

MEETING MINUTES
PORTSMOUTH ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT COMMISSION

January 6, 2012

Conference Room A City Hall

7:30 a.m.

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

Excused: Eric Gregg

Chairman Eaton opened the meeting at 7:37 a.m.

Approval of draft meeting minutes of December 2, 2011

Following a motion by Commissioner Allison and a second by Commissioner, the draft meeting minutes of December 2, 2011 were unanimously approved as written.

Presentation on economic impacts of potential federal and state nutrient limits on the City and local businesses – David Allen, Deputy Public Works Director and Peter Rice, City Engineer

Mr. Rice gave an overview of the City's wastewater treatment system and the regulatory status for its sewer treatment discharge permits with the State of NH and the US EPA. He described the costs of compliance with new EPA nitrogen regulation of 3 mg/L for sewage at the municipal level. Currently there is a discrepancy between the water quality and habitat impacts of the 3 mg/L regulation to be imposed on the municipalities by the State and EPA and an 8 mg/L limit that the city and other municipalities have suggested and proven using sound science. He described the regional efforts of the Great Bay Municipal Coalition to demonstrate through sound science that demonstrates that a 3 mg/l nitrogen level imposed on municipalities will be insignificant in reversing the negative impacts on Great Bay water quality and eelgrass beds because the major contributor to the Bay is non-point source or indirect runoff from the surrounding watershed.

The City is currently conducting pilot treatments at the Peirce Island treatment plant to explore methods levels for nitrogen reduction in the wastewater discharge. These methods will hopefully allow the City to reduce the levels within the existing footprint of the treatment facility and not encroach on recreation property at Peirce Island. The City continues to work with the Great Bay Municipal Coalition to resolve the nitrogen level dispute with the US EPA and the State using a proposed process called Adaptive Management Plan which allows new information to be incorporated a watershed management plan. This method allows for scientific research, monitoring and implementation and incorporates building and measurement of water quality. It also involves a commitment to eelgrass and shellfish restoration and non-point source reduction through best land use practices. Currently the Coalition communities are committed to a total nitrogen limit of 8 mg/L. The Plan is presently being reviewed by regulators.

After a Q&A period regarding the regulations, the costs associated with the pilot project, the input from UNH on the topic and the cost to long term costs to municipalities and businesses, the EDC discussed what the EDC can do to educate and advocate for the 8mg/L limit and state authority over limits. The City Manager suggested raising awareness among the community such as at Rockingham Economic Development Corporation, professional groups such as real estate associations and other business groups. Commissioner Zolla asked about using litigation to counter the dispute. The City Manager responded that the City is not opposed to doing its part to improve wastewater discharge quality and the ecosystem of Great Bay. But, with the majority of the problem stemming from non-point sources, the municipalities do not want to shoulder the majority of the burden while raising sewer rates exponentially and crippling

economic growth. For several years the City has engaged in litigation. One opposing party is The Conservation Law Foundation which supports the US EPA and the State's position. For now the City is planning to upgrade the wastewater system to meet a nitrogen level of 8mg/L.

Chairman Eaton thanked Mr. Rice and Mr. Allen and suggested to the EDC that an advocacy item be added to the 2012 Action Plan.

New Business

Election of EDC Chair – Chairman Eaton passed the meeting facilitation to Vice Chair DeStefano who asked for nominations for EDC Chair. Commissioner Allison moved the nomination of Everett Eaton as EDC Chair for 2012. The motion was seconded by Commissioner Levenson. Hearing no other nominations a vote was called and the motion passed unanimously.

Election of EDC Vice –Chair – Vice-Chair DeStefano passed the meeting facilitation to Chairman Eaton who asked for EDC Vice-Chair nominations. Commissioner Eaton moved the nomination of Commissioner Destefano as EDC Vice-Chair for 2012. The motion was seconded by Commissioner Zolla. Hearing no other nominations a vote was called and the motion passed unanimously.

2011 EDC Year in Review - Ms. Carmer summarized the EDC activities of the accomplishments of 2011 and thanked the Commissioners for their efforts. A copy will be transmitted to the City Council.

2012 EDC Action Plan - Ms. Carmer explained the Action Plan process for members new to the EDC this year. She distributed copies of the EDC Guiding Principles used in developing the EDC Action Plan and suggestions for Actions that were made for 2012. The EDC reviewed and edited the suggestions and two new items were added. The first is review of the impact of utility costs on local businesses and the second is monitoring and participation in the Memorial Bridge replacement project as it relates to businesses, logistics and local quality of life. Ms. Carmer will make the edits and bring the Plan back for EDC approval at the February meeting.

Other Business

Update on Memorial Bridge Replacement – Ms. Carmer distributed copies of a recent news release regarding a NHDOT open house scheduled for January 12th at City Hall to give residents and business owners an opportunity to ask questions about the project and meet NH DOT representatives. At the event there will be stations for the public to learn about various aspects of the bridge replacement project such as the design, the construction schedule, public outreach, environmental impacts and alternate transportation routes during bridge replacement. There will be no formal presentations.

The bridge will close January 9th to bicyclists and pedestrians and the schedule is to remove the center span of the bridge on January 30th. A webcam will be set up to view the process. A hotline and website have been established to provide further information about the project.

Relocation of River Run Bookstore – Commissioner Allison recognized “citizen” Cyr for his assistance to River Run bookstore in securing its future downtown and in the recent book brigade move of the store to its new location in the Franklin Block. Josh Cyr said the move will allow the store to stay in business while saving \$50,000 annually.

Public Comment

David Choate offered four comments:

- 1) The company Novocure recently moved to newly renovated space at 195 Commerce Way. The firm develops techniques and devices for brain cancer treatment. He believes the company would be receptive to an onsite visit from EDC.
- 2) He re-iterated his concerns regarding the issue of the building size required for drive-through lanes in Portsmouth. He recently raised the matter with the Planning Director and feels that the matter needs to be revisited instead of relying on special exceptions for approval. The City Manager noted that there are several pressing matters that the Planning Department is working on and this is not an "A list" priority. Nonetheless, the Manager will have a conversation with the Planning Director.
- 3) With regard to the topic of wastewater regulations, he suggested inviting the Conservation Law Foundation to attend a meeting and hear the economic concerns related to the proposed nutrient level requirements.
- 4) With regard to the cost of electricity in NH. Most larger companies do not purchase power from Public Service of NH (PSNH). Most purchase from a third party and receive lower rates. City Manager Bohenko said this is what the city does. However, despite the lower rate, PSNH charges significant transmission fees.

Confirm Next Meeting: Friday, January 6, 2012

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

Respectfully submitted,
Nancy Carmer
Economic Development Program Manager