

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

March 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; City Councilor Vince Lombardi, Everett Eaton, Ben VanCamp

Excused: Assistant Mayor JoAnna Kelley

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

Chairman Cohen the meeting to order at 7:38 AM

Welcome to Economic Development Commission (EDC) Alternate Anne Weidman – Chairman introduced and welcomed new EDC alternate Anne Weidman to the Commission. Anne is the Director of Community Engagement and Business Development at JSA Architects. She also serves on the Board of the Portsmouth Athenaeum and Strawberry Banke. Anne was also instrumental in coordinating the creation of the outdoor dining wood planters by the Portsmouth High School students as well as a template for urban outdoor dining as part of the PS21 project initiative.

Minutes - Approval of draft meeting minutes of February 11, 2022 – Motion made by Commissioner Kwoka seconded by Commissioner Marchewka. Amendment to page two by Commissioner Watson on EV “Levels 2 and 3,” accepted. Motion to approve amended minutes passed unanimously.

Presentation of 2021 Year End Report and Recommendations by Blue Ribbon Committee on Arts and Non-Profits. Co-chairs Russ Grazier and Barbara Massar summarized the work of the Committee on Arts and Culture in 2021. Committee members include representatives and the executive directors of the City’s major non-profits arts and culture venues as well as local independent artists. The presentation included the impact of the pandemic on the creative community and findings of surveys done by the committee. Report recommendations the group made to the 2021 City Council include:

- Funding and administrative support for the 2022-2023 American for the Arts Economic Prosperity @6 survey.
- Multi-year commitment to support marketing of citywide arts and culture organizations and businesses to be piloted in the spring and summer of 2022.
- Creation of a grant program to support to support a school-based artist in residence program and independent artists whose performances and work add to community vitality.
- Development of a program for affordable housing for creative economy workers.
- Continuation of the Committee for two years to develop a new Cultural Plan based on community input.
- Allocation of 4% of the City’s American Rescue Plan Act funding to the creative economy for implementation of the Committee’s recommendations.
-

The Commission discussed the report and recommendations and Commissioner Kwoka moved to send a letter from the EDC to the City Council in support of the recommendations and specifically the allocation of 4% of the City’s American Rescue Plan Act funding for the creative economy and for implementation of the Committee’s recommendations. Motion seconded by Commissioner Lachance and approved unanimously.

Subcommittee Updates

Economic Development Commission: 3-11-22

Approved:

- *Business Retention and Expansion*
Subcommittee members met with UNH Survey Center staff who provided options and cost estimates for a survey distributed to a large (~2,000) or small (~200) number of businesses. The Committee is evaluating the options and working on reducing the number of survey questions in order to improve chances for a good response rate.
- *Sustainable Cities - EV charger initiative*
A memo from the EDC was sent to the City Council in support of City Councilors Denton's and Cook's request to include \$150,000 in the Capital Improvement Plan (CIP) for electric vehicle (EV) charging stations. Commissioner Watson stated this funding will assist in deploying chargers locally. He added that additional future funding for EV chargers will be available and the City should track those funds and advocate at the state level for the City to be a recipient.
- *Land Use Committee*
Commissioner Lachance recounted the initial meeting of the new committee with an overview of Portsmouth's housing demographic and affordability metrics it discussed. Going forward, the Committee intends to tackle recommendations for:
 - Accessory Dwelling Units
 - Best practices for expediting land use reviews
 - Reduced land use application parking requirements
 - Potential fee waivers and low income tax credits
 The Committee also wishes to have input into the questions and the results of the upcoming EDC business retention and expansion survey as it relates to ease of land use permitting and workforce housing and attraction. She will continue to report out on the committee's work at future EDC meetings.

New/Other Business

- *Chamber Collaborative of Greater Portsmouth Update*
Chamber President Ben Van Camp updated the EDC on the following:
 - Spring business leader education events including Diversity Equity, Inclusion (DEI) and equity, franchising, and trademark law
 - Governor Sununu's State of the State address on March 15th via zoom
 - Annual Seacoast Tourism Forum on March 23rd at Jimmy's on Congress
 - Business networking event at the renovated venue at Portwalk Place Business
 - State of the City event featuring the Mayor and City Manager
 - New tourist map release
 - Business panel at Seacoast Rep featuring Liz Gray of NH Small Business Development Center (SBDC) new Business and Industry (BIA) Executive Director Mike Skeleton
 - Local restaurateur positive response to City's outdoor dining fees and regulations
- *Other business –*
 - Seacoast Bicycle Greenway – The City Manager said that two EDC volunteers are sought to participate in a 2-3 meeting commitment to assist in the Seacoast Bicycle Greenway effort. Commissioners Eaton and Kwoka volunteered to represent the Commission on the project.
 - Future of Portsmouth's vitality - Councilor Lombardi raised several thoughts that he would like the EDC to discuss as the City prepares for the renovation of the High Hanover Parking Garage and the prospect of less parking capacity and cars downtown. A part of the recent City Council visioning session was to explore what would make the City the best place in the country. Councilor Lombardi believes that changing the ratio of sidewalk to street is one way to create a more walkable and vibrant place. If done correctly, he proffered that it could benefit both residents and businesses. This

spurred a broad discussion of modifying the streetscape and parking structure in the city's core including a community discussion in 2017 hosted by PS21 on an alternate street and traffic conceptual plan downtown. Councilor Lombardi would like the EDC to be part of a broader citywide discussion about the pros and cons of this concept. Members commented on the need for additional input and research on the topic. The City Manager reported that City's Parking Master Plan was last updated in 2012 and the City is looking to update the plan which could inform the discussion. At the end of the discussion, Sarah Lachance remarked on the value of the discussion and requested that a City Council representatives' report and comment become a standing EDC agenda item.

Public Comment

David Choate of Colliers International followed up on the EV charging station discussion with the suggestions that the stations need to be where there are options for dining/shopping/recreating and that the city should encourage the private sector to install the stations in such locations to ease the cost burden on municipalities. He provided the example in Rochester, NH where a private party installed several charging stations in a private development.

Confirm Next Regular Meeting – April 1, 2022

Adjourn

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

Respectfully submitted,
Nancy Carmer
Assistant City Manager for Economic Development