

MEETING MINUTES
PORTSMOUTH ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT COMMISSION

February 1, 2008

City Hall Conference Room A

7:30 a.m.

Members Present: Dana Levenson, Chairman; Everett Eaton, Vice-Chairman; Robin McIntosh, William Gladhill, Ken Smith, Jack Blalock, Lisa DeStefano, John P. Bohenko; City Manager
Members Excused: Paul Harvey Sr., Edward Hayes
Members Absent: Michael Murray

Chairman Levenson opened the meeting at 7:30 a.m.

Minutes

Draft meeting minutes of January 4, 2008 were unanimously approved following a motion by Commissioner Smith and a second by Commissioner Eaton.

2008 EDC Action Plan

Suggested changes to the draft Action Plan included adding language regarding sustainability to the Statement of Purpose and to Goal 3 of the Long-Term EDC Objectives and eliminating advocacy for the Worth Parking Garage from Goal 2 of the Long-Term EDC Objectives. Commissioner Smith made a motion to adopt the 2008 Action Plan with amendments, seconded by Commissioner McIntosh.

Update on the Route One Bypass Project – Mike Dugas of NHDOT

Mr. Dugas distributed maps and explained the state's plan for improvements to the Route 1 Bypass. Due to funding cuts in the ten-year plan, the improvements will be limited to six red-listed bridges. Based on state inspections and recommendations, all bridges will be replaced with the exceptions of the railroad bridge over the bypass. The new bridges will be single span and will retain the same road width and sidewalks. Sequencing of the replacements and the traffic diversion plans will be forthcoming. The State is considering the possibility of opening up the access to the Market Street extension for traffic diversion and is analyzing use of a rotary at the intersection. Other areas slated for improvements are the bridge near Bowlarama and the intersection at the Lafayette Southgate Plaza. A local task force chaired by Public Works Director and made up of residents, business representatives and city officials has been working on the improvements. The current plan allows for construction to begin in 2011.

EDC Project Updates

A. Portwalk Underground Parking Garage

On January 17, 2008 the Planning Board approved the project with conditions. The developer is planning to begin construction in the summer and the city is working to develop a comprehensive management and mitigation plan. City Manager Bohenko said that the city is considering hiring a

part-time construction project manager to interface with the developer's team and local businesses and downtown employees.

B. Wayfinding RFP

The Request for Proposals (RFP) is scheduled to be distributed in February 2008 pending adequate funding.

C. Islington St. Improvement Project

The consultant has completed the existing conditions analysis of the corridor, conducted stakeholder meetings and has developed action plan alternatives. The project subcommittee met with consultants on December 20th to review the three action plan options. Following the subcommittee meeting it was determined that, due to the complexities involved in integrating all of the required elements such as transportation, parking, infrastructure and zoning into the plan alternatives, another meeting of the subcommittee is necessary to refine the plans further and get City Council input prior to bringing the plans to a public meeting. The subcommittee will be meeting February 19, 2008 to continue work on the plan alternatives.

City Manager Bohenko suggested a joint meeting with the EDC and the City Council to update the Council on the project and to determine any concerns they may have with some of the options before bringing the alternatives to the public for input. Commissioner Smith moved to draft a letter from the EDC to the City Council requesting the joint meeting. Motion was seconded by Commissioner Destefano and passed unanimously.

D. Exit 7 Gateway Project Update

The Cecil Group has completed the existing conditions analysis of the project area and stakeholder meetings. Next steps are for the consultant to draft a conceptual plan for in-house review and comment before holding a public meeting on the draft plan.

E. Capital Improvement Program (CIP)

There was a City Council work session on the CIP on January 28, 2008. There will be a public hearing on March 3, 2008 with possible adoption on March 17, 2008 for municipal budget planning.

New Business

A. Business Retention Initiative - EDC Business Exchange Program

Chairman Levenson suggested that the EDC host a series of meetings to connect with key local business leaders to discuss their needs and wants. The City Manager suggested that a speaker be invited to speak on relevant topics and then engage the business people in discussion. A unique invitation could be developed for groups of 20 business representatives to keep the meetings small. Commissioner Eaton thinks this is a great idea and suggested perhaps a speaker such as Mr. Crawford who has expertise on the hospitality industry. Sustainability was another topic suggested. Chairman Levenson to work with Mr. Bohenko and Ms. Carmer on a program outline and schedule and report back at the next meeting.

B. UDAG Budget

Ms. Carmer distributed copies of a draft UDAG budget for FY 08/09 which was reviewed in conjunction with the UDAG budget policy as well as the interest accrued during the past fiscal year. Mr. Bohenko stated that the UDAG principal balance is \$3,467,608. Projected FY 07/08 year-end UDAG interest is \$161,600. Commissioner Destefano moved to approve the budget as presented. Commissioner McIntosh seconded the motion which carried unanimously.

Market St. Sidewalk Project

Mr. Bohenko informed the EDC that the Market St. sidewalk improvement project will be the topic of a stakeholder meeting on February 12th at 6:30 PM in City Hall Conference Room A. The project is funded in the CIP and involves removal of parking meters, widening and bricking sidewalks, roof drain work and installation of period lights.

Public Comment Period

Margot Doering owner and operator of the Martin Hill Inn on Islington Street said that she appreciates the effort the city has made on the Islington Street project. She added that the West End Business Association is interested in continuing to participate in the process as a stakeholder and she invited any members of the EDC that were inclined to attend the next West End Business Association meeting to be held on February 19, 2008 at 5:30 at the Bixram Yoga Studio on Islington Street.

City Councilor Dwyer notified the Commission of the upcoming sustainability fair scheduled for April 19, 2008. The venue has yet to be determined, but there will be representatives from “green” businesses in attendance and there will be an educational component. She has if the EDC would sign on as a sponsor (not financial) of the event.

The meeting adjourned at 8:45 AM. The next meeting is March 7, 2008.

Respectfully submitted,
Nancy Carmer
Economic Development Program Manager