

**MEETING MINUTES**  
**PORTSMOUTH ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT COMMISSION**

May 1, 2009

City Hall Conference Room A

7:30 a.m.

Members Present: Dana Levenson, Chairman; Jack Blalock, William Gladhill, Dr. Paul Harvey, Ken Smith, Susanne Delaney, Josh Cyr, Tim Allison, Lisa DeStefano

Members Excused: Everett Eaton, Vice-Chairman

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

**Approval of Draft Meeting Minutes of April 3, 2009**

Following a motion by Mr. Smith and a second by Mr. Cyr, the draft meeting minutes of April 3, 2009 were unanimously approved as written.

**Presentation by Representatives of Seacoast Local**

Karen Marzloff and Tom Holbrook were present to update the EDC on the activities of Seacoast Local. Mr. Holbrook said that the organization has grown substantially and accomplished much since the last time they were before the EDC. For the new EDC members he summarized the role of the organization. Seacoast Local, Inc., is a non-profit network of local, independent businesses, individuals and non-profits who share a vision of community development built on sustainable practices. They work to develop local assets in ways that are specific and meaningful to this area, in order to secure a strong community, environment and economy for all. Mr. Holbrook said that the organization accomplishes its goals through education, market development, and through the national Balle network and the New England Local Business Forum. He cited statistics and studies that have shown that independent businesses contribute 2-3 times more to community than their national franchise counterparts. They also hire more local people and have weathered the economic downturn slightly better than the national firms.

Seacoast Local promotes volunteerism and citizen involvement. Current membership is 170 and growing. The organization has instituted a campaign called “the 10% shift” in which people are urged to shift just 10% of their purchases to locally owned companies if they are not doing so already.

Ms. Marzloff summarized current Seacoast Local initiatives including the local food/local fish program to raise awareness of the local fishing industry. To that end the group has collaborated with the local Fishing Fleet Committee to leverage to the power of the local purchaser. In September a festival dubbed “Fishtival” is being organized. In March the organization launched an effort to connect local farmer to local restaurants and in June Seacoast Local will hold its annual fair. This year it will be held at the Bridge St. parking lot to highlight local non-profits such as Art-Speak and the Discover Portsmouth Center as well as the importance of a gateway to the Islington St. corridor. There will be live music and information booths to learn more about local non-profits, local agriculture and community. Mr. Levenson thanked the group for the informative presentation and for their important local work. Mr. Cyr said that he has been impressed with the professionalism of Seacoast Local and their meaningful work and urged the members to think about how the city can assist the organization accomplish its goals.

**Old Business**

- *EDC Project Updates Group Parking License Policy Modification* - The City Manager informed the EDC that, at its April 20, 2009 meeting, the City Council adopted the proposed Group Parking License Policy modification as recommended by the EDC. Chairman Levenson requested that a copy of the policy be sent to Mr. Choate to share with prospective corporate commercial property tenants and buyers.
- *Update on Islington Street Action plan Meeting*  
Ms. Carmer asked the Commission members to hold the date of June 24<sup>th</sup> for the next public meeting on Islington Street.

### **New Business/Other Business**

*Recent Portsmouth media rankings* – Ms. Carmer distributed a compilation of articles on Portsmouth featured in national publications and newspaper media such as *Business Week*, *American Style*, *Outside Magazine* and *National Geographic Traveler*. She said that such accolades and media features should not be underestimated and that many other localities would be grateful to be the subject of articles. The press is superior to ads purchased in the publications as a means to attract business and visitors. Credit for the list of features goes to many in the community including the Chamber Tourism Committee, local businesses and the city. Chairman Levenson said the two-page compilation is very impressive and a testimony to Portsmouth's diverse assets.

*Governor's Conference on Tourism* – Ms. Carmer reminded the EDC that the NH Travel Council has selected Portsmouth as the site of the May 2010 Governors Conference on Tourism. She will attend the conference on May 24, 2009 to represent the city along with members of the Chamber and local tourism businesses.

*Commencement of State St. sewer/water separation project and business interface* - Mr. Bohenko reminded the EDC that work on State Street sewer separation project will begin in July and that City staff and representatives of the project engineering firm CMA attended a meeting of the Historic State St. Association to discuss the project schedule and to discuss ways to ensure access to State St. businesses during construction. He said the city's goal is to minimize construction downtown during the busy construction season. Mr. Blalock commented that as a downtown business owner, he has experienced municipal infrastructure construction and is impressed with the project management, neatness and quality of the work product.

### **Other Business**

Mr. Smith announced that the city parking committee has been working with Atlantic Parking on a pilot valet parking initiative in Market Square. People can drive up to the valet area in the square and for \$10.00 a valet will park the customer's car in the Harbour Place parking garage.

### **Public Comment Period**

David Choate of Coldstream Realty asked about the project timing for sidewalk improvements between Hanover and Deer Streets. The City Manager said the project is in the capital plan but the timing depends on one of the city's application for potential stimulus money for Market Street extension project. The earliest the project would be started is the fall.

With regard to the commercial real estate market, Mr. Choate said it is a good time to be a tenant as rents are not increasing. Retail in particular has higher vacancies, especially on Lafayette Road. He would like to see a city effort to revitalize that corridor. The industrial market is also soft due to the economy. The Portsmouth Paper Co. site is currently being rented to Wal-Mart for storage. He anticipates some future vacancies of car dealerships.

City Councilor Dwyer spoke about the need to support the interstate project to repair the Memorial Bridge. She attended the recent public input hearing on the project and is not impressed with the PR staff hired for the project. She said that Maine does not have a ten-year plan similar to the NH Department of Transportation Plan, rather they have an 18 month plan. She reminded the EDC that there is a study underway to evaluate several alternatives for the Route 1 Bypass and Memorial Bridge repair needs including to replace the two bridges with one. She said there is also an Advisory Committee overseeing the study. Mr. Bohenko said that Steve Parkinson is on the Advisory Committee. Ms. Dwyer encouraged the EDC to stay informed on the matter. An important hearing will be held in August. Staff will email EDC members when hearings are scheduled. A suggestion was made to bring in the PR representatives to keep the EDC updated as the study progresses.

**Confirm Next Meeting Date:** June 5, 2009 at PDA and Newmarket International/Adjourn  
With no further business, the meeting adjourned at 8:30 AM.

Respectfully submitted,  
Nancy Carmer, Economic Development Program Manager