

## MEETING MINUTES OF THE PORTSMOUTH ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT COMMISSION

June 4, 2021

8 AM

**Members Present:** Bob Marchewka, Chairman; Philip Cohen, Vice Chairman; Tom Watson, City Councilor Cliff Lazenby; Dana Levenson, Alan Gold, Katelyn Kwoka

**Excused:** Sarah Lachance; Assistant Mayor Jim Splaine, Everett Eaton; Ron Zolla

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

**Guests:** Chamber Collaborative of Greater Portsmouth President Valerie Rochon and Vice President Ben Van Camp, Michael and Peter Labrie of Jimmy's on Congress and their representatives Peter Weeks and Suzanne Bresette

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The EDC meeting was held at the Career Technical Education (CTE) Center at the Portsmouth High School.

### Minutes

Chairman Marchewka called the meeting to order at 8:10 AM and asked for a motion to approve the draft meeting minutes of April 9, 2021 and May 7, 2021. Motion made by Commissioner Kwoka, seconded by Commissioner Watson. Motion passed unanimously.

### Recognition of Chamber Collaborative of Greater Portsmouth President Valerie Rochon

In recognition of her pending retirement from the Chamber Collaborative of Greater Portsmouth, Chairman Marchewka recognized and thanked Ms. Rochon for her outstanding leadership and work supporting local businesses and marketing the City as a premier destination location. He presented her with a gift on behalf of the EDC and wished her well in her retirement. Ms. Rochon thanked the EDC for their support over the years and introduced the incoming President, Ben Van Camp, who pledged to carry on the Chamber's initiatives and work closely with the EDC on our mutual goals.

### Follow up from May 7<sup>th</sup> EDC tour with Michael Labrie, Jimmy's on Congress

Michael and Peter Labrie of the new jazz club *Jimmy's on Congress* and their representatives Peter Weeks and Suzanne Bresette were present. Michael Labrie described the likely direct and indirect economic benefits that the City and local hospitality and other businesses will realize from the new jazz venue. He said that a significant challenge to the venue's success will be parking and summarized their efforts to secure five parking spaces in the Worth Lot behind *Jimmy's*. A property title search indicates that in the past, the prior owners had five parking spaces in the Worth Lot dedicated to the property with signage indicating that they were reserved for the property. The signs were removed when the property changed hands in 1996. The Labries have asked the City Council to honor the parking space commitment and return the five spaces for the venue's sole use. The status of this request is, lacking documents with evidence of the commitment, the City disputes the five parking space commitment. And, per vote of the current City Council, the City and the owners are currently negotiating a new parking license agreement for the five spaces. To date, the two entities have been unable to come to agreement on the fee and the term of such an agreement.

The Labries acknowledged their frustration with the negotiations and, respectfully asked that the

EDC advocate on their behalf in the ongoing negotiations for five parking spaces based on the indirect economic benefits anticipated from the music shows, events and the art museum at Jimmy's.

In the ensuing discussions the EDC acknowledged that Jimmy's will indeed be a strong economic driver and cultural asset for the City. However, given that the City is currently in legal negotiations with the business for the parking spaces and in keeping with the long-standing EDC practice of not intervening in ongoing reviews by land use boards or other municipal legal deliberations, members agreed that it would be inappropriate to directly advocate for the parking space request. That aside, the EDC consensus was that a letter to City Council that acknowledges in general the venue's likely direct and indirect contributions to the local cultural and hospitality economy (without stating a position on the parking space request) would be appropriate. Commissioner Gold made a motion to write the letter to City Council as described. Motion seconded by Commissioner Kwoka. Motion passed 6-0 with 1 abstention (Councilor Lazenby). Staff will draft a letter for discussion at the July EDC meeting.

#### Other Business

To allow adequate time for the tour of the CTE Center, Commissioner Kwoka moved and Cliff seconded a motion to adjourn the meeting and defer the balance of the agenda items to the July EDC meeting. Motion passed unanimously.

Respectfully submitted,  
Nancy Carmer  
Economic Development Program Manager