

**MEETING MINUTES OF THE  
PORTSMOUTH ECONOMIC  
DEVELOPMENT COMMISSION**  
March 7, 2025     7:30 AM- 9:00 AM

**Members Present:** Chair Tom Watson, Vice Chair Sarah Lachance, Andrew Ward, Jen Scumaci, Phil Cohen, Bob Marchewka, Anne Weidman, Assistant Mayor Joanna Kelley, City Councilor Vince Lombardi

**Absent:** Anna Howard, Everett Eaton, Jacob Lahoux, Ben VanCamp

**City Staff:** City Manager Karen Conard, Assistant City Manager Sean Clancy

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*Chair Watson* called the meeting to order at 7:35 am.

Motion to accept the minutes of the February meeting made by *Councilor Lombardi*, seconded by *Commissioner Scumaci*. Motion passed unanimously.

Economic Development Office (EDO) Report: *S. Clancy*

- Arts & Cultural Commission rack card outlining purpose and focus now available.
- Market Square Master Plan advisory board met with the consultant (Beta Group) for a final granular discussion. Beta will revise recommendations and present them to the City Council.
- The City's Bike/Ped Plan is moving towards completion.
- Tariffs on Canadian goods continue to be a moving target and this is important to NH citizens and businesses inasmuch as there could be significant cost increases in many areas of commerce. There is also a tourism revenue component which may be negatively impacted by recent events.
- The Portsmouth Propeller Club is seeking to conduct an Economic Impact Study for Maritime related businesses on the Piscataqua River. I will keep the EDC advised on progress with this initiative.
- COAST is facing financial headwinds. Coast is looking to engage the (Seacoast) business community as a way to diversify funding based on concerns with Federal and State level forecasts.

*Commissioner Scumaci* asked a question about the Rockingham Economic Development Commission "vision" sessions being held. *S. Clancy* attended a vision session on March 6<sup>th</sup>. The City of Portsmouth Planning and Sustainability Department as well as the Office of Economic Development and the Portsmouth Chamber are engaged with this state entity.

Chamber Update – *S. Clancy* (on behalf of Ben VanCamp)

- 2025 Economic Outlook event was well attended.
- CelebrateHer is holding an education series over the course of the next two months.
- Art Round Town (tonight) March 7<sup>th</sup>
- Local Love is scheduled for Thursday March 20<sup>th</sup> from 5-8pm

City Council Update – *Assistant Mayor Kelley, Councilor Lombardi*

- The Encumbrance Permit process was changed to eliminate fees for open use tables and chairs placed on City property (sidewalks etc.). This does not include Outdoor Dining Encumbrance fees for tables and chairs not available to the public without the purchase of food or drink.
- The Payment in Lieu ordinance passed. This allows a developer to make per unit payments on new housing units when they choose not to include affordable housing units. These fees are deposited into the newly created Housing Trust.
- The citizen-facing departments within City Hall are piloting a delayed opening on Wednesday mornings in March. This will allow these departments to hold staff meetings.
- The school budget and general budget processes are moving forward. There is no mandate from the City Council to require reductions in staff.

*City Manager Conard* shared the following updates:

- The Planning and Sustainability department is receiving Outdoor Dining applications.
- The McIntyre lawsuit against the City of Portsmouth was dismissed.

*Planning Board Chair Rick Chellman & Planning Manager Peter Stith*

- An overview of the Master Plan process, community outreach, and timeline including how the EDC may be able to support this citywide effort.
- There will be a major focus on public input and engagement.
- Although state law does not require the inclusion of a section on an economic development vision and goals in the master plan, *Mr. Chellman* believes they are important and should be incorporated into this year's plan.
- A robust conversation including questions and answers ensued.
- *Mr. Chellman* welcomed the input of the EDC in the master planning process as it relates to economic development

Public Comment: N/A

Motion to adjourn by *Assistant Mayor Kelley*, seconded by *Commissioner Cohen*. Motion passed.

Meeting adjourned at 9:30 am.

A full recording of this meeting is available on the City's EDC webpage.

Submitted by,

*Sean Clancy*

Assistant City Manager for Economic & Community Development