

## MEETING MINUTES OF THE PORTSMOUTH ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT COMMISSION

December 1, 2017

City Hall, Conference Room A

7:30 a.m.

**Members Present:** Everett Eaton, Chairman; Bob Marchewka, Vice-Chairman; Josh Cyr, Eric Spear, Dana Levenson, Sarah Lachance, Alan Gold, John Pratt, Philip Cohen, Jen Zorn, Ron Zolla (via teleconference)

**City Staff:** City Manager John P. Bohenko, Economic Development Program Manager Nancy Carmer

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Chairman Eaton opened the meeting at 7:35 a.m.

### **Approval of draft meeting minutes of November 3, 2017**

Commissioner Pratt moved, and Commissioner Lachance seconded a motion to approve the draft meeting minutes of November 3, 2017. The motion carried unanimously.

### **Old Business**

#### *Proposed Economic Revitalization Zone (ERZ ) Request for Islington/West End*

As follow up to the November 3<sup>rd</sup>, 2017 EDC meeting, staff circulated a proposed ERZ map of the former Frank Jones parcel off Islington Street inclusive of the Malt House Exchange area and the former Portsmouth Department of Public Works property for discussion. Members suggested a modification to square off the boundaries to Jewell Court, Islington and Albany Streets. The map will be amended and brought back for a vote at the January 2018 EDC meeting.

#### *2018 Action Plan*

Commissioner Lachance led a discussion of the input provided for the 2018 EDC Action Plan. Members expressed positive feedback on the proposed tasks and identified two items that the EDC would like to be in the advocacy mix 1) a downtown conference center and 2) the importance of a balance of commercial/residential uses in the downtown. Staff will confirm the status of the approved new conference center in the North End development across from the Harborside Hotel on Deer Street and report back. A discussion on the capacity/authority of the EDC to undertake some of the action plan items led to the plan to edit the document to identify which city boards the EDC would partner with to advocate for specific actions. Ms. Carmer and Ms. Lachance will work on amendments to be brought back at the January EDC meeting.

### **New Business/Project Updates**

#### *Report on Nov 17th First Manufacturing Roundtable*

The first meeting of the new manufacturing roundtable initiative that emerged from business focus groups and the BR&E project was held November 17<sup>th</sup> at Great Bay Community College. There were about 24 people in attendance representing both seacoast manufacturers and resource organizations. The initial meeting was focused on introductions and on learning what challenges confront local industry and topics of interest for future meetings. As expected, challenges includes skills gap for new hires, workforce attraction, training & housing, intergenerational workforce issues and language barriers. It is anticipated that the roundtable will meet quarterly and resource agency representatives will be invited to provide information on meeting the challenges articulated.

#### *Report on Federal McIntyre Redevelopment*

City Manager Bohenko reported on the recent City Council meeting where the three development firms vying to be the City's redevelopment partner presented their teams and respective visions for the property. Councilors Spear and Cyr provided feedback on the process and the presentations stressing that the key task at this point is to select a development team with which the City can successfully partner throughout the Historic Monument application process as well as in the long term. After selecting the partner, there will be opportunity for public input on uses and on the return to the City over the proposed 99-year land lease.

EDC members discussed its desired role in the process and the timing of this participation. Consensus is that it would like to actively participate in the process, especially when it comes to uses and economic impact of the project and the balance of uses included in the parcel. There is a City Council public dialogue session on December 4<sup>th</sup> dedicated to discussing process which Commissioner Lachance intends to attend. The City Council representatives for the EDC were tasked with relating the EDC's desire to participate in feedback/recommendations as the process ensues.

*2017 Year in Review* – Ms. Carmer distributed copies of the 2017 EDC Year in Review for members to review at their convenience.

### **Update on City Council Referrals**

*Subcommittee on Commercial Valuation* – Ms. Carmer noted the subcommittee has met twice to discuss its charge to report back to City Council with recommendations on innovative policies/ways to increase the commercial component of the City's tax valuation. Subcommittee findings on the Portsmouth's 2017 Commercial/Residential Property Valuations and Valuation Process include:

1. 83% of City's Taxable parcels are residential and 17% are commercial
2. 57% of Total Valuation was residential and 43% was commercial
3. The relative value of residential, commercial, utilities as a % of the Tax Base has remained relative constant over the past decade:
  - Residential between 53%-57%
  - Utilities between 4%-5%
  - Commercial between 38% and 42%
4. Portsmouth Commercial Base ranks 2<sup>nd</sup> in the state for its % of total city valuation

Some EDC subcommittee policy suggestions to date include:

1. For any proposed policy that may impact the commercial property tax, the City Council representatives to the EDC will bring it to the EDC before the City Council vote on the proposed policy.
2. A procedure needs to be developed for better collaboration between the EDC and other city boards and commissions on tax implications of proposals, ordinance amendments, policies and projects.
3. Address the lack of municipal access to same information that appraisers
4. Possibly changes that the Planning Board could spearhead to increase commercial properties.

The subcommittee will meet again to finalize its recommendations and bring those back for EDC approval.

*Subcommittee on Community Broadband* – Ms. Carmer provided a report on the subcommittee charge and activity since February including analysis of potential benefits of community broadband for business and educational opportunities as well as more inclusive access to all residents for high speed internet. Other committee due diligence includes smart city research and conversations with representatives of NH Division of Business and Economic Affairs, Fujitsu Corporation, UNH and School Department. Chairman Nick Kirsch intends to wrap up the committee work by year-end and will begin writing a draft report with recommendations for next steps.

**Confirm Next Regular Meeting and summer schedule:** January 5, 2018, 7:30 AM.

**Public Comment** – No members of the public were present to provide comment.

Prior to meeting adjournment, Chairman Eaton thanked outgoing City Council representatives to the EDC (Mr. Spear and Mr. Cyr) for their participation. The meeting adjourned at 9:08 A.M.

Respectfully submitted,  
Nancy Carmer  
Economic Development Program Manager