

**MEETING MINUTES
PORTSMOUTH ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT COMMISSION**

May 3, 2013 Conference Room A Portsmouth City Hall 7:30 a.m.

Members Present: Everett Eaton, Chairman; Dana Levenson, Robert Marchewka, Christine Dwyer, John Bosen, Eric Gregg, Philip Cohen, Ron Zolla, John P. Bohenko
Excused: Josh Cyr, John Pratt
Absent: Jack Thorsen

Chairman Eaton opened the meeting at 7:35 a.m.

Approval of draft meeting minutes of April 5, 2013

Following a motion by Commissioner Dwyer and a second by Commissioner Cohen, the draft meeting minutes of April 5, 2013 were unanimously approved as written.

Old/New Business

Letter to Editor on parking and June 17th City Council public input session on parking

Chairman Eaton distributed a draft letter to the editor regarding the need for a second parking garage and reviewed the number of times the High Hanover Parking Garage (HHPG) has closed since the Portwalk surface parking lot was closed for the next phase of the Portwalk development. Commissioner Zolla expressed the two goals stated in the letter: 1) the need for more parking downtown, and 2) the EDC's position supporting the Worth Lot as the best alternative for a second public parking garage. He supports the letter.

The rules were suspended to allow Chamber President Doug Bates to comment that the Chamber is finding business support for the Worth Lot and people are drafting a petition on their own in favor of that alternative. Chairman Eaton said that the letter to the editor also includes the June 17th City Council public input session on parking and encourages people to attend. He is hoping that the businesses that Mr. Bates alluded to will attend. With regard to the draft letter, he told the Commission that he had reached out to Commissioners Cyr and Pratt who could not attend today's meeting and solicited their thoughts on the letter. He said he has proxy emails from them in support of the letter and also of the Worth Lot as the best alternative for a second public parking garage. Commissioner Bosen moved and Commissioner Zolla seconded the motion to send the letter as amended to the Portsmouth Herald. The vote passed unanimously.

Update on relocation of the McIntyre Federal Building

City Manager Bohenko told the Commission that the Mayor, staff and he are scheduled to meet the week of May 6th with representatives of the US General Services Administration (GSA) and the NH Congressional delegation to discuss the status of the relocation of the McIntyre Building tenants to 234 Corporate Dr., Pease International Tradeport. He said this is the first step in developing a strategy concerning the transfer of the property to the City as outlined in the federal legislation of 2004 in light of the recent news that the transfer is not recommended in the President's budget.

Greater Portsmouth Chamber of Commerce Semi- Annual Report on tourism for the period 11/30/12 through 4/30/13 – Valerie Rochon, Tourism Manager, Greater Portsmouth Chamber of Commerce

Chamber President Doug Bates opened the discussion by thanking the EDC for its ongoing support of the Chamber's tourism efforts. Valerie Rochon, Tourism Manager distributed copies of the tourism reports and proceeded to highlight the following items:

1. The Chamber has contracted with Kathleen Soldati of Soldati Marketing to do tourism PR for the Chamber.
2. The annual tourism summit was held in March and spawned three new initiatives and subcommittees driven by members including: 1) Attractions (Hit the Decks event, Live Free and Play, Winter Festival), 2) Events Enhancements, and 3) Frontline Training for hospitality and retail workers.
3. Promo opportunities include NYC and Manchester Airport which now has direct Southwest Airline flights

to the airport.

4. Yankee Magazine picked Portsmouth of one its top 13 New England destination picks.
5. Progress on the new website is going well and will include an optimization feature for mobile devices.
6. Hotel occupancy is up 18%.
7. The Chamber continues to drive its social media followers to Facebook, Twitter and eventually its new website.

Commissioner Zolla responded that the work the Chamber has done is very impressive and that Valerie is doing a remarkable job marketing the City year round with limited resources. In particular, he likes that the new website has two revenue generating sources including the ads and a percentage of the hotel reservation fee. He understands that the Chamber will probably not need to draw upon letter of credit extended by the City for website development which he feels indicates that the process has been thoughtfully managed. Mr. Bates agreed that the Chamber has worked hard to structure the website project so that it does not need to incur debt. With that fact in mind, he requested a grant of \$5,000 to market the completed website which will assist in assuring widespread knowledge of the site and its features. Chairman Eaton responded that he should send a detailed request and the EDC subcommittee that reviewed the website will review it and make a recommendation to the EDC and City Manager.

Update on Citywide Wayfinding Project – Juliet Walker, City of Portsmouth Transportation Planner

Ms. Walker provided a PowerPoint presentation on the citywide wayfinding project. She reviewed project progress to date and gave examples of three potential themes that the consultants have developed in conjunction with the Wayfinding Project Advisory Committee. The three themes are: 1) working waterfront/port, 2) historic, and 3) arts and culture. The presentation included examples and renderings of the three wayfinding styles and materials. She asked the EDC to weigh in on their preferences using a survey prepared for input. The Commissioners discussed individual preferences, the breadth of the project scope and complimented the City on work products thus far. Ms. Walker concluded the presentation by outlining the next steps in developing the wayfinding plan.

Public Comment

David Choate submitted the following comments/suggestions:

1. His firm of Grubb & Ellis/Northern New England has now become a part of Colliers International.
2. He asked for time on the next EDC agenda for a presentation on first floor use of property in the downtown.
3. He said that there is “a rumor on the street” that there is a RFP out for private development of the Worth surface parking lot.
4. He suggested that the City /EDC review the wayfinding at Nobles Island which was an initiative undertaken by the condo association and which has been successful.

Confirm Next Meeting: Friday, June 7, 2013

Adjournment – the meeting adjourned at 9:10 AM.

Respectfully submitted,
Nancy Carmer
Economic Development Program Manager