

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

September 5, 2025

7:30 AM- 9:00 AM

Members Present: Jen Scumaci, Anne Weidman, Bob Marchewka, Anna Howard, Ben VanCamp, City Manager Karen Conard, Chair Tom Watson, Andrew Ward, Phil Cohen Vice Chair Sarah Lachance, Assistant Mayor Joanna Kelley

Excused Absence: Jacob Lahoux, Councilor Vince Lombardi

Absent:

City Staff: Assistant City Manager Sean Clancy

Chair Watson opened the meeting at 7:30 am.

Chair Watson advised the commission that Commissioner Howard was approved to be a regular member of the EDC at the last City Council meeting, and she will complete the term vacated by E. Eaton. Chair Watson also advised the commission that current term expiration letters were being sent from the City Clerk's office. The letters will need to be responded to maintain membership or announce an intention to decline renewal.

Chair Watson announced that Commissioner Scumaci has decided not to renew her appointment and that this would be her last meeting. Chair Watson recognized Commissioner Scumaci efforts and especially her efforts to facilitate the 2025 annual retreat!

Chair Watson outlined the attendance policy for the EDC which includes a requirement to record excused absences as well as absences for annual reporting purposes.

Chair Watson invited a motion to accept the minutes of the August 1st meeting. Motion to accept the minutes of the August 1st meeting made by *Commissioner Scumaci* seconded by *Commissioner Cohen*. *Chair Watson* abstained. Motion passed.

Office of Economic Development Update: *S. Clancy*

- The macroeconomic issue of uncertainty stemming from tariffs, inflation, immigration and civil unrest are negatively impacting our local business community
- At the regional level, the State of NH estimates that cross boarder shipments of goods with Canada are declining and there are efforts underway to open additional communication channels with Canadian trading partners
- American Cruise Lines has five more visits to Portsmouth scheduled between September 6th and October 4th
- We have a new retailer opening a store on Congress Steet: Soft as a Grape. This is an apparel retailer with origins on Cape Cod (MA)
- A local Portsmouth business Tenovi has been recognized by the Inc 5000 list of fastest growing companies: #1 in NH, #2 in the Boston Area, #11 in Healthcare (Nationally), and #55 in the entire nation
- Current Commercial Activity update: Six private sector projects including 471 market-rate residential units, 6 commercial spaces (ground level), and a 181-room hotel are approved or under construction
- A second "co-living" residential project has been approved for the downtown area. (McNabb Properties)

Commissioner Weidman lead a discussion of the findings of the Social District working group. The SDWG advised that information continues to evolve and that there is not enough certainty to make a recommendation to the City Council at this point in time. Assistant Mayor Kelley advised that the City Council will discuss adding the Social District question to the November election at the City Council meeting scheduled for September 8th.

Commissioner Ward provided an update from the Master Plan working group which entailed a review of the previously gathered information. *Commissioner Ward* further advised that next steps include refining the EDC goals down to four and then working to create recommendations around the final goals, all to be presented to the full EDC in subsequent meetings

City Manager Conard reminded the Commission that the first public meeting for the city-wide master plan is scheduled for Monday September 15th from 5:30pm -7:00 pm at the Portsmouth Public Library

Chamber Update: *B. VanCamp*

- The Chamber staff is gearing up for major fall events
- Restaurant week is planned for November, specific dates TBA
- Catapult, the Seacoast Young Professionals organization is accepting nominations for their annual “10 to Watch” awards (under 40 years old)
- Chamber members reported a very strong Labor Day weekend from a tourism standpoint
- The Chamber has joined the NH Life Sciences alliance (only Chambe to join) and they are planning two Seacoast events this fall
- Business and Industry Association is holding its annual listening session on Tuesday October 14th at Pease (BIA is the state level Chamber of Commerce)

City Council update:

Assistant Mayor Kelley provided an update on the City Council’s work in the areas of zoning, preparing to kick-off the 2027-2032 CIP process, and efforts to address the after-school care challenges that residents are facing. She reminded everyone that the 2025 election filing period ends on Tuesday September 16th.

Public Comment: N/A

Motion to adjourn by *Commissioner Weidman*, seconded by *Commissioner Marchewka*. The motion passed.

Meeting adjourned at 8:42 am.

A full recording of this meeting can be found on the City’s website.

Submitted by,

Sean Clancy

Assistant City Manager for Economic & Community Development