

MEETING MINUTES OF THE PORTSMOUTH ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT COMMISSION

September 14, 2018

City Hall, Conference Room A

7:30 a.m.

Members Present: Bob Marchewka, Chairman; Cliff Lazenby, Nancy Pearson, Sarah Lachance, Tom Watson, Alan Gold, Everett Eaton, Philip Cohen and Dana Levenson

Excused: Ron Zolla

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

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

Approval of draft meeting minutes of June 1, 2018

Commissioner Gold moved and Assistant Mayor Lazenby seconded a motion to approve the draft meeting minutes of June 1, 2018. The motion carried unanimously

Old Business/Project Updates

EDC Subcommittee Updates

- *City Council Referral – Streamlining land use permitting* – Commissioner Lachance provided an update on the Committee’s work noting it had met twice over the summer and will meet again on September 14th. She reported that the committee has reviewed the aggregate data available and the data shows that the process is not as onerous as some may have one believe. There is good information such as number of applications and average approval times. The program software has a mechanism for applicants to view where things are in the approval process so that they can plan projects accordingly and provide feedback along the way. Commissioner Watson asked if it is possible to compare the City’s process to similar-sized communities. Ms. Lachance will look into that suggestion to see if that has occurred. The next steps are to identify developers to interview and to review/edit interview questions.
- *Alternative Revenue Subcommittee* – Commissioner Watson noted that the subcommittee met twice over the summer and looked at the history of the “pillow tax’ and the legislators’ responses to the bills considered. The subcommittee invited Senator Clark to its last meeting to hear the “lessons learned” and recommendations going forward. The Senator’s recommendations included working on a bipartisan coalition of communities with similar desires to gain alternate revenue that might offset the downshifting of costs to municipalities from the state. She suggested Mayor Blalock might convene a group of Mayors to discuss an alliance and then do the necessary research required to craft legislation. Commissioner Gold said the subcommittee was advised by the Senator to take a year to accomplish this in order to build a strong coalition and to understand the issues of those opposed to the effort. The next steps are to meet as a subcommittee to develop a strategy to accomplish Senator Clark’s recommendations.
- *McIntyre Project Update* – City Manager Bohenko told Commissioners that the Historic District Commission recently reviewed the revised development plans for the McIntyre Project and the Redgate//Kane team is working on further plan revisions based on HDC feedback. The Public Process Steering Committee is scheduled to meet on September 18th to review plan revisions with the Redgate/Kane.

On a related matter, the US Postal Service has scheduled a public meeting to report on the potential relocation of the downtown facility. Mr. Bohenko said that the Post Office has been a long-term tenant

of the General Services Administration (GSA) which manages all tenants of the federal McIntyre Building. However, the GSA is not responsible for relocating the Post Office because it is not a federal agency. As stated in the project request for Proposals, the City prefers that the Post Office remain downtown and has worked with the post office to identify interim or long-term space that might meet the Post Office's operational criteria to which it must adhere when seeking new space.

Commissioner Levenson asked if it would be appropriate for the EDC to send a letter to the Post Office stating its support for it to remain at the McIntyre site or if that is not possible, at least in the downtown. Following discussion on the suggestion Commissioner Levenson moved and Councilor Pearson seconded the motion to craft a letter as described for EDC review to be read at the public meeting on September 19th and sent to the Postal Service. The motion carried unanimously.

- *Other business*

Ms. Carmer updated the EDC on recent business activity including the series of workshops planned by the State Office of Business and Economic Affairs to gather input for the Statewide Economic Development Plan initiative. She also mentioned the upcoming Seacoast Manufacturing Roundtable scheduled for September 19th at Great Bay Community College. This is an ongoing collaborative program between the College, the Chamber Collaborative and the City. This month's session will focus on energy savings programs offered to businesses by Eversource. Lindt Chocolate will speak on their experience using the programs offered.

Finally, Ms. Carmer told Commissioners that she and the City Manager are working on several requests from companies looking to expand or locate in the downtown. All of the firms have been connected to downtown property owners that have projects in the city's central core that could accommodate office space.

Confirm Next Regular Meeting: The next scheduled meeting is October 5, 2018, 7:30 am.

Public Comment

Rick Becksted, City Counselor and resident of 395 Islington Street spoke on the topics of the Post Office and land use permitting. He affirmed that at the Portsmouth Listens sessions and at the City's public comment sessions, residents "overwhelmingly" expressed desire to retain the Post Office at the McIntyre Federal Building site. It is his recollection that the Post Office portion of the redevelopment will not undergo as much disruption during redevelopment as the remainder of the site, and he feels that it would be possible for the City and developer to work to allow the Post Office to remain onsite and allow construction to occur and the asbestos to be mitigated.

Regarding the land use process, he related his experience with the online permitting process. He said he is a fan of it and was pleased with the ease of navigation and degree of feedback and assistance that is available during the process.

Adjourn for tour of Foundry Place Parking Garage -

With no further business, the EDC adjourned at 8:05 am to embark on a tour of the new Foundry Place Parking Garage where they were provided a tour by the City's Project Managers.

Respectfully submitted,
Nancy Carmer
Economic Development Program Manager