

**MEETING MINUTES
PORTSMOUTH ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT COMMISSION**

February 10, 2012

Conference Room A City Hall

7:30 a.m.

Members Present: Everett Eaton, Chairman; Dana Levenson, Eric Gregg, Ron Zolla, Robert Marchewka, Philip Cohen, Christine Dwyer, Jack Thorsen, John Bohenko
Excused: Lisa DeStefano, Vice-Chairman, Tim Allison
Absent: Josh Cyr

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

Welcome to new City Council EDC representative Jack Thorsen

Chairman Eaton formally welcomed Jack Thorsen, the new 2012 City Council representative to the EDC. Mr. Thorsen expressed his thanks and enthusiasm for being appointed to the Commission.

Approval of draft meeting minutes of January 6, 2012

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

Tax Increment Financing (TIF) Discussion with Matthew Walsh, Assistant for Special Projects, City Manager's Office, City of Concord, NH

Chairman introduced Mr. Walsh and thanked him for attending the meeting. City Manager Bohenko explained that to date, the City of Portsmouth's TIF activity is limited to adoption of the TIF legislation and to preliminary discussions on potential TIF projects and districts.

Mr. Walsh provided an overview of the TIF legislation and the process involved in administering a TIF project. He provided examples of several TIF projects in Concord including the Grappone Conference Center, the Sears Block and the Sanel Building redevelopments. He concluded his presentation with thirteen recommendations ("Commandments") for successful municipal TIF projects. Following questions and answers from the EDC on the process, Chairman Eaton thanked Mr. Walsh for coming and Mr. Bohenko presented him with a small token of appreciation for his presentation.

Old Business

Parking Supply and Demand Analysis Study - Next Steps

City Manager Bohenko reported that the City Council has referred the report to the Parking and Traffic Safety (PTS) Committee. City staff will be developing strategies to implement the report recommendations and will work with the PTS Committee on this task. Since there is a symbiotic relationship in the various report recommendations, the desired means to forward is an omnibus approach.

Ms. Dwyer expressed the need for a set of clear principles which the PTS Committee can apply to assure consistency in project evaluations and outcomes. She said that the City Council must have an understanding of these principles before it takes action on an omnibus parking proposal. The discussion concluded that there needs to be a discussion with the Mayor about developing a parallel track of educating the new PTS Committee and developing the guiding principles. Commissioner Levenson expressed the need to incorporate the EDC perspective of promoting mixed use in the downtown and strategies to mitigate the parking cost of locating a business downtown.

Update Chamber of Commerce Website Loan Terms

Chairman Eaton said that the EDC subcommittee members met with Chamber President Doug Bates and Chamber Board of Director Member Ben Wheeler to discuss requested modifications to the proposed tourism website loan terms. The consensus was to increase the loan term from four to five years and to allow interest only payments for the first year so that the site can start to generate revenues from stakeholders and hotel booking fees. Also, a requirement that a joint check for the loan proceeds be issued to the Chamber and to the web designer was dropped. If approved, the loan proceeds will go solely to the Greater Portsmouth Chamber of Commerce.

Update on Memorial Bridge Replacement

As most EDC members were aware, the center span of the historic bridge was floated out this week. Work will now begin on dismantling the towers and the approach spans. The City Council has entered into agreements and licenses with NHDOT for a construction lay down area and for parking easements for bridge attendants. Temporary traffic detours and Wright Avenue parking lot modifications have been instituted.

2012 EDC Action Plan

Due to time constraints, this item was deferred to the March 2, 2012 meeting.

New Business

Potential new Economic Revitalization Zones - Due to time constraints, this item was deferred to the March 2, 2012 meeting.

Other Business

A discussion ensued on what the next steps are for developing a TIF in the City. Councilor Dwyer said that the presentation from Concord illustrates the trend that many NH cities and towns are working innovatively to create successful developments modeled after Portsmouth. The effort has resulted in many interesting projects statewide. She feels that Portsmouth needs to continue to be innovative in economic development. She said the City cannot rest on its laurels or the development and job opportunities will occur elsewhere. Commissioner Cohen feels that there is a need to educate residents that are fearful of new development. Councilor Dwyer said the City needs to promote TIF as a planning and development mechanism over which the city has more control. It was agreed to continue the discussion of next steps for TIF at the March 2ns EDC meeting.

Public Comment

No members of the public were present for comment.

Confirm Next Meeting: Friday, March 2, 2012

With no further business the meeting adjourned at 9:14 a.m.

Respectfully submitted,
Nancy Carmer
Economic Development Program Manager