

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

March 5, 2010

City Hall Conference Room A

7:30 a.m.

Members Present: Dana Levenson, Chairman; Everett Eaton, Vice-Chairman; Nancy Novelline Clayburgh, Christine Dwyer; Dr. Paul Harvey, Susanne Delaney, Lisa DeStefano, Tim Allison, Josh Cyr, Ron Zolla  
Excused: Christine Dwyer; Dr. Paul Harvey

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

**Approval of Draft Meeting Minutes of February 5, 2010**

Following a motion by Commissioner Cyr and a second by Commissioner Eaton, the draft meeting minutes of January 8, 2010 were unanimously approved as written.

**Resignation of Commissioner William Gladhill**

Mr. Levenson publicly thanked William Gladhill for his EDC service since 2004. Mr. Gladhill has changed employment and can no longer attend the monthly meetings. However, he has applied to serve as alternate to the City's Planning Board.

**Chamber of Commerce Request to Extend the Partnership with the City**

Doug Bates, President of the Greater Portsmouth Chamber of Commerce presented the request to extend the partnership with the City. In his presentation, Mr. Bates touched on the value added by the Chamber partnership to the city's overall economic development program. These include the delivery of tourism services including such as publication of 100,000 copies of the *Guide to the Seacoast*, visitor tracking, representation of Portsmouth at tourism tradeshows, interaction with the State Tourism Division, operation of the downtown and in-office information kiosks, the Chamber's Tourism Committee coordination with local tourism-focused businesses, the upgrade of the website for travel information and reservations and organization of local Restaurant Week. The funds received from the city are a small portion of the tourism budget which includes Chamber tourism members and the State Joint Promotional Program funds (which was \$38K last year).

Chairman Levenson thanked Mr. Bates for the presentation and reminded the EDC that over the course of the past several years, the Commission has worked to establish a set of quantitative metrics that the Chamber could report on quarterly to provide a better measure of the tourism work done by the Chamber. He invited Commissioners to suggest other metrics that they feel could add value to the quarterly reports. Mr. Eaton moved to approve the Chamber's request to extend the partnership at level funding of \$40,000 for the tourism services provided. Ms. Destefano seconded the motion which passed unanimously.

**Old Business**

*Zoning Amendment Summary* – Planning Director Rick Taintor explained the history, purpose and status of three proposed zoning amendments. The Gateway District on Lafayette Road is intended to encourage higher quality design, incorporate more green space and pedestrian elements for new developments proposed in the corridor starting at the Rye town line. The ordinance change modifies the Table of Uses in the Zoning Ordinance and includes a planned design option that

promotes development with better pedestrian and bicycle amenities and higher quality architectural design in exchange for higher development density. Mr. Taintor said there is already some developer interest in using the planned development option for future development in the corridor.

The changes to the unmet parking credit are intended to eliminate confusion, simplify the parking requirement in the downtown and require a higher payment (\$5,000 per space) for those uses that generate the highest amount of parking demand. It also eliminated the parking requirements for first floor occupants with the exception of restaurants. He said that the first zoning application received after the change was a mixed use condominium/restaurant development that has challenged the “in lieu” payment. The City Council is considering an interim measure to reduce the payment to \$2,000 while the Planning Board analyzes alternatives to the parking requirements (first reading on this zoning amendment is scheduled for March 15, 2010).

A parking focus group has been established to answer the question should private development be required to provide for parking in the downtown and if so, what should be the unmet parking credit for developments that cannot create on-site parking? The EDC has been invited to participate in the parking focus group which consists of local developers, business owners and city staff. Chairman Levenson said that the EDC has been involved in this issue in the past and it is complicated. It also has a very significant impact on development downtown and the cost to lease property downtown. He asked members of the EDC to email him if they are interested in serving on the parking focus group.

The or Critical Care Retirement Community (CCRC) overlay district zoning amendment was withdrawn from the recent zoning modifications by the City Council in December 2009 for further research on the implications such a change would have on tax revenues, risk, traffic and affordability. The new CCRC zone stems from a request for a development off Borthwick Avenue that would create hundreds of elderly residential units. After much public debate on the matter, the area where such developments would be allowed was expanded to other office research zones within the city including Lafayette Road, Bartlett Street, and the North Mill Pond area.

In closing, Mr. Taintor noted that the amended Zoning Ordinance creates sign districts to accommodate the various commercial areas and sign needs throughout the city. He said this changed has helped business in the downtown.

*Maine - NH Bridge Connections Study Update* – Ms. Carmer brought the Commission up to date on the process for evaluating the rehabilitation or rebuilding of the Memorial and Sarah Long Bridges over the Piscataqua River. The consultant has narrowed the action alternatives from 44 to 9. A public meeting was held in February to present the remaining alternatives and gather additional public comment. It was announced last week that the joint TIGER grant application from the states of Maine and NH to rebuild the Memorial Bridge was unsuccessful.

Going forward, the consultant will apply new a new set of evaluation criteria to the remaining alternatives within the context of the project Purpose and Need Statement. Ms. Carmer distributed a list of the evaluation criteria for the EDC to peruse. The evaluation criteria include consideration of the economic impacts of the remaining alternatives. The consultants will be doing a business survey to analyze the impact of the temporary closure of Memorial Bridge last November on local business. The next stakeholder meeting will be March 26, 2010.

*Mayor's Blue Ribbon Committee on Downtown Events* – City Councilor Spear presented the Committee's report and recommendations to the City Council on February 16, 2010. The report was accepted along with the letter from the EDC encouraging the Council to adopt the recommendations in the report.

*Portsmouth Naval Shipyard (PNSY) – Annual Economic Impact Report* Ms. Carmer distributed copies of the 2009 PSNY economic impact report and provided comparative figures to support the fact that the overall employment is up by 188 or 3%. There are currently 269 Portsmouth residents working at the shipyard.

### **New Business**

*Update on Market Street Sidewalks and Gateway Project* - Ms. Carmer informed the EDC about the upcoming sidewalk project from Bow St. to Russell St. The work includes new brick sidewalks, reset granite curbs, period lights, undergrounding of roof drains, and improved pedestrian crosswalks that include bump-outs. Work is scheduled to start in late April and be completed before Market Square Day. The project staging site is as yet undetermined. The City has held one abutter meeting and a pre-construction meeting will be held when a contractor has been selected.

*Rockingham County Economic Development Commission Planning for the Future Sessions* The EDC is invited to attend and participate in the upcoming Economic Development Planning Strategy session at the great Bay Community College on April 2<sup>nd</sup> sponsored by the Rockingham Economic Development Commission. Demographer Peter Francese is the keynote speaker. Participants will have an opportunity to suggest economic development priorities for inclusion in the next Comprehensive Economic Development Strategy (CEDs) document that is required before the County and towns can qualify for federal EDA funds.

*Discussion of EDC/UNH relationship building and Green Launching Pad* - In keeping with the EDC Action Plan goals of collaborating with UNH on economic development, a discussion of potential collaborative opportunities was discussed including sustainability initiatives, development of a green incubator and local business participation in the Green Launching Pad, learning more about UNH's facilities planning and how it can impact local business. Commissioner Allison will communicate with UNH representatives regarding these opportunities on behalf of the EDC and a subgroup of Commissioners Delaney, Cyr and Eaton will work on the green incubator idea.

### **Other Business**

Susanne Delaney invited the EDC to attend a special meeting of the Tenants Association at Pease (TAP) to learn more about the upcoming Boston – Portsmouth Air Show Aug. 28 & 29, 2010. The TAP meeting is being held April 13<sup>th</sup> at 1 NH Avenue at Pease in the 3rd Floor Conference Room.

Ms. Carmer distributed final copies of the Islington Street Improvement Action Plan.

### **Public Comment Period**

David Choate spoke to the unmet parking credit section of the zoning ordinance stating his belief that the city should not charge businesses to create parking downtown because, in his opinion, it stifles development. The loss of office business downtown such as Bottomline Technology has an extremely negative impact on the remaining restaurant and retail stores. He agrees that the EDC should be more

involved in the parking focus group.

With regard to the commercial market, Mr. Choate reported that the Northeast Rehabilitation Hospital at Pease Tradeport will be breaking ground soon. The 40-bed hospital will create skilled jobs for the community.

**Confirm Next Meeting Date:** April 2, 2010 /Adjourn

With no further business, the meeting adjourned at 9:00 AM.

Respectfully submitted,  
Nancy M. Carmer  
Economic Development Program Manager