when the new cable is eventually installed. Ms Carmer distributed a flyer with details about an interstate business development cooperative effort to assist businesses with a raffle for patrons of the businesses on Route 1 Bypass. Customers will receive raffle tickets for donated items.

Revised Islington Street Corridor Plan Outline - Ms. Carmer distributed copies of a revised draft outline for a Request for Proposals for the Islington Street Corridor Study. The draft is still a work-in-progress but has been revised to include comments from the city's planning consultant Taintor and Associates as well as the Planning Director. Project will include two phases; an existing conditions update and review of existing reports on the corridor in phase 1 and an arts district study in phase 2.

WiFi Expansion – Chairman Levenson distributed a draft report back to the City Council on the WiFi expansion referral. Ms. Carmer said that the report outlines the work of the EDC including a review of survey data for the current seasonal WiFi access in Market Square as well as models of how other municipalities in the US are approaching WiFi access. Also, the subcommittee met with representatives of businesses that install WiFi access to private entities to discuss the benefits and costs of expanding the City's WiFi and to explore the possibility of sponsoring the expansion. It also evaluated potential locations and costs to deploy a phased expansion of WiFi for year round access in Market Square. The Committee found that WiFi use has been steady from 2005 to 2006 and that there is interest in year-round WiFi access from users as well as from downtown businesses.

The EDC has essentially completed its charge under the City Council referral. Subsequent work on fund raising and implementation will be the responsibility of the chamber working in partnership with city staff. Implementation of a second phase would be dependent on successful non-public funding of the first phase and more specifically on the economic development implications and value-added opportunities of expanding the city's WiFi. On a motion from Commissioner Taylor with a second by Commissioner Tom Ferrini, the Commission unanimously voted to submit the report the City Council.

Introduction of Dick Green, Executive Director, Pease Development Authority

Chairman Levenson introduced Mr. Green, the new Pease Development Authority Executive Director, who replaced George Bald who was appointed Commissioner of DRED under Governor Lynch. Mr. Green said he is pleased to be in the position and is looking forward to working with the City of Portsmouth. He said PDA has four distinct sectors of the Tradeport to oversee: the airport, the golf course, the business park and the port of New Hampshire. There are currently 6,400 people employed at the business park and airport and golf course with 90 public employees. There is over 4 million square feet of property to manage. The primary role of the PDA is to create good paying jobs. With 90% of the land currently developed or permitted for development, the PDA's role is more of redevelopment at this point which is done primarily through ground or land leases that create a constant revenue stream.

Mr. Green said that he and his staff recognize the importance of being a good neighbor to Portsmouth, Greenland and Newington and is committed to the PDA's charge to create quality jobs and maintain a world class office and industrial park.

Presentation on Pease Tradeport Economic Impact – Dave Mullen, Deputy Director, Pease Development Authority

PDA Deputy Director Dave Mullen provided a power point presentation on the Tradeport including the direct and indirect regional employment, building development, diversity of development and revenues of the Tradeport. A question and answer period followed. There was discussion on the recent approval by the PDA Board of Alpha Airlines for operation the fractional ownership airline company at the Tradeport. Mr. Bohenko said the company will fill an important niche locally with its state of the art Swiss PC12 Turboprop planes that limit noise compared to other planes.

Other Business

Preliminary Discussion on 2007 Action Plan and Timeline – The 2006 Action Plan was distributed and progress to date was reviewed. There was discussion on moving the way finding project to a priority status. Chairman Levenson asked Commissioners to come to the January meeting on activities for the 2007 Action Plan or to call Ms. Carmer with suggestions in the interim.

Update on Market St. Extension CIP Projects- Department of Public Works Director Steve Parkinson distributed a summary and explained upcoming projects on the extension road. They include improvements to the I-95 interchange (design this winter for construction in May 07), Market Street Signal Coordination (November 2007), Market St. Railway crossing improvements, Deer St. Pump Station and intersection improvements (2007), Market St. Bike Lane and Sidewalk (May 2007), Bike Route to Pease (March 2007) and the Market St. Streetscape Improvements (Design 2007).

Miscellaneous - Chairman Levenson asked if there was a sense that the EDC should weigh in on the Building Re-use Committee's work or if there should be a EDC representative on the Committee. The City Manager described the Committee's work to research and inventory the City- owned buildings and to develop a policy regarding acquisition and disposition of these assets for the City Council. He feels that it would be valuable to have the EDC comment on the re-use of specific buildings at the upcoming Building

Re-use Committee's public input sessions. A copy of the press release on the sessions will be sent to the Commission.

Regarding the Islington St. Corridor Plan Project Chairman Levenson said that unless the EDC feels otherwise, he will be treating this as a committee of the whole until a consultant is hired at which time he will ask for a subcommittee to provide input.

Public Comment Period

David Choate distributed a copy of the Grub and Ellis RE/ Coldstream Real Estate Advisors third quarter report for the EDC to review and noted that Portsmouth's office market is doing quite well compared to the other regions identified.

Speaking as a member of the Building Re-use Committee, Christine M. Dwyer encouraged EDC members to participate in the attend the upcoming public input sessions.

Referring to the collaboration of multiple public entities and development representatives at the recent Towns and Developers Forum on Affordable Housing, Mr. Choate asked if the PDA, in its capacity as a regional employer, could participate in seeking solutions to this mutual challenge. Mr. Green said he would be happy to participate.

Next Meeting Date

January 5, 2007 is the next scheduled meeting date.

The meeting adjourned at 9:00 am.

Respectfully submitted,
Nancy M. Carmer
Economic Development Program Manager