

City of Portsmouth, New Hampshire
Portsmouth Citizen Response Taskforce
Remote meeting via Zoom
Meeting Minutes for Wednesday, July 29, 2020; 2:00 P.M.

Call to Order; Determination of Quorum

Co-Chair James Petersen determined a quorum and called the meeting to order at 2:00. City Manager Karen Conard represented staff and was the moderator. Patience Horton took minutes. The meeting lasted one hour.

Taskforce present:

1. Co-chair James Petersen, Principal, Petersen Engineering
2. Co-chair Mark Stebbins, Principal, PROCON, Hotel Industry Professional
3. Russ Grazier, PMAC, Non-profit
4. Senator Martha Fuller Clark, NH State Senate District 21 Representative
5. Valerie Rochon, President, Chamber Collaborative of Greater Portsmouth
6. Ann Birner, Pharmacist, Retired Health Care Professional
7. Dr. Bianca Monteiro, York Pulmonary Associates, Health Care Professional
8. Jim Lee, REMAX Shoreline, Real Estate Business
9. Karen Bouffard, The Real Estate Market, Real Estate Business
10. Kathryn Lynch, Non-profit Health-care Organization
11. Marylyn Morin, Pediatric Nurse Practitioner, Health Care Professional
12. Karen Conard, City Manager
13. Health Officer Kim McNamara, City Health Officer
14. Alan Gold, City Economic Development Commissioner
15. Sarah Lachance, City Economic Development Commissioner

Taskforce absent:

16. Jeffrey Goss, The Clipper Tavern, Restaurant Owner
17. Deb Anthony, Gather Pantry Market, Non-profit Director
18. John Golumb, Poco's Bow Street Cantina, Restaurant Owner
19. Nathan Moss, Citizen-at-large
20. Samantha Finigan, Gus & Ruby Letterpress, Retail Business Owner
21. Joe Scarlotto, Restaurant Owner

City Staff present:

1. Stephanie Seacord, Public Information Officer
2. Joe Almeida, Facilities Manager
3. Nancy Carmer, Economic Development Manager
4. Peter Rice, DPW Direct
5. Juliet Walker, Director of Planning

Also present:

1. Petra Huda, City Councilor
2. Anne Weidman, Portsmouth Professional Alliance/JSA Architects

3. North Sturtevant, JSA architect, Board Member, PopUpNH
4. Andrew Bagley, PopUpNH

I. Approval of Minutes

- Motion: Russ Grazier moved to approve the minutes of July 22, 2020. Jim Lee seconded. In discussion, changes were made to the roll call and the Health Subcommittee report. The motion passed unanimously.

II. Insurance Coverage for members of City committees

Karen Conard reported that Taskforce members are covered by liability insurance. The NH Public Risk Management Exchange provides coverage to City committees.

III. Health Sub-committee report—COVID update

Ann Birner: “The Health Subcommittee met yesterday and laid the groundwork for letters to Governor Sununu and surrounding towns that will express the members’ collective support for a statewide mask mandate. Several members of the subcommittee attended the City Council Workgroup session RE: Protective Face Covering Ordinance Proposal held on July 22nd and were concerned about misconceptions expressed during that meeting. The subcommittee has written a “Facts and Clarifications Memo” that will be sent to the Council as part of meeting materials for its August 3rd meeting, and the Health Subcommittee will be represented at that meeting. Key points describe viral spread (emphasis on inability to reproduce on a cloth mask), proper mask usage, and the limited benefit of plastic face shields. Subcommittee support for public service announcements, safety promotional campaigns, and positive reinforcement of safety measures was described. Finally, the CRFT was walked through a new format of the weekly COVID-19 report. Shaded maps of the New England area and regional data being relatively straightforward, more time was spent explaining new data and charts the Johns Hopkins University tracker. Particular emphasis was placed on the importance of percent positivity as related to number of tests performed, which we will continue to follow. The final version of the weekly report has been updated with the percent positivity graph at bottom right labelled as NH data. **BOTTOM LINE: DESPITE LOW NUMBERS OF CASES RELATIVE TO OTHER PARTS OF THE COUNTRY, WE MUST REMAIN VIGILANT.**” Summary written by **Ann Birner** for the Meeting Minutes, 7/29/20.

Ann Birner: The virus cannot grow outside of the host that it has invaded, which are our human cells. **Bianca Monteiro:** NH is not at the level of testing that it should be. We are slowing creeping up—ever so slightly. Having 14 cases in Portsmouth compared to four (4) last week is a jump. It is slowly rising. **Kim McNamara:** The percent of positive is what we have to watch. Even a fraction of a percent rise gives us a very short amount of time to do anything that is going to be a consequence to stop further spread.

IV. Bridge Street (Pop-up) Subcommittee Report

Russ Grazier:

- 1) PopUpNH is working with the Fire Department for assembly permit review.
- 2) They will be working with plumbing contractors to make sure things are set up to City requirements.
- 3) The PopUp NH group is finalizing their insurance. They understand what they need to have to operative.
- 4) They hired a general manager, **Tristin Law**, who oversees the operations.
- 5) An early draft of the operations plan for the stage has been made.
- 6) The donations go through the fiscal agent/sponsor Seacoast Repertory Theater. Donations should be given directly to Seacoast Rep with **PopUpNH** on the notation line.
- 7) They are working with the State on liquor licensing and some other issues.

Another group has become eligible for participation in the PopUp site. Artisans, artists, and crafts people based in Portsmouth in places like the Button Factory are added to the second tier, after bricks-and-mortar applicants.

Mark Stebbins: The \$50,000 that the City is putting in is not going through the hands of the non-profit group. It is going in directly to infrastructure at the Bridge Street lot.

Russ Grazier: The City is paying for:

- 1) Fencing
- 2) Portapotties
- 3) Power generators
- 4) Sewer and water

North Sturtevant: The process that it takes for an entity to become a 501(c)(3) is extremely lengthy. That is a 2-to-3-year process. The Seacoast Rep as fiscal agent is quicker and lasts through its proposed status only as long as the Task Force exists.

Martha Fuller Clark: The public has to understand how the City's \$50,000 contribution is being spent. **Russ Grazier:** An Op Ed piece from the Task Force should go in the paper. **Stephanie Seacord** said she will start the process.

Newcomer **Laura Brown** was inducted onto the Board of Directors of PopUpNH. She will be working proactively as the marketing person and work with **Stephanie Seacord**, the City's public information officer

The arts and culture scene are much bigger than what is happening at the Bridge Street lot, said **Russ Grazier**, implying that most are not under the umbrella of the Task Force. We should also find ways to be supportive of the independent projects taking place at the

Music Hall, Prescott Park Arts Festival (movies), the Black Heritage Trail, 3S Artspace, Seacoast Rep, NH Theater Project, the Chestnut Street Concert Series, and the Loading Dock Concert Series. How can we better support their efforts? **Martha Fuller Clark** added that the historical element cannot be overlooked. Strawberry Banke (Tuesday night concerts) and Portsmouth Historical Society (walking tours and quilt exhibit) should not be missed. We can't forget the independent efforts that community non-profits and arts organizations are doing on their own. We want them to be here when the pandemic is over, and we want them to be strong, she said.

V. Streets Subcommittee Report

City Planner **Juliet Walker** showed:

- 1) The Hammer is taking on their loading zone plus one State Street parking spot.
- 2) The Franklin Oyster Street has requested café tables in the Fleet St. travel lane. A recommendation is to convert Fleet Street to one-way traffic from Congress St.
- 3) The Black Trumpet will be on the sidewalk, leaving Ceres Street for pedestrians and vehicles.
- 4) The Gas Light will be set up to keep pedestrians from impeding on the café area.
- 5) Bennett Sandwich Shop would like a 15-minute pick-up spot outside their store. A handicap space will be changed to a 15-minute spot for them.

Ratification by the Citizen Response Task Force

- Motion: Martha Fuller Clark moved for the Citizen Response Task Force to ratify the Street Committee's approval of the items Juliet Walker listed. Valerie Rochon seconded. The motion carried unanimously.

Anne Weidman showed photoshopped images of iconic statues wearing masks as part of the Mask-up Portsmouth campaign. She showed sidewalk and parking space success-stories around town. "Whether you are a social media person or if you are just talking to your neighbors, it is really important to be an ambassador and push it out," she said.

VI. Other Business—November, Ph 3 & 4 indoor assembly, PR

James Petersen: What happens when folks move back inside? We will start thinking about that as the colder weather comes. **Kim McNamara:** Fall is worrisome. We have to have the community give it our best shot to keep the numbers down so it is safe enough to keep businesses open in the Fall and move indoors.

VII. Adjourn

- Motion: Martha Fuller Clark moved to adjourn. Valerie Rochon seconded. The motion passed unanimously.

Respectfully submitted, Patience Gifford Horton, Recorder