

City of Portsmouth, New Hampshire
Portsmouth Citizen Response Task Force
Remote meeting via Zoom
Meeting Minutes for Wednesday, October 28, 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 22nd Citizen Response Task Force meeting lasted one hour. Votes were taken with a show of hands.

Task Force present:

1. James Petersen, Petersen Engineering, Co-Chair
2. Karen Conard, City Manager
3. Senator Martha Fuller Clark, NH State Senate District 21
4. Kim McNamara, Health Officer
5. Alan Gold, Economic Development Commission
6. Ann Birner, PharmD (Health Care Professional)
7. Sarah Lachance, Economic Development Commission
8. John Golumb, Poco's Bow Street Cantina (Restaurant)
9. Kathryn Lynch, (Non-profit Health-care Organization)
10. Jim Lee, REMAX Shoreline (Real Estate)
11. Bianca Monteiro, York Pulmonary Associates (Health Care Professional)
12. Valerie Rochon, President, Chamber Collaborative of Greater Portsmouth

Task Force absent:

13. Mark Stebbins, ProCon Construction, Co-Chair
14. Russ Grazier, PMAC (Non-profit)
15. Karen Bouffard, The Real Estate Market, Inc. (Real Estate)
16. Deborah Anthony, Gather Pantry Market (Non-profit)
17. Jeffrey Goss, The Clipper Tavern (Restaurant)
18. Joe Scarlotto (Restaurant)

Since Resigned

19. Marylyn Morin, Pediatric Nurse Practitioner (Health Care Professional)

City Staff present:

1. Peter Rice, Director of Public Works
2. Stephanie Seacord, Public Information Officer
3. Joe Almeida, Facilities Manager
4. Juliet Walker, City Planner
5. Nancy Carmer, Economic Development Manager
6. Patrick Howe, Deputy Fire Chief
7. Todd Germain, Fire Chief
8. Mark Newport, Police Chief

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 & Approval of October 21, 2020 Minutes

- Motion: Jim Lee moved to approve last week's minutes. Alan Gold seconded. There was a word change. The motion passed unanimously.

Health Subcommittee Report

Ann Birner: Mary Morin is stepping down from her place on the Task Force. She has been an active participant in the Health Subcommittee.

- Motion: Ann Birner moved to approve Mary Morin's resignation. Bianca Monteiro seconded. The motion passed unanimously.

CRTF HEALTH SUBCOMMITTEE (HSC) MEETING NOTES

October 28, 2020
By Ann Birner

“A draft of the DAILY LIFE FAQ is in circulation for review within the subcommittee. It maybe it ready for consideration by the Task Force next week. Notes from the HSC along with the FAQ document state that a risk assessment app will also be provided for TF review for inclusion in the FAQ; that will be dependent upon final review of the app by subcommittee members.

“The dashboard was reviewed. Noteworthy was the change of Rockingham County to ‘substantial’ category of transmission and Coos County now moderate. James noted that Manchester and Nashua were red last week. This map along with the map of New Hampshire at the bottom of the page show in a graphic way the recent rise in cases here. Midpage, we continue to view the JHU data for NH/ME/MA. Cases are up in all 3 states, with testing down in NH and ME, unfortunately as testing would ideally increase as cases rise. Positivity is shown to the right of this section. The TF was reminded that there are various ways to calculate positivity but broadly it is the proportion of positive tests. The arrows previously included reflected whether positivity is below WHO threshold. These arrows have been deleted as they did not demonstrate positivity trends. The subcommittee is troubled by the paucity of daily data and the continued (over the past 2 weeks) lack of a rolling average for NH positivity, and is considering replacement of the JHU datasets with information from some other source to be determined.

“The subcommittee discussed last week's request to help reduce community transmission as has resulted in recent restaurant closures in the City, and determined that while the HSC can and does educate the public on risk reduction strategies and behaviors, it is not our role to monitor or enforce. There is a working system in place for that piece, involving city Police

(24/7) and Health (during limited hours) Departments. Complaints when received have resulted in appropriate action taken. Public Health Officer Kim McNamara was to follow up with the Chief of Police. It was noted that the Chamber of Commerce has access to, and ability to share with its members, all HSC FAQs through TF member Valerie Rochon, who indicated that she has shared these liberally.

“Much discussion followed. Senator Clark suggested that the FAQ documents should be publicized in the local press. Stephanie Seacord described prior publicity and agreed to another press release. Kim McNamara stated that without knowing in greater detail exactly how cases were spread, it is not possible for city Health Department to monitor and act in a targeted way. Improved communication with NH Health and Human Services would go far toward enabling rapid response. In response to a question, she clarified the current situation regarding indoor dining (generally 100% but only if 6’ distance can be maintained). As Portsmouth High was closed due to a COVID-19 case today, concern was expressed regarding voting next week might be impacted. Sarah LaChance will make an inquiry after the meeting. Also relevant to the school closing, there was a brief discussion regarding appropriate socialization, which should be limited with attention to basic safety rules.

“Further discussion included the role of “bars” (or bar areas of restaurants) in recent case transmission. Removal of bar stools is one solution to prevent close congregation.

“Senator Clark offered to appeal to the Governor for further regulation if Kim is able to provide written background for her; this would be subject to City Manager approval.

“The City Mask Ordinance expires January 4th and a statement of support for renewal has been drafted. The Chair encouraged submission to the Task Force for consideration at next week’s meeting based on the short timeline for Council action.”

Report submitted by Ann Birner

Kim McNamara: One hundred percent capacity doesn’t apply to many restaurants because you still have to maintain the six-foot distance between patrons. Most places can’t meet 50% capacity and meet those guidelines. The 100% capacity doesn’t really exist. The people who are making these reopening guidelines are not people with boots on the ground.

Kim McNamara: Bars are not allowed to operate right now. No one is allowed to be running a bar. What the guidelines say is that you can use the bar for seating patrons as if it were a table.

Streets/Fall/Winter Subcommittee Report

Peter Rice: The DPW staff cannot move sidewalk furniture before and after snow events. Restaurants will have to have furniture they can easily get out and back in. Will businesses

and restaurants be responsible for salting and sanding those areas in a safe manner? We need to have real events to determine what City funding it is going to be needed.

Valerie Rochon: The restaurants we spoke with recently said they would be interested in taking care of their own outdoor space. Insurance has to be part of the discussion. Businesses are ready to do their part, but it is a question of liability.

Juliet Walker: We're working at reaching out to all the outdoor dining businesses and letting them know about the extension to the end of November. We are trying to figure out how to streamline the permitting process if we decide to have outdoor dining next year.

Alan Gold: Part of the Streets Committee meeting this week was to brainstorm a Wish List for the 2021 Citizen Response Task Force. We plan to put together some ideas we can ratify and share with the City Council about the future of the Task Force.

Alan Gold: Item #4 on the Wish List has to do with helping individuals who must quarantine and the respective restaurants that must shut down for two weeks. There are already a number of organizations that already help, like Gather. The Streets Subcommittee could potentially provide a clearing house of information, similar to the HSC's FAQ pages, to help get the word out about what those resources may be for those affected employees.

Senator Fuller Clark: Is the Chamber able to apply for some money to be set aside to help our employees with that kind of issue?

Valerie Rochon: There is \$38 million left in the CARES fund that would have to be returned to Washington if it is not used by the end of the year. The Chambers are determining where to best apply it.

Alan Gold: Perhaps if the City could repurpose some sort of Clipper Strong fund, there might be some vessel to get some of those CARES funds in for that purpose.

Karen Conard: We have exhausted our entire allocation that we've been allowed to access. If the rules or parameters around the programs are modified, we'll be the first in line to take advantage of that.

Other Business

1. Police Chief Mark Newport regarding the mask ordinance: We haven't written any citations, but we've visited several restaurants and businesses where we've educated managers/owners. There hasn't been a place we've had to repeat.
2. James Petersen: If anyone is unable or unwilling to serve beyond the end of the year, we should know that. Karen Conard: I can keep track of that along with the co-chairs.

Adjourn

- Motion: Martha Fuller Clark moved to adjourn. John Golumb seconded. The motion passed unanimously. The time was 2:55.

Respectfully submitted,
Patience G. Horton
Recorder