

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

April 1, 2022 7:30 AM

**Members Present:** Philip Cohen, Chair; Alan Gold, Vice-Chair, Sarah Lachance, Tom Watson, Andrew Ward, Jacob Lehoux; City Councilor Vince Lombardi, Assistant Mayor JoAnna Kelley, Everett Eaton, Anne Weidman (A), Ben VanCamp (ex-Officio)

**Absent:** Katelyn Kwoka; Bob Marchewka

**Excused:**

**City Staff:** City Manager Karen Conard, Asst. City Manager for Economic Development Sean Clancy, Assessor Rosann Maurice-Lentz, Emily Goldstein

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Chairman Cohen the meeting to order at 7:30 AM

Minutes - Approval of draft meeting minutes of March 11, 2022 – including the following corrections; actual date and listed Ben VanCamp as attendee. Motion made by Commissioner Watson seconded by City Councilor Lombardi. Motion to approve corrected minutes passed unanimously.

Subcommittee/Working Group - Updates

- *Business Retention and Expansion*

Vice Chair Gold advised that the group is closing in on the “final cut” of the survey. Next steps include finalizing the survey and digital format with the UNH survey center. The FY 22/23 funding details need to be finalized (S. Clancy) and a target launch date will be approximately 60 days from now. Vice Chair Gold stated that outreach to the NH Attorney general’s office is in order to request an updated list of businesses in our area.

- *Sustainable Cities - EV charger initiative*

The group did not meet between EDC meetings. Commissioner Watson provided information about his conversation with a private business owner in Rochester who has invested in EV chargers. They are in the initial stages of operation and do not have any experience or data to share at this time. They would be willing to present more detailed information the EDC if requested.

City Manager Conard advised the commission that the Bridge Street parking lot reconstruction project will include subsurface work including laying conduit for future electric power for (future-potential) EV charger installation.

- *Land Use Committee*

Commissioner Lachance reported on the Supportive Market subcommittee tasks that are in progress:

- 1) Review the Governor’s budget (\$100M) for guidance in our efforts
- 2) Revisit Housing Committee first established by (now) Senator Perkins-Kwoka. Determine if revitalization or re-staffing may be in order
- 3) Perform an Airbnb study to determine what the impact would be to housing in Portsmouth
- 4) Review RSA 79E and analyze impact of opportunity zones or (available) city owned property for reuse as affordable/workforce housing
- 5) Review legislation to enable ADU requests to be granted without the current application process
- 6) Research “Fee in Lieu” activity to determine which developers are taking advantage of these and where investments are going (greenspace, additional density)

## Summary of Q&A with City Assessor

2022 Revaluation is underway and in the analysis stage. Early indications are that residential property valuations are rising much faster than commercial which include industrial and hospitality properties. Class B office space is experiencing high vacancy (estimated 10%) while Class A office space is trending towards smaller configurations due to market factors such as work-from-home and hybrid office conditions. The previous full revaluation occurred in 2019

The Commissioners launched a robust conversation about the need to capture data at a high (enough) level to help “tell” the story of the commercial development impact on the City’s residential tax rate. The residential market both for owning and renting has been trending very high and this will impact the amount of property taxes paid not necessarily because the tax rate is increasing.

Chair Cohen expressed a desire to create a data working group to work with City departments in an effort to find manageable data and metrics. This information would allow the ED Commission to more effectively share this information and illuminate the value of commercial/economic development.

## New/Other Business

- *Chamber Collaborative of Greater Portsmouth Update:*
  - GoPortsmouth/HeART of Portsmouth presentation from 2022 Portsmouth Tourism summit was shared with EDC
- *Outdoor Dining (O/D)*
  - 10 Establishments approved, 19 additional applications as of 3/31/22
  - Restaurants have expressed a desire to delay placing outdoor barriers (potentially 3 weeks)
  - City Manager Conard advised that staff would communicate with restaurants via permit process and coordinate with DPW for most effective timing and process of placing O/D barriers
- *Councilor’s Update*
  - Loading Zone parking conversion – adding 39 evening and weekend parking spaces downtown
- *June 3<sup>rd</sup> meeting*
  - Plan to meet at Pease - hosted by PDA

## Public Comment

Current and past members of the EDC were invited to celebrate Nancy Carmer’s retirement through memories, recognitions, and expressions of gratitude.

## Confirm Next Regular Meeting – May 6, 2022

## Adjourn

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

Respectfully submitted,  
Sean Clancy  
Assistant City Manager for Economic Development

Economic Development Commission: 4-1-22

Approved: