

**MEETING MINUTES OF THE PORTSMOUTH
ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT COMMISSION**

March 4, 2016

City Hall, Conference Room A

7:30 a.m.

Members Present: Bob Marchewka, Vice-Chairman; John Bosen, Philip Cohen, John Pratt, Eric Spear, Ron Zolla (via teleconference), Stefany Shaheen, Josh Cyr

Excused: Everett Eaton, Chairman; Dana Levenson, Jen Zorn

City Staff: City Manager John Bohenko, Economic Development Program Manager Nancy Carmer

Vice-Chairman Marchewka opened the meeting at 7:35 a.m.

Approval of draft meeting minutes of February 5, 2016

Commissioner Bosen moved, and Commissioner Pratt seconded a motion to approve the draft meeting minutes of February 5, 2016. The motion carried unanimously.

Presentation on Parking Program Initiatives and Updated On-Street Parking Report

Joey Giordono, City of Portsmouth Parking Manager provided an update on parking initiatives underway. He noted that the City's current parking inventory is as follows:

Hanover Garage	900 space
Metered Lots	212 spaces
Pay Lots	181 spaces
Multi Space	824 spaces
Single Space	215 space
Free Lots	876 spaces
TOTAL	3,208 spaces

He reported on the results of the recent Parking Utilization Analysis from July 2015 and from May and October 2015. He was struck by how small the variation was between the tourist season in the summer and the shoulder season indicating year round demand for on-street parking.

<u>July</u>		<u>May/Oct 2015</u>	
Market Street	99.2%	Market Street	93.4%
Congress Street	92.9%	Congress Street	92.9%
Bow Street	97%	Bow Street	94.2%
Worth Parking Lot	92.1%	Worth Parking Lot	91.3%

Next, Mr. Giordono described the City's parking initiatives relative to new technology, operations and research to increase parking program efficiencies and user options. Technology improvements include new digital parking meters, smart phone apps and installation of a credit card system in the parking garage. The parking shuttle frequency will be reduced to fewer trips to sync better with rider demand. Enforcement will focus on meter turnover downtown to benefit merchants along with a new validation system. Finally parking employees will sport new uniforms of khaki pants and blue shirts for a recognizable and professional look.

On the research side, the City is exploring dynamic pricing in high and low demand areas in order to influence parking behavior. Mr. Giordono is also seeking remote parking public/private partnerships to ease demand in the city's core.

During discussion, Mr. Giordono responded to several questions including one about job loss at the garage with the new credit card system. No jobs will be lost as garage workers will be trained and

retained as parking ambassadors. He also noted that the goal is for 85% on-street occupancy and management through dynamic pricing for turnover. The point was made that for the lower wage workers, the City needs to do a better job of communicating the location of the 825 free parking spaces in the City in addition to conducting research on shuttle use from remote lots. The City Manager responded to a question about the status of a parking enterprise fund noting that the transition has been slow in order to avoid a large one-time increase to the tax rate.

Business Expansion and Retention Subcommittee Update and Discussion

The EDC Business R&E Subcommittee has met four times. The group is compiling a list for Task Force member solicitation with the goal of having a team of 30-35 members to assist with recruitment of volunteers to conduct the business surveys in May-June.

Other Business

Deer Street Parking Garage Update

Mr. Bohenko told the EDC that the City Attorney and Deputy City Manager are working diligently on a land sale closing agreement and post-closing operation agreement. He said that the Mayor is considering appointing a three member City Councilor working group to review the draft documents before the Council votes on the documents.

Economic Revitalization Zone (ERZ) Program Regulatory Changes and Local Review Requirement

The State has modified the ERZ rules and the City must now certify every five years that the zones still meet program eligibility criteria for the tax credits afforded businesses within the zones. Currently Portsmouth has four zones at High Liner Avenue, Pease Tradeport, Commerce Way and Constitution and Heritage Ave Industrial Park. By May 2016, the City must certify the ongoing eligibility of the first three zones listed above.

GSA Industry Day for Federal McIntyre Property

March 5, 2016 is the Federal General Services Administration (GSA) Industry Day for development teams to tour the McIntyre Building and to learn more about the Request for Information (RFI). This instrument is a solicitation of non-binding planning strategies from developers for construction of a new federal building downtown or the sale of an existing building that meets federal standards in exchange for the existing McIntyre Building. The real estate development community will have 60 days to respond to the RFI.

Chamber of Commerce informational items

1. Government Affairs Committee Monthly Meeting Date Change – The meeting date for this Chamber Committee has been changed from the first Friday of the month to the second so that it no longer conflicts with the EDC and other community meeting dates. Ms. Carmer will forward Chamber meeting information to EDC members if they wish to attend.
2. Meals and Room Bill defeat – The legislature defeated action on the recent bill that Senator Stiles submitted and that was in Legislative Committee. Mr. Bohenko said that the failed bill continues the Legislature’s practice of the putting more pressure on local property taxes to meet municipal expenses associated with tourism in communities that generate large amounts of meals and room tax revenue. He noted that the City owes thanks to the Senator Stiles and Senator Clark for all their hard work on moving the bill forward.
3. eCoast Roundtable Discussion – The Chamber is hosting a meeting next week to discuss the Chamber’s eCoast goals and brand next week. Several members of the tech community are invited to attend including Councilor Cyr.

4. *Seasonal Hospitality Workforce Discussion* - The Chamber has convened a group of hospitality workers to tackle the lack of housing for seasonal hospitality workers that come to the seacoast through the J1 VISA program. This program creates opportunities for foreign college students to work abroad during the summer and experience cultural travel. Local hospitality businesses have hired the students but there is insufficient seasonal housing for the number of workers needed.

Public Comment

Mr. Choate indicated that his firm has been retained to participate in the GSA Industry Day and that he will be presenting on the local real estate market.

Confirm Next Regular Meeting: Friday, April 1, 2016, 7:30 a.m.

Adjourn – The meeting adjourned at 8:45 a.m.

Respectfully submitted,
Nancy Carmer
Economic Development Program Manager