

**MEETING MINUTES
PORTSMOUTH ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT COMMISSION**

November 5, 2010

Conference Room B City Hall

7:30 a.m.

Members Present: Dana Levenson, Chairman; Everett Eaton, Vice-Chairman; Nancy Novelline Clayburgh, Josh Cyr, Ron Zolla, Robert Marchewka, John P. Bohenko, City Manager
Excused: Lisa DeStefano, Christine Dwyer, Tim Allison

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

Approval of Draft Meeting Minutes of October 1, 2010

Following a motion by Commissioner Nancy Novelline Clayburgh and a second by Commissioner Eaton, the draft meeting minutes of October 1, 2010 were unanimously approved as written.

Old Business

Memorial Bridge TIGER II Grant – ME-NH Connections Study

Ms. Carmer reported three items related to the ME-NH Connections Study:

- 1) The Study is scheduled to be complete this week and posted on the Study website. The final Connections Study Stakeholder and Steering Committee meeting and public hearing are scheduled for Nov. 16th, location TBD.
- 2) The Governors of Maine and NH met in October in a press conference and announced a task force to develop a funding plan for replacement of the Memorial Bridge and the rehabilitation of the Sarah Long Bridge. The plan will be presented in December 2010.
- 3) The \$20 million TIGER II grant application for replacement of the Memorial Bridge was approved.

Mr. Bohenko said that the morning *Portsmouth Herald* newspaper reported on the first meeting of the funding task force. Proposed payment options for the bridges include funds from the US Department of Defense for the Sarah Long rail line, potential new tolls and revenues from existing tolls. The EDC will be kept apprised of information on the final study report as it becomes available.

Update from EDC Subcommittee on Film Industry

Commissioner Robert Marchewka reported that the subcommittee held two meetings with individuals and representatives from local film businesses for an informal discussion on challenges and opportunities. Discussion focused on current business in the city/state and how the city might help them to succeed and strengthen the city's appeal to film and media businesses. The subcommittee learned that the participants have had a positive experience in the past when filming in the city and that the City's current procedure for requests is flexible and film friendly.

Follow-up on Tech World Event

Ms. Carmer said that the City of Portsmouth participated as an exhibitor at the Chamber of Commerce's e-Coast Tech World event held at the former Celestica Building at Pease on October 14th and 15th. The City shared a booth with Pease Tradeport officials to reinforce the desire to have technology firms locate here. The event was well attended on the first day with lighter attendance on day two. Commissioner Josh Cyr attended the event as well. He said that the event had not been held in ten years and the response from the technology community was good.

Follow-up discussion to the Parking Focus Group Report

Mr. Bohenko opened the discussion with a review of the seven recommendations included in the Parking Focus Group Report. He spoke specifically about the City's efforts to move toward a parking enterprise fund and the restrictions for the revenues going into the fund. Commissioner Zolla commented on two of the report recommendations. The first is the elimination of all off-site parking regulations in the Central Business Districts and the second is the elimination of the in-lieu fees for parking. He is concerned with the unintended economic development impacts these may have on the downtown. He said that current market forces favor residential development over commercial development downtown and he fears that this may create more property conversions from commercial to residential. This would result in a loss of downtown employees and the associated direct and indirect spending which negatively impacts central business district economic vitality.

Following a general discussion and concurrence with these concerns, it was decided that a letter will be drafted from the EDC to the City Council expressing these concerns. Ms. Carmer will work with Planning Director Taintor on drafting the letter and will circulate it to the EDC for review.

New /Other Business

Request from Portsmouth Cable Commission re: Broadband Infrastructure

John Gregg, Chairman of the Cable Commission and fellow members Bill Southworth and Brian Gregg addressed the EDC regarding the possibility of establishing a subcommittee to explore whether efforts should be taken to improve broadband infrastructure to ensure that the city remains competitive from an economic development perspective. Mr. Southworth recounted a similar effort his employer spearheaded running a network control center in the Boston area. He said that there are several studies that document the impact of adequate broadband capacity and economic development.

The City Manager said this is a timely topic and one that should be on the EDC Action Plan for 2011. A brief discussion ensued on the benefits of improved broadband speed to residents and to businesses, Mr. Levenson suggested that a subcommittee consisting on two members from the EDC and the Cable Commission plus a fifth member (perhaps from the Chamber) be established to explore this topic. EDC Commissioner Cyr volunteered to be on the subcommittee. Chairman Levenson will follow up with Chairman Gregg on he subcommittee details.

2011 Comprehensive Economic Development Strategy (CEDs) Process

Ms. Carmer provided an overview of the Comprehensive Economic Development Strategy (CEDs) process for the new EDC members. She likened the process to a regional Master Plan for economic development goals. The region consists of all of Rockingham County, and the Cities of Nashua, Hudson and. A new CEDS document is prepared every five years and updated annually. Communities in the region can submit public infrastructure projects and studies that are then prioritized for potential federal Economic Development Administration grants. The CEDS Steering Committee is beginning the update process for 2011. Currently, the City has two projects on the priority list: the Greenland Well Upgrade Project and the Regional Biosolid Project. New projects can be submitted until December 15, 2010.

EDC 2010 Accomplishments and Preliminary Discussion of 2011 Action Plan

Ms. Carmer distributed copies of the 2010 EDC Action Plan. Chairman Levenson said that the plan includes a comprehensive long term plan as well as a short term plan with one year priorities. He asked EDC members to review the plan and to send thoughts for the 2011 plan to Ms. Carmer. Some items that should be included are: study of the cities future broadband needs, a strategy to attract small office users to the downtown, promotion of a 750-1000 seat downtown conference center, and a strategy for sustainable business development. It was also suggested that, given the importance of Pease Tradeport to the City, the EDC should request semi-annual or quarterly reports from PDA Executive Director Mullen.

Public Comment Period

Mr. David Choate had two comments. First, in the effort to promote the city to technology firms, the EDC should not lose sight of the importance of the local manufacturers and the blue collar workers employed by them. He said that much of the current demand in commercial real estate is for manufacturing warehousing and distribution. Second, he wondered if it is possible to analyze existing developable land to see if some parcels could be consolidated and rezoned to meet this demand.

Confirm Next Meeting Date: The next scheduled meeting date is December 10, 2010.

With no further business the meeting adjourned at 9:00 a.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Nancy Carmer

Economic Development Program Manager