

**MEETING MINUTES OF THE PORTSMOUTH
ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT COMMISSION (EDC)**

December 2, 2022

7:30 AM

Members Present: Philip Cohen; Chair, Alan Gold: Vice Chair, Bob Marchewka, Tom Watson, Andrew Ward, Sarah Lachance, Anne Weidman, Everett Eaton, Jacob Lehoux, Assistant Mayor; JoAnna Kelley; City Councilor; Vince Lombardi, Ben VanCamp

Absent: City Manager; Karen Conard

City Staff: Asst. City Manager for Economic Development; Sean Clancy

Chairman Cohen called the meeting to order at 7:35 AM

Minutes - Approval of draft meeting minutes of November 4, 2022 – Motion made by *Commissioner Watson* seconded by *Commissioner Weidman*. Motion to approve draft minutes passed unanimously.

Working Group Updates:

Business Retention and Expansion Survey – *Sean Clancy* provided a high level summary of the BR&E Survey results. The results were not all that dissimilar than the 2017 BR&E survey results. There was positive feedback in terms of business wanting to do business in Portsmouth and that many are confident that they can improve their financial health over the next two years. There are economic headwinds such as workforce attraction, a lack of affordable housing for needed employees, and some economic uncertainty due to recent inflation.

Having previously circulated the survey results; a call for questions, observations and/or comments was made to the group.

Commissioner Lachance observed that much of the survey focus was on location, office space, employees and physical expansion plans or needs. She asked if there was a way for the EDC to survey employers for ways to help them grow and/or expand from a technology standpoint. She also inquired about any insights or intelligence we might glean from co-working space providers in Portsmouth as we go forward.

There is much more analysis of employer concerns and barriers to doing business in Portsmouth that the *Working Group* is committed to addressing.

Sean Clancy provided an outline of a path forward from this successful survey effort. The survey will be sent to businesses that requested a copy. Businesses that requested a meeting with the EDC or Econ. Dev. Office will be contacted. The working group will develop plan to share more information from the survey as well as use this as a launching pad to engage with businesses on a regular basis through digital and live communication channels.

Commissioner Watson shared his idea of using these findings as a way to engage with the broader community and outline/highlight the work of the EDC on behalf of the entire Portsmouth Community.

Councilor Lombardi made a recommendation that the City Council be presented with summary findings from this survey in the near future.

Ben VanCamp expressed his thoughts on highlighting the positive results of this survey as there are many.

Commissioner Eaton shared information about the potential for more Massachusetts based companies desire to relocate to NH. We are hearing this message anecdotally from our contacts at Pease Tradeport. Lastly he inquired about a relocation page on our city website? It will be reviewed and assessed for any needed improvements.

Land Use Liaison - *Assistant Mayor Kelley* provided a Land Use Commission update specifically around the changes to the ADU permitting process. The conversation evolved into a broader discussion of affordable housing, increasing the housing stock, and what role the EDC could/should play in advocating on the issue to support economic growth and expansion. This will be discussed in greater detail as the EDC launches a strategic planning process in January

City Council Update:

- *Counselor Lombardi* provided a list of germane issues before the City Council including: the DSA lawsuit settlement paving a way for new development including housing, increased parking spaces downtown by retiring unneeded taxi stands, protecting the city's water supply through the on-going effort to build a third water line under Little Bay, the outstanding issue of whether State Street should be one way or two, and an expectation of the outdoor dining report from the Planning department in mid-December.
- There was robust conversation about downtown traffic flow, pedestrian improvements and parking improvements (Fleet Street, Market Square Master Plan) which again may spur a deeper dive into topics for the strategic planning effort (in January).

Chamber Update: Chamber President Van Camp

- Restaurant week data +50% increase in sales vs. previous and post 10 day time-frame
- Public Relations efforts are bearing fruit: USAS Today, Trip Advisor, etc..
- Chamber is starting strategic planning effort (Jan-Jul'23)
- Save the date for legislative Reception event Monday January 30th – invitations forthcoming

Strategic Planning (SP) Retreat Conversation

- *Chair Cohen* requested that group brings ideas to January 6th meeting to inform a SP conversation
- *Vice-Chair Gold* suggested that pre-work email be circulated before January 6th meeting
- Initial concept is a three hour facilitated strategic planning meeting was put on the table

Public Comment

- *David Choate* of Colliers International advised that there is 0% industrial space available in the city of Portsmouth

Adjourn

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

Next Meeting Schedule for Friday January 6, 2023

Respectfully submitted,
Sean Clancy
Assistant City Manager for Economic Development