

**MEETING MINUTES OF THE
PORTSMOUTH ECONOMIC
DEVELOPMENT COMMISSION**
April 4, 2025 7:30 AM- 9:00 AM

Members Present: Chair Tom Watson, Vice Chair Sarah Lachance, Jen Scumaci, Phil Cohen, Bob Marchewka, Anna Howard, Everett Eaton, Jacob Lahoux, Anne Weidman, Assistant Mayor Joanna Kelley, City Councilor Vince Lombardi, Ben VanCamp
Absent: Andrew Ward, City Manager Karen Conard
City Staff: Assistant City Manager Sean Clancy

Chair Watson called the meeting to order at 7:30 am.

Motion to accept the minutes of the March meeting made by *Assistant Mayor Kelley*, seconded by *Commissioner Scumaci*. Motion passed unanimously.

Chair Watson recognized *Commissioner Eaton* for twenty-five years of service on the Economic Development Commission and advised the group this would be *Commissioner Eaton's* last meeting. Congratulations and gratitude were expressed by all.

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

- A “connecting West End businesses to rail trail riders” kick-off event is planned for April.
- The Planning & Sustainability department has received fifteen Outdoor Dining Encumbrance permit applications to date.
- Construction season begins on Monday April 7th. The City’s construction project web pages are the best place to stay informed of project-by-project progress.

Chamber Update – *Ben VanCamp*

- Membership has increased to the highest level since 2018
- Restaurant Week reminder: April 10th-19th
- Hit the Decks is scheduled for May 8th
- Commissioner Weidmann is presenting an educational seminar on April 21st
- Chamber Staff are ramping up activity for tourism season amidst concerns about state-level tourism marketing budget cuts.

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

- The City Staff and Councilors hosted a very successful Student Government Day for students from Portsmouth High School including a mock City Council meeting
- The City Council is committed to finding ways to simplify the process of doing business with the City of Portsmouth. Zoning, policies, and procedures are all available to be reviewed.
- Fees for sidewalk encumbrance have been waived by City Council. This does not include Outdoor Dining Encumbrance fees.

Chair Watson asked about any risks associated with the Federal Government proposed funding cuts. *Councilor Lombardi* advised that City staff have identified approximately \$3.6 M in potential lost funding but to date there has not been any actual lost funding in potential.

Chair Watson relayed to the commissioners his more recent conversations with the Planning Board Chair concerning the status of the master plan process. He reported that the Planning Board, the Planning & Sustainability Department and the consultant, Utile, are working on finalizing the scope of work for the project. Chair Chellman expressed his opinion that the scope of work of the consultant would

likely have to include the creation of an economic development existing conditions report in order to inform the recommendations of the master plan itself. The Chair also reported that Chair Chellman and he had come to a general understanding on the role that the EDC can play in the master plan process. It is threefold.

- A) If and when the consultant prepares an existing conditions report, it will be presented to the EDC for review and comment before it is released to the public or approved by the Planning Board.
- B) The EDC will be afforded the opportunity to prepare an initial draft of the goals, objectives, strategies & actions of the Economic Development Section of the master plan for the consideration of the consultant and Planning Board.
- C) If the Planning Board elects to establish a citizen committee, steering committee, or similar group to assist it in the process, the EDC will have a seat at the table.

A robust conversation ensued regarding how the EDC can support and contribute to the critical process.

Chair Watson requested that all members put “pen to paper” and send their respective goals and objectives for Economic Development Section of the 2035 Master plan (using the format of the earlier master plans) to Sean Clancy within two weeks for compilation before the May 2nd meeting.

Mayor McEachern thereafter stopped into the meeting and was recognized by the Chair. The Mayor recognized Commissioner Eaton on the occasion of his retirement from the EDC for his twenty-five years of service to the City as well as service on a number of community boards and organizations. The Mayor presented Commissioner Eaton with a traditional Portsmouth doorstopper symbolic of the “City of the Open Door.”

Public Comment: N/A

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

Meeting adjourned at 8:50 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