

MEETING MINUTES OF THE PORTSMOUTH ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT COMMISSION

April 6, 2018

City Hall, Conference Room A

7:30 a.m.

Members Present: Bob Marchewka, Chairman; Cliff Lazenby, Nancy Pearson, Sarah Lachance, Alan Gold, Everett Eaton Philip Cohen, Tom Watson, Ron Zolla (via teleconference) and Dana Levenson (via teleconference)

Excused: Jen Zorn

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

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

Welcome new City Council Representative Tom Watson to EDC

Mr. Marchewka introduced and welcomed Tom Watson to the EDC. Mr. Watson provided information on his residency in the City, his business and extensive public service on other boards.

Approval of draft meeting minutes of February 2, 2018

Commissioner Cohen moved and Councilor Lazenby seconded a motion to approve the draft meeting minutes of February 2, 2018. The motion carried unanimously.

Presentation on CIP Projects

City Engineer Terry Desmarais and Transportation Engineer Eric Eby presented upcoming and ongoing 2018 capital projects totaling \$45 million dollars. Included in the presentation were roadway projects such as Maplewood Avenue reconstruction, Woodbury and Market St Ext. Paving, Pleasant St. reconstruction, Brewster St. Phase 4 and Andrew Jarvis Dr. Reconstruction and Phase 1 of Islington St. Improvements. The plan also includes several stormwater, sewer, drainage, sidewalk and culvert upgrades.

Bids received thus far for projects have been high which is not uncommon in a good economy such as Portsmouth is experiencing. Due to this, some projects may need to be delayed and rebid in the fall.

Old Business/Project Updates

McIntyre Project Update – Essential Framework and Public Input Process

Commissioner Cohen who is a member of the Steering Committee tasked with overseeing the public input process on the project updated the EDC on recent activity. Starting in early February, six public input sessions have been held to hear from the public on the topics of public realm, design transportation/parking, and public private partnerships. The Committee developed an Essential Framework to guide the redevelopment plan which was approved by the City Council in March.

The next meeting is scheduled for April 24, 2018 at 6:30 pm which is when the city and its partner, Redgate/Kane will present early design plans based on the approved Essential Framework.

Discussion of EDC 2018 Action Plan Priorities Survey + Implementation

The top three 2018 Action Plan priorities based on the survey responses of EDC members were:

1. Play a leading role in McIntyre project analysis administration
2. Advocate for and promote workforce housing and housing affordability initiatives
3. Advocate for parking, transportation infrastructure and policies

Discussion evolved around the notion of developing task forces to move forward on these items as well as on the topic of working on legislation enabling communities to charge and collect a \$1-\$2 per night surcharge on local lodging.

On the McIntyre project, the City Manager said that it is yet to be decided if the Mayor and City Council will move forward with a “committee of the whole,” or create a committee with representation from boards/commissions. Until that is determined, Commissioner Cohen will continue to be the voice of the

EDC on the framework.

The issue of workforce housing is a difficult one given the strong real estate market in the region. The Mayors Committee on Housing has made progress on modifying local zoning regulations by adding new areas where multi-family and higher densities are allowed. However, without state mandates for inclusive zoning or strong incentives for development of workforce housing, it is a difficult task to accomplish. The EDC decided to invite Councilor Perkins, Chair of the Housing Committee to a future EDC meeting to discuss options and opportunities for EDC advocacy.

On the topic of parking and transportation, Commissioner Zolla suggested an effort around parking fees and messaging that encourages residents to frequent downtown and patronize local shops. He suggested potentially surveying residents to determine if there is an issue. Others felt that until the Foundry Place is open, a survey is not warranted. A better option might to focus an advocacy of parking policies, alternative transportation modes and new infrastructure.

On the topic of additional revenue sources for economic development, the idea of working toward a local surcharge on hotel rooms, the City Manager estimates that Portsmouth businesses send roughly \$27 million to the state in meals and rooms taxes and only receives \$1.1 million in return. This is because the return is not based on local contributions, but rather on population. The Manager estimates that a \$2 surcharge per night on the City's 1900 hotel rooms (based on a conservative 75% occupancy rate) could return \$1.4 million annually.

The City Manager suggested a three member EDC task force to work toward this goal and to reach out to other tourist destination communities and develop a coalition in preparation for the 2019 legislative session. Several members concurred with the Manager and agreed that the effort to advocate for additional revenue sources for economic development is worthwhile. Commissioners Lazenby, Watson, and Gold agreed to serve on the task force charged with undertaking this goal.

New Business

- *Request to Extend Partnership with Chamber Collaborative in FY19* - In the interest of time this agenda item was deferred to the May EDC meeting
- *2017 4th Quarter Office And Industrial Property Trend Report*- Ms. Carmer distributed copies of the report noting
- *Business updates/highlights* - In the interest of time this agenda item was deferred to the May EDC meeting
- *US Small Business Week April 29 - May 5, 2018*- The City is working with the Chamber Collaborative and Great Bay Community College and the Small Business Administration to recognize Small Business Week with a proclamation and events for local small businesses.

Confirm Next Regular Meeting: May 4, 2018, 7:30 AM

Public Comment

No members of the public were present to comment.

Adjournment – With no further business, the meeting was adjourned at 9:05 am.

Respectfully submitted,
Nancy Carmer
Economic Development Program Manager