

DRAFT
MEETING MINUTES OF THE PORTSMOUTH
ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT COMMISSION
October 6, 2023 7:30 AM- 9:00 AM

Members Present: Chair Phil Cohen, Vice Chair Tom Watson, Bob Marchewka, Sarah Lachance, Anne Weidman, Anna Howard, Andrew Ward, Jacob Lahoux, Jen Scumaci, Ben VanCamp, City Councilor Vince Lombardi

Absent: Assistant Mayor Joanna Kelley, Everett Eaton, City Manager Karen Conard

City Staff: Assistant City Manager for Economic & Community Development Sean Clancy

Chair Cohen called the meeting to order at 7:32 Am.

Motion to accept the minutes of the September 8th meeting with no changes made by *Councilor Lombardi*, seconded by *Commissioner Ward*, passed unanimously.

Chamber Collaborative Updates:

- Visitor volume remains strong through September.
- The Chamber has a full schedule of events planned to include City Council Candidate forums – See Chamber website for more information - portsmouthchamber.org

Office of Economic Development Updates:

- The 2023 Cultural Plan consultant, Arts Consulting Group will be “on the ground” October 16th-19th to conduct live Focus Group sessions. The goal is to hear from approximately 100 participants.
- ACG and the Cultural Plan Subcommittee will host a Town Hall style public comment session in City Council Chambers on October 18th from 6:30-8:00 PM.

Councilor Lombardi provided a City Council update including Federal transportation grant awarded to City, \$460,000 for rail bridge repair, Cable (TV) Service Survey results, Safe Water Advisory Group (SWAG) lead testing initiative, City Archive Committee. (see EDC/City Council recordings for details)

Chair Cohen introduced a discussion to explore the possibility of inviting cruise ships to make a port call in Portsmouth. The EDC received a request from a (single) Portsmouth resident and *Chair Cohen* invited the EDC to discuss this request. The EDC decided to initiate due diligence to clarify the opportunities, benefits, etc. of such an endeavor. There was robust dialogue, and the decision was made to invite the PDA, Director of Ports and Harbors (Geno Marconi) to the November 3rd EDC meeting to continue this exploration.

Vice Chair Watson proposed that the EDC meet in January to review priorities and goals from CY ‘23 and develop or in some cases refine priorities and goals for CY ’24. *Commissioner Lachance* proposed that EDC members review the retreat documents from CY ’23 and plan to decide which priorities and goals carry-over to CY ’24, which priorities and goals are removed either due to completion or obsolescence, and determine any priorities and goals to add based on the new EDC charter that was approved earlier this year.

Commissioner Lachance proposed using our monthly meetings as more of a communication resource for our business constituents. The concept would be to curate, target, and notify the business community of upcoming EDC topics. Very often, helpful information is provided/shared at EDC meetings and inviting businesses to participate or at least listen live is one way to raise the EDC’s value proposition.

Motion to adjourn made by *Vice Chair Watson*, seconded by *Councilor Lombardi*, motion passed unanimously.

Submitted by,
Sean Clancy
Assistant City Manager for Economic & Community Development