

City of Portsmouth, New Hampshire
Portsmouth Citizen Response Task Force
Remote meeting via Zoom
Meeting Minutes for Wednesday, October 21, 2020, 2:00 P.M.

Call to Order

Co-Chair James Petersen called the meeting to order at 2:00. City Manager Karen Conard represented staff and was the moderator. Patience Horton took minutes. This 21st general Citizen Response Task Force meeting lasted 45 minutes. Votes were taken with a show of hands.

Task Force present:

1. Mark Stebbins, ProCon Construction, Co-Chair
2. James Petersen, Petersen Engineering, Co-Chair
3. Alan Gold, Economic Development Commission (City)
4. Ann Birner, PharmD (Health Care Professional)
5. Russ Grazier, PMAC (Non-profit)
6. Sarah Lachance, Economic Development Commission
7. John Golumb, Poco's Bow Street Cantina (Restaurant)
8. Kathryn Lynch, (Non-profit Health-care Organization)
9. Jim Lee, REMAX Shoreline (Real Estate)
10. Bianca Monteiro, York Pulmonary Associates (Health Care Professional)
11. Valerie Rochon, President, Chamber Collaborative of Greater Portsmouth

Task Force absent:

12. Karen Conard, City Manager
13. Deborah Anthony, Gather Pantry Market (Non-profit)
14. Senator Martha Fuller Clark, NH State Senate District 21
15. Kim McNamara, Health Officer (via phone)
16. Karen Bouffard, The Real Estate Market, Inc. (Real Estate)
17. Marylyn Morin, Pediatric Nurse Practitioner (Health Care Professional)
18. Jeffrey Goss, The Clipper Tavern (Restaurant)
19. Joe Scarlotto (Restaurant)

City Staff present:

Nancy Colbert Puff, Deputy City Manager

1. Peter Rice, Director of Public Works
2. Stephanie Seacord, Public Information Officer
3. Joe Almeida, Facilities Manager
4. Kristin Shaw, Deputy Health Administrator
5. Juliet Walker, City Planner
6. Nancy Carmer, Economic Development Manager

Also present were:

- 1) Petra Huda, City Councilor
- 2) Anne Weidman, Alliance of Portsmouth Design Professionals

- 3) Andrew Bagley, Board member, PopUpNH
- 4) Laura Brown, PopUpNH

Welcome and Approval of Minutes

- Motion: Russ Grazier moved to approve the Minutes of October 14, 2020 as amended by a comment that had been made about potential use of the public realm during balmy days of the winter months. Jim Lee seconded. The motion passed unanimously.

Health Subcommittee Report

CRTF HEALTH SUBCOMMITTEE (HSC)
October 21, 2020
By Ann Birner

“Notes from the previous day’s Health Subcommittee meeting were distributed to TF members along with TWO versions of the weekly dashboard, and the subcommittee’s agenda time was used entirely for a review of those dashboards. Changes are intended to enable more focus on local and regional data. The previous format and an updated format were shown side-by-side and the data reviewed in some detail. Unless TF members objected, and none did, the HSC plan is to use the updated version for the foreseeable future.

“The data review and changes to format were discussed as follows:

- COVID-19 infections are up in NH, Rockingham County, and Portsmouth. Cases are attributed to a location based on residency. Many essential and service industry workers who work in Portsmouth do not live in the city, and will not add to our case count, but could spread the virus here. Statements from Michael Calderwood (Infectious Disease expert, DHMC) and Benjamin Chan (Epidemiologist, DHMC and NH), along with rising hospitalizations, support the HSC’s perception that rising case numbers are “real” and not entirely attributable to increased testing. Continued attention to basic risk reduction strategies (masks, distancing, handwashing, etc.) is urged.
- US cases and deaths were removed from the top right and replaced with NH positivity (percent positive), which will henceforth be in red if increased over the previous week.
- The MA dashboard was deleted as similar data are available in the JHU section mid-page. In its place is a summary and map depicting New Hampshire’s “Community Transmission Metrics”. Rockingham County and Portsmouth are green, indicating minimal transmission, but yellow (moderate transmission) and red (substantial transmission) areas are nearby, with traffic back and forth between areas common.
- The JHU section now reads across by state, rather than vertically by state (NH, ME and MA). Cases are up in NH but testing is also up and positivity appears to be

down; however, for reasons unknown, only one day's positivity results are shown. The rolling average of daily percent positivity for NH and ME is not shown this week. This is unfortunate as that is more useful than daily figures which are subject to much fluctuation.

- Graphics at the bottom of the dashboard are essentially unchanged and show in a different view the numbers of cases and percent positivity in NH, as well as the U.S. map with current hotspots mostly in the northern Midwest.

“COMMENT (Councilor Huda): would be useful to have dates showing on the graphs of NH, Rockingham and Portsmouth cases and NH hospitalizations over the past 12 weeks. Stephanie Seacord will aim to do this as space allows.”

Report submitted by Ann Birner

Streets/Fall/Winter Subcommittee Report

Mark Stebbins: We are hoping to consolidate the Streets group and meeting time with Alan Gold's new committee and will be doing that as of Monday, Oct 26. The City Council extended the Public Realm status until November 16. This will be discussed in more detail at the Council meeting of November 9.

Valerie Rochon: The restaurants are requesting the City for 15-minute parking along Congress Street and Penhallow for takeout. The idea of common areas with picnic tables for takeout or coffee is being accepted favorably by restaurants for warmer winter days. The après ski theme has been tossed around. Making the top third of Bridge Street lot handicap-access is being considered. There was a request to extend outdoor dining, including liquor service to go, through the winter or even the fall of 2022. Folks are lacking storage for all the tables, chairs, and beautiful construction they have used this summer. Can the City make space available? Will these tables, chairs, and constructions most likely be needed next spring and should restaurants pay for storage? The Christmas theme is “Let the Magic [of Portsmouth] Shine Through.”

Valerie also expressed concern regarding staff socializing at restaurants after hours and a possible connection to restaurants closing due to cases of COVID. She asked HSC to discuss that, and it was added to their agenda. Ann Birner stressed that meanwhile, everyone should be paying attention to the basic rules of pandemic behavior (masking, distancing, etc.).

Mark Stebbins: One of our goals, if the committee continues, is to plan for next spring and hit it early. We have only spent \$65,000 of the \$100,000 CARES act money allocated to us. It might be available to us in the future.

**Report from Nancy Carmer
Economic Development Manager
October 21, 2020**

Nancy Carmer: “Governor Sununu has authorized \$100 million in CARES Act funds to continue economic support to New Hampshire small businesses through a second round of Main Street Relief Fund grants. Main Street Relief Fund (MSRF) 2.0 provides additional economic support to New Hampshire small businesses suffering from business interruptions as a result of COVID- 19. Specifically, it supports both (1) businesses that did not receive grants from the initial round of MSRF or the General Assistance Program (GAP) Fund, and (2) businesses that received grants of less than the maximum \$350,000 from the initial round of MSRF or the GAP Fund, if eligible. Businesses that received a Self-Employed Livelihood Fund (SELF) grant are not eligible for MSRF 2.0.

Nancy Carmer [cont.] “This info was sent to roughly 3,000 Portsmouth businesses this week in the hopes that eligible companies will apply for funding to help them with the challenges of COVID 19. This funding as well as the previous round of Main Street Relief funds and General Assistance Program (GAP) funds from the State as well as tremendous boost many companies received from the federal Paycheck Protection Program (PPP) has been critical to the survival of many of Portsmouth and seacoast businesses.”

Submitted by Nancy Carmer

Russ Grazier: We should have the discussion about what is happening next spring soon. I worry about these businesses having to hang onto their chairs, tables, and constructions if they don’t really need to. They need know now if something is going to happen next year.

Bridge St. Lot Subcommittee Report

Russ Grazier was told by Tristan Law, the general manager for PopUpNH, that, except for structures (the sheds and the stage) everything for the Bridge Street lot has been cleared. Those constructions should be moved in early November. Cars have started parking there. “Numbers” should be available for the CRTF next week, and the subcommittee will then wrap for the year.

Adjourn

Motion: Mark Stebbins moved to adjourned. Jim Lee seconded, and the group agreed unanimously.

Respectfully submitted,
Patience Gifford Horton
Recorder