

# MEETING MINUTES OF THE PORTSMOUTH ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT COMMISSION

October 6, 2017

City Hall, Conference Room A

7:30 a.m.

**Members Present:** Everett Eaton, Chairman; Bob Marchewka, Vice-Chairman Josh Cyr, Eric Spear, Ron Zolla, Dana Levenson, Sarah LaChance, Alan Gold

**Excused:** John Pratt

**Absent:** Philip Cohen, Jen Zorn

**City Staff:** 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 September 8, 2017**

Commissioner Cyr moved, and Commissioner Levenson seconded a motion to approve the draft meeting minutes of June 2 and 14, 2017. The motion carried unanimously.

## **Presentation - Small Business Development Center (SBDC) Annual Activity Report**

SBDC Regional Director Warren Daniel, and SBDC Seacoast Business Adviser Jeffrey Seligman presented on the mission, funding and services provided by the SBDC. The NH SBDC is a part of a nationwide (63 in all) network of SBDCs. It is an outreach program of the UNH Peter Paul College of Business and Economics in partnership with the U.S. SBA, and the State of New Hampshire Department of Business and Economic Affairs. It is funded by the SBA, the State of NH, and the private sector. The organization has a cadre of certified business counselors with experience in multiple fields who can be tapped to assist to assist clients in one on one confidential sessions. Counselors assist business clients seeking capital, financial planning, statement analysis, marketing & sales, expansions & acquisitions international trade, environmental compliance, and management infrastructure.

The organization also has over 40 online courses available for free to clients as well as training to assist companies considering exporting. In 2016 advisers, provided the following services to 26 Portsmouth clients with 229 advising hours which resulted in \$1.2M in capital infusion, 36 + jobs created / retained.

## **Project Updates**

Ms. Carmer presented on highlights and findings of the Business Retention and Expansion Project. UNH is currently working on edits provided by the Leadership Team and advising the City on next steps, rollout of the report as well as a plan for outreach to stakeholders and businesses that participated in the survey. The EDC discussed the findings and the opportunities to connect further with the business community. The consensus of the Commission was to post an executive summary and the final report (when complete) on the City's website and drive stakeholders and participants to the website. Hard copies would also be available for public review at City Hall and the Library.

## **Other Business**

- *Economic Revitalization Zone (ERZ) Request* – The City has received a request to designate the Frank Jones Brewery property off Islington St. as an Economic Revitalization Zone (ERZ). The property is currently undergoing renovation. The EDC discussed the incentives inherent in the request and the pros and cons of expanding a zone to more than one parcel. Staff is going to inquire

at the NHBEA if it is possible to annex this site to the downtown ERZ and will report back at the November meeting.

- *2018 Action Plan* – Discussion on this item was postponed to the November EDC meeting.
- *Website Video* – The Commission reviewed the video and offered constructive suggestions to improve the video voiceover and music. On balance, the Commission felt the video is good portrayal of the city’s assets, opportunities and quality of life.
- *Other Business* – Ms. Carmer distributed information on upcoming event for the Workforce Housing Dialogue sessions of Portsmouth Listens and the Bank of Americas Breakfast Forum on October 12<sup>th</sup>. The topic is the results of the 2016 Americans for the Arts Economic Prosperity Study.

**Confirm Next Regular Meeting and summer schedule:** November 3, 2017, 7:30 AM

**Public Comment**

David Choate from Colliers International spoke on several topics:

- 1) On code interpretation and enforcement, Mr. Choate again urged the City to examine its Inspection and Code Enforcement practices as he feels that they are negatively impacting decisions by companies to undertake projects in the City and causing much business consternation and cost.
- 2) On proposed Gateway zoning amendments, he believes the amendment as written will not meet the objective of creating more workforce housing because the density allowances are too low. He intends to ask City Council to table the issue at its next meeting.
- 3) A client of his recently took advantage of the SCORE business counseling services and had an excellent experience.
- 4) Mr. Choate believes the ERZ designation is a beneficial development incentive in the City and should be encouraged.

The meeting adjourned at 9:05 a.m.

Respectfully submitted,  
Nancy Carmer  
Economic Development Program Manager