

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

February 11, 2022      7:30 AM

**Members Present:** Philip Cohen, Chair; Alan Gold, Vice-Chair; Bob Marchewka, Sarah Lachance, Tom Watson, Katelyn Kwoka, Andrew Ward, Jacob Lehoux; Assistant Mayor JoAnna Kelley, City Councilor Vince Lombardi

**Excused:** Everett Eaton

**City Staff:** City Manager Karen Conard, Economic Development Program Manager Nancy Carmer, Assistant City Attorney Jane Ferrini

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Vice-Chairman Gold called the meeting to order at 7:35 AM and chaired the meeting until Chairman Cohen was able to join.

New EDC City Council Representatives

Vice-Chairman Gold welcomed Assistant Mayor JoAnna Kelley and City Councilor Vince Lombardi to the EDC as City Council representatives and each provided a brief summary of their background.

Minutes - Approval of draft meeting minutes of January 7, 2022

Vice-Chairman Gold asked for a motion to approve the draft meeting minutes of January 7, 2022. Motion made by Commissioner Lachance, seconded by Commissioner Kwoka. Motion to approve passed unanimously.

Chairman Cohen arrives.

Presentation on recent Legislative Committee activity and other bills related to economic development and workforce housing

Assistant City Attorney Jane Ferrini provided a summary of state legislation activity and the work and priorities of Portsmouth's Legislative Committee. She reported that this has been a very political session and this atmosphere impacts what passes in Committee and moves on to the House and Senate.

Of particular note is NH SB249 prohibiting planning and zoning ordinances that prohibit short-term rentals in any zoning district statewide. It has passed the Senate and will now move to the House. The City has opposed this bill and, although possibly well intended, it will have the effect of decimating the apartment and multifamily market, the valuation of property and harm efforts to create workforce housing. For communities with a large hospitality sector like Portsmouth, it will make it even more difficult for employers to attract workers.

On a more positive note, SB400 sponsored by Senator Kwoka of Portsmouth, is legislation that includes a toolbox for local planning and land use boards for creation of more affordable housing.

The Portsmouth Legislative Subcommittee has established priorities for this session including:

1. Legislative authority (to protect local control)
2. Climate change
3. Minimizing downshifting of costs to municipalities
4. Right to Amendments to the Right to Know regulation
5. Virtual and remote public meeting rules
6. Child care funding advocacy
7. Workforce housing bills
8. Support for SB400

In response to a question on how to comment on bills, Attorney Ferrini said there are three ways to comment:

1. Submit written testimony
2. Attend a legislative hearing and testify
3. Go on record as supporting or opposing a bill

The EDC discussed the implications of SB249 and how the City might be able to narrow the impact of the law. Chairman Cohen asked how the EDC can support the efforts of the legislative committee. Attorney Ferrini will share her list of bills including links with Ms. Carmer to share it with the EDC. She will also request EDC advocacy when needed.

#### ARPA Funding Update

Chair Cohen asked Attorney Ferrini to comment on the status of the City's \$12.44 million ARPA funds. She reported that the 1<sup>st</sup> tranche of funding (~\$6.44 million) has been received. The second tranche is anticipated in May 2022. City staff and department heads have submitted lists for eligible uses of these funds and the City Council anticipates establishing a committee for analysis and brainstorming potential uses with opportunities for public input. City Manager Conard said no funds from the first tranche have been spent yet. The previous and the current City Councils endorse using the funds for acquisition of the Community Campus. Under this concept, the City would honor the commitments to the non-profits housed at the campus. Other uses identified are space for City Recreation and Health Departments as well as the Lister Academy.

#### Subcommittee Reports

- *Business Retention and Expansion*

Commissioner Marchewka reported that there is a zoom call this week to speak with the UNH survey center representatives about digitizing and implementing the survey.

- *Sustainable Cities – Electric Vehicle (EV) charger initiative*

Commissioner Watson reiterated the challenges to installing rapid EV chargers downtown such as the inadequate electric service and the cost to install the rapid Level 3 chargers (Estimated at roughly \$130,000 - \$200,000 per charger). Currently DPW is considering the lower east end of the Bridge St. lot (which is scheduled for maintenance soon) as a site for installing two Level 2 and two Level 3 chargers.

Recently Commissioner Watson spoke to Tim White from the state who is charged with administering the Volkswagen settlement funding and Mr. White encouraged the City to get on the list for funding consideration. He also noted the request of City Councilor Denton for a report back on the costs of installing rapid chargers in the downtown and on the possibility of adding this to the Capital Plan. Lastly, he noted that the US Department of Energy has allocated \$650 million to states for this use. To be eligible to receive the funds states must have a plan for using the money by August 2022. An additional \$2.5 billion is anticipated to be announced later in 2022.

Commissioner Watson recommended that the EDC endorse the installation of Level 3 EV chargers downtown and work toward preparing a RFP for shovel ready projects. He added it is important that the City Council know that the EDC believes this effort adds value from an economic and business development perspective. Commissioner Lachance said it will be important to understand the utilization of lots when promoting this effort. Commissioner Marchewka said it will be important to understand the revenue stream from this effort as a means to recoup installation costs.

Commissioner Watson moved and Commissioner Kwoka seconded a motion that the EDC write a letter to the City Council endorsing the deployment of Level 2 and Level 3 EV chargers on city property. Motion passed unanimously.

## New/Other Business

- *Request by City Councilor Moreau for EDC Representation on new Land Use Committee*  
Councilor Moreau explained the new Land Use Committee she recently recommended to the City Council. The purpose of the Committee is to review all current zoning and policies surrounding housing and development to encourage sustainable, diverse, and affordable development including expanded multi-modal transportation with a report back to the City Council on recommended changes to existing zoning and policies along with any new zoning or policies to be considered. Furthermore, the committee shall consist of eight members including an EDC representative. The following committee members have been approved by the Mayor:
  - Beth Moreau, City Councilor
  - Rich Blalock, City Councilor
  - Rick Chellman, Planning Board Chair
  - Corey Clark, Planning Board Vice Chair
  - Beverly M. Zendt, Planning Director
  - Nick Cracknell, Principal Planner
  - Craig Welch, Executive Director, Portsmouth Housing Authority
  - EDC representative

Chairman Cohen thanked Councilor Moreau for this important initiative and asked EDC members to reach out to him if they are interested in being the EDC representative on this Committee.

- *Approval of West End Economic Revitalization Zone (ERZ) expansion*  
Ms. Carmer reported that on January 24<sup>th</sup>, the City Council approved the EDC recommendation that an application be submitted to the State BEA to extend the West End ERZ. An application was submitted on January 25<sup>th</sup> and approved by the State BEA on January 27<sup>th</sup>.
- *Update on McIntyre Building Redevelopment*  
City Manager Conard reported that at the meeting the City Council voted to rescind the prior City Council's action to terminate the relationship with Redgate Kane. The Mayor will be creating a McIntyre Committee to determine next steps.
- *Update on recent City Council Retreat*  
Assistant Mayor Kelley reported on the goals set at the recent City Council retreat at which the following goals were established:
  1. Role of the City in affordable/workforce housing
  2. The future of outdoor dining post COVID
  3. Non tourism business development
  4. City Council best practices
  5. Communication among staff and the public
  6. TransportationThe Mayor will be bringing a draft of the goals to a future City Council meeting.
- *Other business – Chamber Collaborative Update*  
Chamber President Ben Van Camp listed the following notable items that the Chamber is currently working on:
  1. Upcoming zoom call with restaurants February 18, 2022 at 10:30 am. Meeting is open to all.
  2. The Chamber will be following the closure of a portion of the High Hanover Parking Garage for renovations and its impact on business.
  3. Screening of the film Housing and Consequences II and panel discussion on February 15<sup>th</sup> at the

Music Hall.

4. Annual Tourism Summit on March 23, 2022 at Jimmy's on Congress

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

Confirm Next Regular Meeting – The March meeting was moved to the second Friday of the month (March 11, 2022) to accommodate those members with plans for the spring school vacation week.

Adjourn

Motion to adjourn made by Commissioner Lachance, seconded by Commissioner Marchewka. Motion passed unanimously.

Respectfully submitted,  
Nancy Carmer  
Assistant City Manager for Economic Development