

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

December 10, 2010

Conference Room A City Hall

7:30 a.m.

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

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

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

Following a motion by Commissioner Eaton and a second by Commissioner Allison, the draft meeting minutes of November 5, 2010 were unanimously approved as written.

**Presentation: Great Bay Community College (GBCC) and Industry Workforce Development**

Lin Tamulonis, Associate Vice-President, Corporate and Community Education made a power point presentation on the college, its curriculum and programs. She focused on the various workforce programs and the collaboration with local business for training. GBCC provides Associates Degrees and Certificate programs, high school transfer programs (i.e. Project Running Start, eStart), and transfer programs to 4-yr. colleges and institutions. Since 2008 there has been dramatic growth at the school. The schools affordability and flexibility are factors in this growth.

Through the college's Business and Training Center, the school works with local employers to tailor training that meets businesses' need. GBCC also has a partnership with the Portsmouth Naval Shipyard to train its apprentices. Since 2003 it has trained 1,227 apprentices. It also offers a para-educator training program designed to improve the educational attainment of this sector of the workforce. Other sectors served are the health care and hospitality industries. GBCC also offers workforce training and opportunities for students with disabilities. The school leverages federal and state dollars to deliver these programs. Following her presentation and a question and answer session, Chairman Levenson thanked Ms. Tamulonis for her presentation.

**Seacoast Commercial Real Estate Report: Laura Nesmith, Analyst for Grubb & Ellis/Northern New England**

Chairman Levenson announced that this agenda has been deferred to the January 7, 2011 due an unexpected conflict in Ms. Nesmith's schedule.

**Old Business**

*NH- ME Connections Report and Memorial Bridge Reconstruction*

Ms. Carmer distributed copies of the Executive Summary section of the ME-NH Connection Study. The report is the conclusion of the contract to evaluate repair and maintenance of the Memorial and Sarah Long Bridges through 2035. Commissioner Cyr asked what the next steps are. Next steps are to bid out the Memorial Bridge replacement project. On a parallel track is the interstate effort to develop a funding plan for the long term maintenance and repair of the three interstate Piscataqua Bridges. At a recent meeting of the task force charged with this assignment, a proposal for tolls was shot down. The deadline for the funding plan is December 14<sup>th</sup>. Councilor Dwyer asked if the Memorial Bridge design process is being delayed as a result of public input regarding alternative bridge design. Ms. Carmer will check and respond.

*Broadband Infrastructure Subcommittee Update*

Josh Cyr summarized the purpose and progress of the subcommittee. The subcommittee is in response to a request raised at the November EDC meeting by members of the Cable Commission to explore potential efforts to improve broadband infrastructure. Studies show communities that have the best broadband capacity attract more hi-technology businesses and jobs. The subcommittee consists of two members of the EDC and two members of the Cable Commission and is in the initial research stage. At the kick-off meeting it was decided to research what other cities have done and to interview stakeholders to determine the present and future needs. After making the initial

findings a course of action and responsibility assignments will be recommended.

#### *Update from EDC Subcommittee on Film Industry*

Commissioner Robert Marchewka reported that the subcommittee is scheduled to meet December 16<sup>th</sup> with Matt Newton of the NH film office to discuss ways to collaborate and develop the local film industry. Ms. Carmer added that the group will be exploring hosting the next NH Film Roundtable in Portsmouth and increasing the city's presence on the NH Film Office website.

#### *New /Other Business*

##### *EDC 2010 Accomplishments and Discussion of 2011 Action Plan*

Chairman Levenson asked members to review the EDC Guiding Principles used in development of the annual EDC Action Plan as well as the 2010 Action Plan Year in Review prepared by Ms. Carmer. These documents will be sent to City Council along with the 2011 Action Plan. After reviewing the Guiding Principles, discussion moved to action items for the 2011 Plan. It was agreed that the following items should be included:

- Study of the cities future broadband needs
- Strategy to attract small office users to the downtown
- Promotion of a 750-1000 seat downtown conference center
- Strategy for sustainable business development
- Semi-annual or quarterly reports from PDA Executive Director Mullen
- Semi annual Economic Conditions Report to City Council
- Creative Economy support Include Art-Speak, film subcommittee effort., etc)
- Potential microloan subcommittee using UDAG funds
- Expand regional economic development understanding and efforts
- Continued implementation of Islington St. and Market St Extension projects

#### *Chamber Tourism Annual Meeting report*

Assistant Mayor Novelline Clayburgh, Commissioner Zolla and Ms. Carmer attended the November Chamber of Commerce Annual Tourism meeting. Mr. Zolla reported on the speakers, the attendance and the general topic of enhancing visitation to the area. One topic that was well received was the opportunity to capitalize on the existing events in the city, by expanding collaboration between businesses and event organizers in order to take advantage of the residents and visitors that participate in events. Another topic of the conference was a pilot mobile device application that the Chamber is offering to its members. The event "app" was developed by the local business called On Plane and the Chamber is testing it at no cost. Mr. Zolla felt the conference was productive and for him it highlighted the importance of advertising the seacoast region to attract visitors from New York and other east coast cities for multiple day visits.

#### **2011 Calendar/New Roster**

The 2011 meeting calendar was approved. The revised EDC roster was acknowledged.

#### **Other Business**

- 1) Everett requested that a subcommittee be established to explore a micro loan program using UDAG funds. It was decided that this would be added to the 2011 Action Plan.
- 2) The EDC reviewed and approved a memo to the City Council with comments on the Parking Focus Group Report. The memo expresses concern that elimination of the parking credits could inadvertently result in the conversion of office space to residential space downtown.

#### **Public Comment Period**

Mr. David Choate had four comments. First, he noted that the closure of the Memorial Bridge, while unfortunate, is more hurtful to businesses on the Kittery side of the Piscataqua River than to business on the Portsmouth side.. Second, he reiterated an earlier public comment that perhaps it would be meaningful for the EDC to hear from the Economic Development Directors from other seacoast cities on what is going on in their respective cities and to explore where communities can work together toward regional economic development. Third, he updated the EDC on commercial office activity noting that Smith Barney is moving its offices from 10 Pleasant St to Harbor Place, thereby opening up 6,000 square feet of space at Pleasant St. Also, the UBS offices

currently located on Ladd St. is closing and consolidating to its Portland, Maine location. The Ladd St. office has 3,000-4,000 square feet of space. Lastly, he noted that there has been a spike in the number local residential condominium sales, some for permanent residences and some for second homes.

**Confirm Next Meeting Date:** The next scheduled meeting date is January 7, 2011

With no further business the meeting adjourned at 9:12 a.m.

Respectfully submitted,

*Nancy Carmer*

*Economic Development Program Manager*