

**MINUTES OF THE
ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT COMMISSION**

April 3, 2015

City Hall Conference Room A

7:30 a.m.

Members Present: Everett Eaton, Chairman; Bob Marchewka, Vice-Chairman; Dana Levenson, Stefany Shaheen, Jen Zorn, Josh Cyr, Ron Zolla (via teleconference), John Pratt (via teleconference)

Excused: Eric Spear, John Bosen, Philip Cohen,

City Staff: City Manager John P. Bohenko, Economic Development Program Manager Nancy Carmer, Principal Planner Nicholas Cracknell

Approval of draft meeting minutes of March 9, 2015

Commissioner Levenson moved, and Commissioner Marchewka seconded, a motion to approve the draft meeting minutes of March 9, 2015. The motion carried unanimously.

Other business

Bruce Montville of Life Wise Community Partners, (a non-profit, volunteer, educational service organization which advocates for citizen involvement, community service and public safety), presented a program entitled “Yes You Can.” This is a free program focused on helping middle school students become more aware of their potential and opportunities for career goals. It relies on business professionals to act as guest speakers for its in-school career enrichment program. Business representatives are invited to do brief presentations on their respective vocations to educate and inspire the students to complete their education and to set career goals and to develop a future workforce. Calypso Communications marketing firm has agreed to will follow each presentation with a free press release providing media coverage and recognition of the individual’s and company’s contribution. The program is scheduled to launch in late April and get underway in the fall and EDC members were encouraged to share information about the program with their respective employers.

Summary of Vision Plan for Islington Street Corridor

Nick Cracknell, Portsmouth Principal Planner provided a summary of the vision plan developed during a recent planning charrette in February on the Islington Street corridor and West End areas. The charrette included a community survey, mapping exercises, and roundtable public input sessions. The outcome was conceptual level plans and feedback to be included in the character-based zoning code to be developed by the City’s consultant, Town Planning and Urban Design. Feedback heard at the event was that residents embrace the West End neighborhoods, its creative economy and unique nature distinct from the downtown. Charrette participants expressed desires included a cohesive, walkable neighborhood with a mixed uses, significantly more civic space and protection and revitalization of the historic mill areas in the corridor.

The vision conceptual plan includes a proposed greenway along Hodgson Brook and the railroad linking the Route One Bypass to downtown. Also included is a network of pedestrian ways, parks and open civic spaces and revitalization of a mixed use node at the former Frank Jones Brewery including a variable building heights and structured parking. Land use regulation changes that allow for ground floor commercial and upper floor residential received support as did the inclusion of “maker-space” type uses and micro-apartments of up to 500 square feet. This would translate into high density zoning at the Button Factory and Frank Jones Brewery areas. Transportation and infrastructure improvements for intersection upgrades, a rail trail with bicycle and pedestrian facilities, a trolley and shared streets uses were also favored.

The vision plan is now online and the next steps include a 21-day public comment period with draft character-based zoning regulations and public workshops envisioned for June 2015. Planning Board and

City Council reviews will be held in July and public hearings will be scheduled for the fall of 2015. The EDC was encouraged to review the plan and submit comments to Ms. Carmer for a preparation of a comment from EDC.

Discussion of Response to City Councilor's Request regarding Small Business

Members reviewed a draft report back to City Council on city activities focused on small business and suggested modifications for revisions to the report.

Updates/ New Business

Downtown Parking Garage at 165 Deer St. update and second reading and public hearing on bond at April 20th City Council Meeting

City Manager Bohenko informed the Commission that the next step in the process for construction of a second downtown parking garage is a public hearing and second reading of the bond appropriation on April 20th. In preparation for the hearing, City staff and owners are reviewing the site layout, required infrastructure and the activities and liner building uses that would activate the development. He is also reviewing the proforma, parking rates and cash flow proposed for the development at the April 20th hearing presentation.

The EDC discussed the debt service for the proposed garage as it relates to the cost of providing the free shuttle from the CC Church on Market St. Extension. The Manager believes the trolley is one of the potential ways needed to address the City's parking shortage and it should remain part of the City's discussion on transportation strategy. Commissioners suggested that, in preparation for the April 20th hearing, the City should be prepared to respond to questions and comments that may emerge from the concepts included in the PS21 talk by Michael Manville on Parking and Economic Vitality including how the City incentivizes parking in the garage and in high and low occupancy parking areas, garage closure data and how the city uses its parking revenues to improve the downtown. Another suggestion was made to review the 2012 Parking Study by John Burke and the Guiding Principles for Parking established by the City Council.

Decision on UNH Extension Retention/Expansion Program

This item was deferred until the May EDC meeting.

Update on NH Senate Bill 213 re: Rooms and Meals Tax and Senate Bill 253 re: municipal ordinances permitting an assessment on hotel occupancy for the use of municipal services

City Manager Bohenko said that the NH Senate passed SB 213 with two amendments. The first amendment was to change it to the establishment of a committee to study the distribution of the meals and room tax. The second amendment added the study of a hotel occupancy fee to the study committee. The bill has left the Senate (it passed as amended) and will be assigned a Committee in the House. A public hearing is scheduled on the amended bill next Thursday. SB 253 was tabled until the next session.

Public Comment – No members of the public were present to make public comment.

The meeting adjourned at 9:08 AM.

Respectfully submitted,
Nancy Carmer
Economic Development Program Manager