

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

April 5, 2019

City Hall, Conference Room A

7:30 a.m.

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

Excused: Katelyn Kwoka, Philip Cohen

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 March 8, 2019

Assistant Mayor Lazenby moved and Commissioner Gold seconded a motion to approve the draft meeting minutes of March 8, 2019. The motion carried unanimously.

Presentation: Regional Economic Development

Regional Joint Land Use Study (JLUS) - Peter Stith, Portsmouth Principal Planner provided an introduction to a collaborative planning initiative by Kittery in partnership with the Portsmouth Naval Shipyard and Stantec consultants. Mr. Stith is the City of Portsmouth's representative on the project's working group. The purpose of the study is to preserve military readiness while supporting continued community growth and regional economic development. The study area is seacoast NH inland to Northwood and Milton and coastal Maine to Saco and inland to Lebanon.

The project scope includes the following elements:

- Stakeholder and public involvement
- Survey/Stakeholder interviews
- Data Collection, inventory and mapping
- Conflict and compatibility Analysis
- Conflict resolution strategies
- Report preparation and implementation

The main focus of the study is examination of transportation options/routes to and from the shipyard and workforce commuting patterns in an effort to develop strategies for alleviating the current state of congestion. Currently there are 8,000 people employed at the facility with 2,000 of these workers on the nightshift. In addition to transportation factors, the study will explore 28 other "Compatibility Factors" in the categories of people, natural resources, and development.

Data collection and stakeholder interviews are currently underway. A final report is due at year end and will be submitted to participating community legislative bodies for consideration of support to carry out the recommendations. As the project moves forward Mr. Stith offered to provide updates and bring any particular economic development concerns the EDC may have to the working group.

Rockingham Economic Development Center (REDC) Economic Development – Laurel Adams, Executive Director of REDC gave an overview of REDC's mission and current Rockingham County economic conditions/drivers and REDC's economic development programs. REDC is a non-profit organization incorporated in 1994 that seeks to promote sustainable economic development activities in southern New Hampshire. It does this through jobs creation facilitated by accessing alternative financing for business and industrial expansion or relocations, which in turn provides tax relief for regional communities. The financing

is typically loans that are subordinate to local, regional and national banks. Currently 90% of REDC's loan assets are deployed.

REDC also manages a Brownfields program through a revolving loan fund (RLF) from the US Environmental Protection Agency. These funds are used for loans and grants to communities for cleanup of contaminated sites that can be returned to productive economic properties.

Another initiative the REDC administers is the annual Comprehensive Economic Development Strategy (CEDS) report under the U.S. Department of Commerce and Economic Development Administration (EDA). This document is the result of a comprehensive planning process that addresses economic problems and opportunities in the region through a series of goals established every five years. Current goals include infrastructure development, regional cooperation, workforce attraction, affordable housing, and sustainable living.

A new initiative that emerged from the CEDS process is the New American Fund that came about as a result of the review of the most recent census data which showed the only significant population group that is moving into New Hampshire are immigrants. The New American Fund was launched to provide small business loans and mentoring to qualified individuals interested in starting businesses. To date, the program has been successful.

Current regional economic development challenges include inability to find skilled workforce, the cost of construction and lack of workforce housing inventory. REDC recently absorbed the Workforce Housing Coalition into its Raymond offices. The Coalition is maintaining its independent non-profit structure but its staff is working with REDC on the CEDS housing goals. It is also collaborating on developing educational opportunities for land use boards on the housing topic.

Other Business/Project Updates

- *EDC Retreat Planning Update* – Alan Gold distributed a proposal for the EDC planning retreat including purpose, desired outcome, attendees, draft agenda and methodology. Desired outcome would be consensus around key topics and EDC activities to best serve City leadership and citizens. There was a brief discussion on purpose and retreat discussion topics. Suggestions on how the EDC could serve the City included EDC participation in legislative advocacy such as testifying at hearings on bills related to economic development, strengthening the liaison between the City and business community, strategies to improve communication between the EDC and other city boards on development projects, the future of the changing retail landscapes, and the future of the workforce and workplaces. Commissioner Watson stated that in looking at the EDC's role, it can either wait for direction from the City Council as has been the practice, or alternately get ahead of the pressing issues and determine how Portsmouth positions itself on things like "Smart Cities" initiatives, future work environments, the 5G movement and other topics. Speakers will also be explored to frame some of the topics suggested.
- *Draft Subcommittee Report on Land Use Permitting Process* - Sarah Lachance summarized the subcommittee's charge, actions, findings and recommendations. Actions included meetings with the Deputy City Manager and Planning Director to review the City's current land and building permit processes and recent changes instituted to improve the process including online permit applications, project managers for large projects (for land use process), use of experts for peer review to reduce process time and weekly meetings of Planning and Inspections Department staff. The group conducted interviews with representatives of the local development community to explore potential process improvement strategies. Recommendations include:

1. Tailor workflow and management of relatively small scale vs. larger scale projects
2. Consider assigning a project liaison / development coordinator between the city and larger scale projects early in the process to streamline information flow and improve consistency
3. Obtain, measure, and incorporate more qualitative and quantitative feedback on the permitting lifecycle
4. Provide process guidelines for applicants to improve project efficiency (required documents, expected timelines, etc.)
5. Optimize online features to capture applicant feedback at completion or abandonment of project
6. Consider the scale of project to help applicant plan for costs
7. Clearly communicate the potential for land use board appeals and re-hearings
8. Improve flexibility of scheduling and sequencing inspections
9. Study workflow for inspections to identify bottlenecks and improvement opportunities
10. Optimize use of back-up inspectors to minimize overhead streamline the inspection process
11. Note and communicate where local codes exceed state/national building code

A copy of the report will be sent to EDC for edits and then to City Council.

- *March 25th Parking Principles Work Session Update* – Councilor Pearson advised the EDC that the meeting was for city land use and development boards to review the City’s parking principles and parking plans. The next step is synthesis of new concepts into revised principles under a forthcoming phase 2.

Public Comment – Dan LeClair, a member of the construction industry, made the suggestion that in looking toward the future of workforce and other concerns the EDC should make a concerted effort to involve the millennial cohort and perhaps get a representative on the EDC as a member.

Confirm Next Regular Meeting: June 7, 2019 7:30 AM or later subject to the timing of the proposed EDC retreat.

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

Respectfully submitted,
Nancy Carmer
Economic Development Program Manager