

## MEETING MINUTES OF THE PORTSMOUTH ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT COMMISSION

May 6, 2016

City Hall, Conference Room A

7:30 a.m.

**Members Present:** Everett Eaton, Chairman; John Bosen, Philip Cohen, Eric Spear, Ron Zolla, Dana Levenson, John Pratt, Josh Cyr,

**Excused:** Bob Marchewka, Vice-Chairman; Jen Zorn, Stefany Shaheen

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

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

### **Approval of draft meeting minutes of April 1, 2016**

Commissioner Cyr moved, and Commissioner Cohen seconded a motion to approve the draft meeting minutes of April 1, 2016. The motion carried unanimously.

### **Presentation on UNH Strategic Business Partnership Work and Opportunities**

Ellen V. Christo, Director, Strategic Partnerships, UNH Innovation gave a powerpoint presentation that covered a broad overview University of New Hampshire including its charge and funding as a Land Grant University. She covered the student population, demographics, graduation rates (76%) and the university's areas of distinction including marine science, space research, agriculture/horticulture, family services and environmental science. The UNH Innovation Center is a new UNH resource established to drives corporate engagement, technology transfer, intellectual property and licensing work as well as start-up creation and corporate research. Affiliated with UNH Innovation is the Interoperability Lab (IOL) which is a private technology compatibility lab dedicated to testing tech devices and products. The Lab shares space with UNH Innovation offices in a new facility in downtown Durham which provides easy access for technology and business students working at the lab.

In her capacity as Director of Strategic Partnerships, Ms. Christo has access to all University departments and resources to better assist NH businesses in research projects. She has created Industry Days to expose NH businesses to the University's assets and labs and has hosted "Roundtable Dinners" with NH CEO's and the University President. Her office also engages with the NH Office of Economic Development in recruiting business as well as with other industry groups such as the NH High Tech Council, Business and Industry Association and Chambers of Commerce.

With regard to workforce development, she reported that UNH's goal is to increase STEM graduates by 250 students annually to help NH employers meet demand for STEM workers. This effort will require new and updated laboratories and the university is requesting the NH Legislature to approve Phase 1 funding of \$30 million toward the effort. Following a brief Q&A session, Chairman Eaton thanked Ms. Christo for her presentation and express support for the UNH's funding request for laboratory upgrades. In turn she invited the EDC to tour the UNH Innovation center and IOL which will be scheduled in the future.

### **Business/Project Activity Updates**

*Deer Street Parking Garage Update* – The City Manager reported that documentation and negotiations for the new garage project is nearing completion. The attorneys are working on finalizing the Purchase and Sale and the Post Closing Obligation Agreements. All environmental issues have been resolved and a \$250,000 guarantee from Deer St. Associates has been secured to cover any future title issues. The City has engaged Walker Parking Consultants and Deputy City Manager Dave Allen has agreed to work on a contractual basis as project manager and clerk of the works for the garage permitting and construction phases following his retirement from the City this month. The Manager will ask the Mayor to appoint a project oversight working group at the May 16<sup>th</sup> City Council meeting to consist of two Councilors, two members of the public and one EDC member. Everett Eaton has agreed to be the EDC representative.

### *Business Expansion and Retention Subcommittee Update*

- *Task Force kick-off meeting* - The newly formed Task Force kick-off meeting will be held May 10th in the Levenson Room of the Portsmouth Public Library from 7:30 a.m. - 9 a.m.
- *Volunteer recruitment*- Task Force members will be asked to recruit 4 volunteers to undertake 4 business interviews in teams of two. The goal is 60 teams. EDC members are encouraged to volunteer for survey teams which will require a total commitment of 6 hours: two hours for training and four hours to undertake the business surveys.
- *Business survey list* - UNH business student interns worked with the BR&E Leadership Team to produce a survey list of 250 businesses to be surveyed.

### **Federal McIntyre Property**

City Manager Bohenko reported that the GSA received 5-6 responses to the Request for Information (RFI) issued for the development of a new federal office building downtown and the re-use of the McIntyre Building on Daniel Street. As reported previously, the City has explored creating a public/private partnership to work with a private developer that, if the City Council approves, would build a new federal building on the city-owned Bridge St. surface parking lot in exchange for partnering with the City on redevelopment of the McIntyre Lot under a 99-year land lease agreement. He said the concept will be the topic of an upcoming City Council work session. The Manager would like the City Council to sit as a Committee of the Whole on this project. The Commission discussed some of the aspects of the concept such as what might be the incentive for a development partner to partner with City and the potential financing obstacles of a 99-year lease. City ownership of the property will be helpful during the land use process and the developer would not have the exposure of land costs for the Daniel Street property. Additionally, the City would control the lease terms which could be helpful in promoting office which is in short supply downtown use for some portion of the re-development. The EDC expressed enthusiasm for the creative concepts developed by the City Manager for this project.

### **New Business**

- *New Chamber of Commerce President* – Chairman Eaton reported on the selection of current Chamber Tourism Manager Valerie Rochon as new Chamber of Commerce President. Ms. Rochon was selected from a field of 60 qualified local and national candidates.
- *Other Business*  
Commissioner Cohen asked if there had been any judicial decision made on the appeal of the Whole Foods/Conference/Hotel project at Harborside. No decision has been made to date.

**Confirm Next Regular Meeting:** Friday, June 10, 2016, 7:30 AM at Pease International Tradeport

### **Public Comment**

David Choate of Colliers International reported that developer Brian Thibeault has partnered with a national apartment complex developer for a mixed use project at the Frank Jones Property on the Route 1 Bypass. He next reported that his company is working with a reputable housing developer on an approximately 80-unit workforce housing development outside the downtown and will soon go public with it. Lastly, he recounted a lunch recent discussion he had with PDA Director George Bald and concerns he has regarding the lack of qualified workforce to meet the demands of local business.

**Adjourn** –The meeting adjourned at 8:55 AM.

Respectfully submitted,  
Nancy Carmer  
Economic Development Program Manager