

MEETING MINUTES OF THE PORTSMOUTH ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT COMMISSION

March 8, 2019

City Hall, Conference Room A

7:30 a.m.

Members Present: Bob Marchewka, Chairman; Philip Cohen, Vice Chair; Assistant Mayor Cliff Lazenby, Everett Eaton, Nancy Pearson (via phone), Sarah Lachance, Tom Watson, Alan Gold, Ron Zolla (via phone), and Dana Levenson (via phone)

Excused: Everett Eaton

Absent: Katelyn Kwoka,

City Staff: City Manager John P. Bohenko, Economic Development Program Manager Nancy Carmer, Planning Director Juliet Walker

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

Approval of draft meeting minutes of February 1, 2019

Commissioner Gold moved and Commissioner Watson seconded a motion to approve the draft meeting minutes of February 1, 2019. The motion carried unanimously.

Presentation

Introduction to Joint Land Use Study by Kittery and Portsmouth Naval Shipyard (PNSY)- Ms. Carmer reported that the presentation has been postponed to the April 5th EDC meeting since the presenter is out sick.

Other Business/Project Updates

- *HB 641 Municipal Hotel Occupancy Fee Vote*

The NH House Municipal and County Government Committee passed the bill and sent it to the Ways and Means Committee for a hearing this week. EDC members commented on how this is a “sea change” in moving this local option fee forward as previous attempts failed. The testimony by representatives of cities such as Hampton, Lebanon/Hanover, Portsmouth, and the Chamber and the NH Municipal Association were instrumental in the favorable vote.

- *EDC Retreat Planning*

Chairman Marchewka initiated the discussion for a retreat by asking if Alan Gold would spearhead an EDC subcommittee to research locations and dates/times for the retreat as well as to work on topics. Mr. Gold obliged and said the goal is to look at the best way the EDC can serve the City Council and residents and businesses with actionable activities. Commissioner Lachance volunteered to assist. Some possible retreat topics that were brought up include:

- Advocacy
- EDC partnerships
- Potential use of the Foundry Place Garage flex space
- Smart cities opportunities
- Legislative action work
- Workforce issues (talent search and housing)
- The future of business and the workplace (GIG economy and other trends)

- *Subcommittee updates*

Alternative Revenue Subcommittee:

Commissioners Watson and Gold noted that there are limited opportunities in a state that requires enabling legislation for local revenue generation, but testimony and the recent vote on HB 641 are encouraging. The next step is to follow NH Senate action on the bill, and if approved engage the community and the local hospitality properties before any City Council action is undertaken.

Land Use Process Streamlining Subcommittee:

Commissioner Lachance reported that the Land Use Process Streamlining Subcommittee has completed its final interview and is currently synthesizing the results and findings for report back at the April EDC meeting. She added that the group has learned that there are some good practices currently being implemented by the City; particularly the online application process which is providing good information on the permit volume, timelines and status reports.

- *Other business*

Open Street Pedestrians Pilot Proposal

Councilor Pearson summarized the proposal that she and Councilor Raynolds have put forward to undertake a pilot project this summer. It involves closing several downtown streets to vehicles on the Saturdays and Sundays in July from noon to 9 PM. Ms. Pearson noted that the impetus for this proposal is primarily to increase pedestrian activity, to improve safety and to create opportunities for downtown businesses to have a stronger interface with pedestrians. The model has been done successfully in several cities around the world and could bring people downtown to enjoy activities that are currently happening in other locations in the city such as salsa dance class at the tennis courts. She and Councilor Raynolds are in the process of doing outreach and gathering feedback from stakeholders. They are very open to modifications, scaling back the area affected and programming suggestions.

The City Manager said that the staff is currently reviewing the proposal and EDC input has been requested. EDC feedback on the proposal from the Commission included being cognizant of the need for people to get to the Post Office and for the businesses to be able to operate seamlessly during the pilot. Commissioner Lachance said it was bold and ambitious and perhaps could be broken down and simplified. Commissioner Zolla suggested a pilot at Vaughan Mall before launching it in the streets. Other suggestions were to seek feedback from restaurants as well as other merchants on how this initiative might increase their access to pedestrians. Chairman Marchewka said it is important to be mindful and inclusive of businesses that are not located in the downtown but rather in other areas of the City like Lafayette Rd. and the West End that may be impacted by this proposal.

Infrastructure Projects

- Proposals for the next phase of the Market Street Gateway project from Albacore Way to Russell St. have been submitted and will begin this construction season.
- Improvements under the Islington Street Improvement Project plans are also scheduled to begin this construction season. Staff will be attending the March 12th meeting of the West End Business Association to discuss traffic control and pedestrian access to properties in the project area.

Foundry Place Garage Public Art Celebration

Councilor Pearson has coordinated a celebration of the public art created for Foundry Place under the City's Percent for Art Ordinance on March 24th at 4 PM. All are invited.

Meeting on Guiding Parking Principles

The EDC is invited a March 25th meeting at 6:30 PM with members of the local land use boards in the Levenson Room at the Public Library to discuss updating the City's *Guiding Parking Principles*.

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

Confirm Next Regular Meeting: April 5, 2019 7:30 AM

Adjourn: Following a motion by Assistant Mayor Lazenby, seconded by Commissioner Watson, the EDC unanimously voted to adjourn.

Respectfully submitted,
Nancy Carner
Economic Development Program Manager