

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

January 9, 2026      7:30 AM- 9:00 AM

**Members Present:** Chair Tom Watson, Vice Chair Sarah Lachance, Anne Weidman, Ben VanCamp, Andrew Ward, Bob Marchewka, Anna Howard, Phil Cohen

**Absent/ Absent (Excused):**

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

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

*Chair Watson* entertained a motion to accept the EDC meeting minutes from December 5, 2025. A motion was made by *Commissioner Howard* and seconded by *Commissioner Ward*.

*Chair Watson* called for Chair & Vice Chair nominations in accordance with annual elections requirement.

*Commissioner Lachance* nominated *Commissioner Ward* for Chair, seconded by *Commissioner Weidman*. There were no additional nominations. *Chair Watson* called a motion to cast a single ballot. Motion made by *Commissioner Marchewka*, seconded by *Commissioner Weidman* to cast a single ballot. The vote passed unanimously. Subsequently *Commissioner Ward* was elected to the chair position by unanimous vote.

*Commissioner Weidman* nominated *Commissioner Lachance* for Vice-Chair, seconded by *Commissioner Howard*. There were no additional nominations. *Chair Watson* called a motion to cast a single ballot. Motion made by *Commissioner Marchewka*, seconded by *Commissioner Weidman* to cast a single ballot. The vote passed unanimously. Subsequently *Commissioner Lachance* was elected to the vice chair position by unanimous vote.

*Commissioner Watson* passed the gavel to *Chair Ward*.

Office of Economic Development Update: *S. Clancy*

- The State of NH has launched a new tool for start-up businesses [www.nhbusinessgateway.gov](http://www.nhbusinessgateway.gov)
- The NH Division of Ports and Harbors has launched an RFP to lengthen its primary pier and add a secondary pier for smaller vessels
- I plan to attend the State of NH Economic Forecast later this month
- Private development projects are continuing to make progress downtown
- Congress Street (Winter) construction started on January 5<sup>th</sup> and is intended to move the required water-sewer separation project along with less impact to the summer tourism season

Commercial Real Estate Presentation – *Colliers International*

Kristie Russell and Abby Bachman presented a commercial real estate market update for the Portsmouth Submarket including vacancy rates and recent trends by category. Categories included: office, industrial, retail, and multi-family. A robust question and answer period followed the presentation.

*Chair Ward* reiterated the timeline and expectations of the annual retreat/workshop scheduled for January 30<sup>th</sup>

Chamber Collaborative Update – *B. VanCamp*

- Retailers report a successful Holiday season including “vintage Christmas”.
- The Chamber is supporting new initiatives within the West End business community
- Additional Events:
  - Elected Officials reception at Great Bay Community College on January 27<sup>th</sup>
  - 2026 Tourism Summit January 28<sup>th</sup>, 8-11 am at the Seacoast Rep

[Events Calendar - Chamber Sponsored Programs](#)

*Commissioner Weidman* provided a brief Master Plan update:

- A draft plan is being prepared to share with the community
- A large community meeting will be scheduled for a date in April to secure feedback
- The consultant plans to organize focus groups such as retail, hospitality, etc
- Exact timing is still being determined

Motion to adjourn by *Councilor Cohen*, seconded by *Commissioner Watson*, and the motion passed.

Meeting adjourned at 8:49 am.

A full recording of this meeting can be found on the city website.

[Economic Development Commission | City of Portsmouth](#)

Submitted by,

*Sean Clancy*

Assistant City Manager for Economic & Community Development