

## MEETING MINUTES OF THE PORTSMOUTH ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT COMMISSION

January 8, 2021

**Members Present:** Bob Marchewka, Chairman; Philip Cohen, Vice Chairman; Sarah Lachance, Tom Watson, Dana Levenson, Alan Gold, City Councilor Cliff Lazenby; Ron Zolla, Everett Eaton

**Excused:** Assistant Mayor Jim Splaine, Katelyn Kwoka

**City Staff:** City Manager Karen Conard, Economic Development Program Manager Nancy Carmer

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### **Zoom meeting statement**

Chairman Marchewka began the meeting by reading the following statement:

Per NH RSA 91-A:2, III (b) the Chair has declared COVID-19 outbreak an emergency and has waived the requirement that a quorum be physically present at the meeting pursuant to the Governor's Executive Order 2020-04, Section 8, as extended by Executive Order 2020-18, and Emergency Order #12, Section 3. Members will be participating remotely and will identify their location and any person present with them at that location. All votes will be by roll call.

All members present identified themselves, their location and persons present with them.

### **Minutes- Approval of draft meeting minutes of December 4, 2020**

Commissioner Zolla moved, and Commissioner Eaton seconded a motion to approve the draft meeting minutes of December 4, 2020. Via roll call vote, the motion carried unanimously.

### **Pandemic Economic Recovery Response**

- *Update: COVID19 Mayor's Blue Ribbon Committee to Reopen Portsmouth 2021 and Mayor's Blue Ribbon Committee on Health – City Manager Conard and Commissioners Gold and Lachance*

City Manager Conard reported that the membership of the two Blue Ribbon Committees is being populated with applicants from both the existing Task Force as well as new applicants. At the January 11<sup>th</sup> City Council meeting, the Mayor will appoint John Akar and Anne Weidman to the Re-Open Portsmouth 2021 Blue Ribbon Committee and Rich DiPentima to the Portsmouth Health Blue Ribbon Committee. The groups charge has been modified to focus on collaboration with other resources to include the Greater Portsmouth Chamber, Pro Portsmouth, the EDC and others. Also included is the effort to identify businesses needs related to the pandemic impacts now and in the future. Lastly, she reported that the city staff recently discussed the lessons learned from the outdoor dining experience of 2020 for application in the upcoming outdoor dining season scheduled to begin in late March. She closed by suggesting the EDC has a significant role to assist the Blue Ribbon Committee in their charge and that EDC members should consider watching the rebroadcast of the weekly meetings to get a sense of the opportunity to assist.

Commissioner Gold added the committee will be looking at pandemic impacts industry citywide rather than simply restaurant, retail and other hospitality businesses. He indicated this is agreed

that this is an opportunity for EDC and the Chamber to assist in determining which businesses are suffering and what their most pressing needs are.

Commissioner Lachance reported that there are procedural kinks to work out in the operational process. One open item is the absence of an arts representative on the Committee when the departure of Russ Grazier. She hopes that the industry can be integrated into the charge as it is an important economic driver. Finally she informed the Commissioner that given the new year meeting schedule at her work she will not be able to attend the Blue Ribbon Committee meetings and wondered if a new EDC member should replace her or to continue on with Commissioner Gold as the sole EDC representative. In any event she will advise the Blue Ribbon Committee (BRC) Chairmen.

Councilor Lazenby reported that he spoke with the Mayor recently about the arts and cultural organizations and his concern that by restricting the BRC membership to residents only there will not be adequate representation of this industry that is a key economic driver in the City. The Mayor said he is in the process of reconstituting a separate arts committee and hopes to announce his initiative by the end of January. He suggested that it makes sense to have Commissioner Gold on the Re-opening BRC and a difference EDC representative on the Mayor's arts and cultural group.

Commissioner Levenson stated that given the importance of the arts to the City's economy and vibrancy and the negative impacts of the pandemic on local arts and cultural organizations, he suggests the EDC send a letter to the Mayor and Council regarding the EDC's desire to serve in a collaborative role on any newly established arts advocacy committee and to assist with research and outreach as it did with the Business Retention and Expansion project. After EDC discussion on this input, Commissioner Lachance moved and Commissioner Gold seconded a motion to send a letter to the Mayor and City Council urging the Mayor to include arts and culture research and outreach in the charge of the 2021 Re-opening Committee. In the event that a separate task force or arts committee is established, the letter should indicate the EDC's desire to have representation on that committee given its work with Art-Speak and the important role Portsmouth's arts businesses have as an economic driver. Motion passed unanimously on a roll call vote. Councilor Lazenby will bring up this topic at the January 25<sup>th</sup> Cit Council meeting when the BRC reports to the Council.

- *New Federal COVID Stimulus relief package*

Ms. Carmer reported initial details on the federal Consolidated Appropriations Act recently approved by Congress and signed by the President to provide relief to businesses impacted by the COVID 19 pandemic. Highlights include:

- a. \$284 billion added to the Paycheck Protection Program (PPP) for additional forgivable loans
- b. Changes to the PPP Forgiveness process for both new and existing loans
- c. Renewed the debt relief program for borrowers with existing SBA 7a, 504, and/or microloans starting in February 2021
- d. Expansion of the Employee Retention Tax Credit to cover 70% of eligible

- employment taxes and extended it through July 1, 2021
  - e. \$20 billion in funding to restart the Economic Injury Disaster Loan (EIDL) advance grant program
  - f. A new program called “Grants for Shuttered Venues” for eligible live venues, museums and movie theaters will be able to receive grants of up to \$10 million
  - g. \$10 billion in funding was set aside for “Childcare Stabilization Grants” to help childcare centers that are open or temporarily closed fund their operating expenses
- Commissioner Eaton added to the discussion on features of the second round on PPP loans and the new streamlined loan forgiveness process.

### Council Representative Report on Upcoming Business that Warrants EDC Attention

In addition to the McIntyre Redevelopment Project topic previously discussed, Councilor Lazenby stated that this week the City Council kicked off the FY 21/22 budget preparation effort as a first step in a long budget development process. Central to this is the Capital Improvement Plan effort which is also on the docket for a report back at the January 11<sup>th</sup> City Council meeting.

### Other Business

- *Portsmouth Listens McIntyre Redevelopment Planning*  
The City Manager reported that Councilor Whelan is on the January 11<sup>th</sup> City Council meeting to report on the McIntyre Subcommittee work including the Portsmouth Listens effort. Twenty-two groups of 8-12 people have registered for the facilitated listening sessions that will occur over the next two weeks. An outcome report from the groups to the City Council is scheduled for the January 20<sup>th</sup>. The Principle Group will convert the results into concept plans for public input. From there the City Council subcommittee will work with Redgate Kane on development and finance plans. The EDC is encouraged to watch the Portsmouth Listens kick-off meeting and to take the online input survey (links will be provided). Lastly, the GSA is on track to have all McIntyre Building tenants vacate the building in late March for conveyance of the property to the City.
- *EDC Retreat*  
The retreat is scheduled for February 5, 2021 from 7:30 am - 9:30 am via remote Zoom conference call. Suggested discussion topics including development of a long term business outreach/visitation and retention strategies, 2021/2022 Post-COVID Business resiliency planning as outlined in the EDC’s 2021 Action plan for business retention, recovery and resiliency, defining the EDC role in community understanding of the municipal tax/revenue impacts of future development projects, and EDC officer term limits.

Other topics suggested by Commissioners include positioning Portsmouth’s success through smart growth initiatives, alternative energy opportunities such as wind power, privatization of Pease International Trade Port property, and the future of work.

Given the 2-hour meeting duration, the consensus of the EDC is to divide the retreat into two sessions, one to brainstorm short term topics and one for long term topics. Session one to be moderated by Ms., Carmer with the possibility of a facilitator for the second session. The topic of term limits will be taken up at a regular EDC meeting following input from the City

Attorney. Ms. Carmer will send a poll of potential discussion topics for prioritization and retreat time optimization.

- *Election of EDC Chair and Vice-Chair for 2020*

The slate of officers for 2021 are incumbent members Chairman Marchewka to serve as Chair and Vice-Chairman Cohen for Vice-Chair. Hearing no other nominations, the EDC voted a motion by Commissioner, seconded by Commissioner to elect the slate as proposed at the December 4, 2020 EDC meeting. The motion was approved unanimously.

Chairman Marchewka thanked the members for their work and said this would be his last year as Chair. Vice-Chair Cohen echoed the gratitude and said he looks forward to working with the EDC in the coming year.

- Boards and Commissions Diversity and Inclusion Training will occur January 14, 2021 and a few EDC members are registered. City Manager Conard advised that anyone still wishing to participate can call or email her office.

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

Confirm Next Regular Meeting: Retreat on February 5, 2021 7:30 AM-9:30 AM

Adjourn

At 9:15 AM Councilor moved and Commissioner seconded a motion to adjourn. Via roll call vote, the motion carried unanimously.

Respectfully submitted,  
Nancy Carmer  
Economic Development Program Manager