

MEETING MINUTES
PORTSMOUTH ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT COMMISSION

November 6, 2009

City Hall Conference Room A

7:30 a.m.

Members Present:	Dana Levenson, Chairman; Everett Eaton, Vice-Chairman; William Gladhill, Dr. Paul Harvey, Susanne Delaney, Lisa DeStefano, Jack Blalock, Josh Cyr, Ron Zolla
Excused:	Tim Allison
Absent:	Ken Smith

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

Approval of Draft Meeting Minutes of October 2, 2009

Following a motion by Mr. Eaton and a second by Ms. DeStefano, the draft meeting minutes of October 2, 2009 were unanimously approved as written.

Presentation: Route 1 Study and Update

Dave Walker, Senior Transportation Planner, Rockingham Planning Commission (RPC) provided a power point presentation on the recent Route 1 Corridor Study. . The purpose of the study is to identify transportation deficiencies in the corridor and make recommendations that guide planning and land use decisions in the study area. The presentation summarized the comprehensive analysis of the busy corridor that includes 27 seacoast towns. The recommendations fall into the following categories:

1. Land use/zoning
2. Access management
3. Transit opportunities
4. Streetscape/landscaping improvements

The cost of the recommended improvements in the study area is \$57 million (in 2004 dollars). In Portsmouth, the study recommends an estimated \$9.1 million of improvements. Mr. Walker illustrated where the various improvements and access management areas are proposed in the city. Recommendations include cross connections between properties to facilitate the limitation of left turns due to the proposed median throughout the corridor. He also highlighted transit stops, sidewalks and bike lanes.

With regard to land use, the study recommends more compact, dense urban development with less of a “strip mall” design standard than currently exists. He said that the proposed Gateway District in Portsmouth is in sync with the study recommendation.

The study includes three streetscape improvement categories including 1) historic town center, 2) commercial areas, and 3) rural. Using Savannah, Georgia as a case-study, Mr. Walker illustrated how the study recommendations might appear once completed. The next steps in the process are to make final recommendations to RPC communities, to develop financing sources and to start implementation through the Rockingham Planning Commission and NH DOT. Following his presentation, Mr. Levenson thanked Mr. Walker for the attending and for updating he EDC on the study.

Overview of State of NH Shoreland Protection

City of Portsmouth Environmental Planner Peter Britz provided an overview of the NH Shoreland Protection Act. The Act became law in 1992 and was amended in 2008. The law establishes a 250-foot protection zone from the edge of water bodies in the state. The Act was originally intended to protect the rapidly developing shoreline of NH lakes and rivers in the early 1990’s from non-point source pollution and

decimation of natural buffer zones. Within the protection zone no more than 20% of the surface area can be impervious. There is a 50-foot no-build zone adjacent to water bodies followed by a 150 foot wooded buffer area and a 50-foot upland zone that is subject to the regulations. In urban areas existing developments are grandfathered for replacement unless the request is to expand the building footprint.

The law often causes confusion with the state tidal wetland regulations and application for buffer zone development within 100 feet of a tidal water body. To remedy this, the state allows development applicants to use the wetlands permit and incorporate the provisions of the Shoreland Protection Act into the wetland permit application. Using an example of the Poco's restaurant on the Portsmouth waterfront, Mr. Britz outlined the complex exemption provision in the Shoreland Protection Act. All exemption requests require City Council approval before the State will approve it. Mr. Bohenko reviewed history of requests in the city noting that the City Council has never denied an exemption request. He said that one problem with these requests is the lack of state personnel to handle the requests in a timely manner. He added that despite the provision in the law to allow cities to request exemptions for entire urban zones, the city prefers to handle requests on a case-by case-basis. Part of the reason for this is that the exemption runs with the land. Mr. Levenson thanked Mr. Britz for the presentation and for broadening the EDC's understanding of the Shoreland Protection Act.

Old Business

DRED approval of Economic Revitalization Zone (ERZ) at 1 Highliner Ave.

Ms. Carmer informed the EDC that the NH Dept. Of Resources and Economic Development (DRED) has approved the city's application for an ERZ at Highliner Avenue and also at Pease. This action will allow eligible businesses to apply for tax credits to be used against Business Profit Tax and Business Enterprise Tax in a qualifying project.

Islington Street Improvement Action Plan Update

Ms. Carmer distributed the draft Action Plan and explained its contents and how to use the document. She asked EDC members to review the Plan for discussion at the December EDC meeting and to contact her with questions. Mr. Levenson also asked the EDC to consider how best to prioritize the actions and to inform stakeholders of the final Action Plan

Schedule for Readings on Draft Revised Zoning Ordinance, and the Draft Revised Site Plan Review Regulations

Mr. Bohenko reported that, after 48 meetings on the topic, the amendments to the Zoning Ordinance and Site Review regulations will go before the City Council for first reading on November 16th. If the Council moves second reading (which is anticipated), there will be a work session with the Council on Nov 30th and a public hearing at the December 7th City Council meeting.

City Council Referral on Flag Policy – Subcommittee Report

Josh Cyr reported that the subcommittee has met twice and members have reviewed the flag regulations under the current sign regulations as well as the list of approved flags and other flags in the Central Business District (CBD). Members have also researched flag regulations of other communities and the group will meet again in November. Prior to the next meeting, subcommittee members will talk to local businesses about the perceived impact of flags in the CBD.

New Business

Mayors Blue Ribbon Committee on Downtown Events

Mr. Bohenko reported that the Mayor anticipates naming committee members at the November 16th City Council meeting. An EDC member will be appointed to the Committee.

Memorial Bridge Update

On Monday November 9, 2009 in City Council Chambers the NH DOT will hold a public informational meeting on the recent Memorial Bridge closure and the schedule for repair and reopening of the bridge.

Renewal of satellite parking agreements

Mr. Bohenko reported that the city renewed both parking agreements with the respective owners of the Bethel Assembly of God and Masonic Temple satellite parking lots. Both of these lots provide much needed overflow parking during city events such as the Tall Ships event.

Other Business

November 16, 2009 City Council Work Session

Mr. Bohenko reported that on November 16, 2009 at 6 PM, the City Council will hold a work session with Parking Manager Jon Frederick. The Council has invited the EDC to attend. The agenda for the meeting includes review of the 2006 Parking Service Enhancements Report, a review of the 1998 Downtown Parking Study by John Burke and a discussion of a potential parking garage at the site of the Court Street public parking lot.

Seacoast Local Request

Ms. Carmer reported that on December 8th in recognition of Buy Local Week, Seacoast Local is hosting Dan Houston of *Civic Economics*, the firm responsible for economic impact studies of shifting purchasing dollars to local businesses. There is an opportunity for the EDC to co-sponsor the event. Ms. Carmer noted that the event is educational and is free to the public and thus complies with Goal 5 of the 2009 EDC Action Plan which is "to support and assist Seacoast Local's effort to educate the business and residential community on the benefits of buying from locally-owned businesses." Seacoast Local's cost for the event is \$1,400. Mr. Bohenko recommended that the EDC co-sponsor the event at the \$700 level and encourage a match from local business. The motion by Ms. Delaney to commit \$700 to the event, seconded by Mr. Eaton, passed unanimously. Members also asked how they could volunteer to assist with the event. Ms. Carmer will contact Ms. Marzloff of Seacoast Local to discuss the event and volunteer opportunities and email the details to EDC members.

Public Comment Period

No members of the public wished to make comments.

Confirm Next Meeting Date:

The next meeting is December 4, 2009.

With no further business, the meeting adjourned at 9:04 AM.

Respectfully submitted,
Nancy M. Carmer
Economic Development Program Manager