

MEETING MINUTES
PORTSMOUTH ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT COMMISSION

October 1, 2010

Conference Room A City Hall

7:30 a.m.

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

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

Approval of Draft Meeting Minutes of June 4, 2010

Following a motion by Commissioner Eaton and a second by Commissioner Dwyer, the draft meeting minutes of September 10, 2010 were unanimously approved as written.

Recognition of Dr. Paul Harvey for his EDC service

After remarking on his long term service to the City as a member of various boards, Chairman Levenson thanked Mr. Harvey for his service to the Economic Development Commission and the city and presented him with a token of appreciation. Mr. Harvey responded that he enjoyed serving on the Commission and is proud of its accomplishments. He will continue to support EDC's activities going forward.

Greater Portsmouth Chamber of Commerce Quarterly Reports on Tourism for the period 4/1/10 through 9/30/10

Valerie Rochon, Chamber of Commerce Tourism Manager gave a tourism activity report on the past two quarters. She said that the excellent summer weather benefitted the seacoast by bringing thousands of visitors to the area, filling hotels and restaurants and boosting attendance at local festivals, road races and events. In a written report submitted to the Commission she detailed chamber tourism activity including distribution of collateral such as The Guide to the Seacoast (>100K) and rack cards (>75K), travel shows attended (2), advertising, grants received, hotel occupancy and visitation data.

Old Business

Report on City Council Sept 20, 2010 Work Session on Parking Report/Worth Parking Lot

City Manager Bohenko said that on Sept 20, 2010, the City Council held a work session on the Parking Impact and Downtown Vitality Report. Parking utilization rates listed in the report indicate that a new garage is needed and one of the seven recommendations in the report is to build a new public parking garage at the Worth Lot. Mr. Bohenko said that would require the City Council to authorize him to re-engage the consultants that prepared the original 1998 Worth Lot parking garage feasibility analysis in 1998. The consultants would re-visit the proposed alternatives and develop new cost estimates for construction of a new parking garage. Another recommendation in the report is for variable parking rates. This recommendation is indicated because parking utilization exceeds 80%. Mr. Bohenko said that the City Council has a retreat scheduled in November at which time the report recommendations and the Worth Lot garage will be discussed at greater length.

Additional discussion included the fact that the previous constraints on the lot when the Shaines Law firm was an abutter are no longer in place. Also discussed were loading zones and the opportunity to revitalize the Vaughan Mall if a new garage were to be constructed.

Chairman Levenson told the EDC that Commissioner Zolla had requested agenda time for further discussion of the regulations that, in Mr. Zolla's opinion, encourage conversion of commercial to residential space in the city's central business district. Since Mr. Zolla was absent, Chairman Levenson said that he will continue the discussion at the next meeting.

Film Industry Subcommittee Report

Commissioner Robert Marchewka reported that the subcommittee met to develop a strategy for exploring current film and media activity and opportunities for film and media business development. There are a growing number of people and businesses in this sector and the group wants to examine how it might help them to succeed and strengthen the city's appeal to film and media business. The next step is to invite representatives from local film and media businesses to an informal meeting and discuss challenges and opportunities. The subcommittee will report back on its progress later in the year.

New /Other Business

2011 American for the Arts Economic Prosperity Study

Ms. Carmer reported that the City's Cultural Commission, *aka* Art-Speak, has signed an agreement with the Americans for the Arts to undertake an Economic Prosperity Study for 2011 so that the city can evaluate trends in the contribution of non-profit arts and culture organizations to the city's economy and get a sense of the vitality of this sector of the city's business community.

Other Business

Commissioner Eaton wondered if the City could adopt the distinctive historic font used in the Chamber of Commerce's printed materials for the city's wayfinding signs. Mr. Bohenko said that readability is important, but it could be explored.

Councilor Dwyer suggested that the EDC play a more visible role in educating the community regarding the city's relatively good economic standing. She suggested a quarterly report to the City Council with labor force figures, building and tourism activity data, etc. She feels that the EDC is a respected Commission with a "quiet visionary voice" that has a good perspective on "overall community well-being." She said this perspective is not always acknowledged by the City Council and others in discussions on the importance and value of infrastructure projects and other related community expenditures on overall city economic well-being..

Public Comment Period

No members of the public were present to comment.

Confirm Next Meeting Date: The next scheduled meeting date is November 5, 2010.

With no further business the meeting adjourned at 8:50 a.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Nancy Carmer

Economic Development Program Manager