

City of Portsmouth, New Hampshire
Portsmouth Citizen Response Taskforce
Remote meeting via Zoom
Meeting Minutes for Wednesday, August 12, 2020, 2:00 P.M.

Call to Order

Co-Chair James Petersen and called the meeting to order at 2:00. City Manager Karen Conard represented staff and was the moderator. Patience Horton took minutes. Her comments are in [brackets]. This meeting lasted one hour.

Taskforce present:

1. Co-chair James Petersen, Principal, Petersen Engineering
2. Co-chair Mark Stebbins, Principal, PROCON, Inc. (Hotel Industry)
3. Senator Martha Fuller Clark, NH State Senate District 21
4. Russ Grazier, PMAC (Non-profit)
5. Ann Birner, PharmD (Health Care Professionals)
6. John Golumb, Poco's Bow Street Cantina (Restaurants)
7. Kathryn Lynch, (Non-profit Health-care Organization)
8. Karen Bouffard, The Real Estate Market, Inc. (Real Estate)
9. Valerie Rochon, President, Chamber Collaborative of Greater Portsmouth
10. Deb Anthony, Gather Pantry Market (Non-profit)
11. Alan Gold, Economic Development Commission
12. Karen Conard, City Manager

Taskforce absent:

13. Marylyn Morin, Pediatric Nurse Practitioner (Health Care Professional)
14. Dr. Bianca Monteiro, York Pulmonary Associates (Health Care Professional)
15. Sarah Lachance, City Economic Development Commission
16. Jim Lee, REMAX Shoreline (Real Estate)
17. Samantha Finigan, Gus & Ruby Letterpress (Retail Business)
18. City Staff, Health Officer Kim McNamara
19. Jeffrey Goss, The Clipper Tavern (Restaurants)
20. Joe Scarlotto (Restaurants)
21. Nathan Moss, Citizen-at-large

City Staff present:

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

Also present:

- 1) Petra Huda, City Councilor
- 2) Anne Weidman, Portsmouth Professional Alliance/JSA Architects
- 3) Andrew Bagley, Board member, PopUpNH
- 4) Laura Brown, Board member, PopUpNH

Welcome and Approval of Minutes

- Motion: Russ Grazier moved to approve the Minutes of July 1, 2020 as written. Valerie Rochon seconded the motion. The motion passed unanimously.

Health Subcommittee Update

Ann Birner: Two letters discussed last week were revisited. One was letter to area towns seeking support for mask mandates, and the other was the letter to Governor Sununu from the Task Force. (The latter is in follow-up to the already delivered Health Subcommittee letter). There was a lengthy discussion as to whether the Governor should be asked for a statewide mask mandate, given his stated unwillingness to do so. In addition, it may make more sense to wait until the outcome of the August 18th City Council meeting is known. It will include the 2nd and 3rd readings of the proposed city mask ordinance. Possibly at that time we will have an ordinance which we may append or reference in letters on this subject. In the Governor's letter we should encourage him to issue an executive order in support of mandates by order of individual cities and towns in NH. At the request of the Downtown Streets Subcommittee, the Health Subcommittee has discussed a zonal approach to mask regulation but supports the broader citywide approach in the current proposed city ordinance. It was agreed that these two letters will remain in draft form for now.

The weekly Covid-19 dashboard was reviewed. Ann corrected her statement that the target for broad testing is 5%. Testing target for mitigation varies with the case number (one per case plus ten contacts per case) whereas the target for suppression is much higher but not a fixed number. Our region is doing relatively well in the context of the rest of the USA, but not necessarily in a global context. Ann and Bianca will represent the subcommittee at a zoom meeting (Chamber of Commerce "chat") on Friday, August 14.

Proposed mask ordinance: a memo drafted by the subcommittee for delivery to the City Council reiterates support for the ordinance and recommends identifying masks with exhalation valves or vents as inadequate face coverings for the purpose of protecting the public. The memo was ratified by the Task Force. Autumn Plans – ventilation will become a key topic for discussion. The Health Subcommittee was written by Ann Birner specifically for the Minutes.

Stephanie Seacord: The Health Subcommittee continues to work on follow-up to the mask ordinance being considered by the City Council. They are:

- 1) Preparing a memo to the City Council for their August 18 meeting, with some suggested amendment of the language of the ordinance.
- 2) Preparing a letter co-signed by the City Manager, the Subcommittee and the entire CRTF that will be sent to surrounding NH town managers or Boards of Selectmen, sharing the outcome of the ordinance vote , encouraging them to create their own mask ordinances to promote the safety of all in the seacoast, and asking the governor to declare his support for municipal mask ordinances.
- 3) Drafting a letter to Governor Sununu for the full CRTF, as recommended by Senator Martha Fuller Clark, asking him to issue an Executive Order supporting local municipalities who issue their own mask mandates. This section of the Health Subcommittee was written by Stephanie Seacord specifically for the Minutes.

James Petersen: I don't think our opinions or actions ought to be influenced by the Governor's saying there is never going to be a statewide mandate. Everything that I've heard is that everything is subject to reconsideration based on the trajectory of the pandemic.

Bridge St Lot Subcommittee Discussion

Russ Grazier: The PopUp had a great startup weekend. The Black Trumpet and the breweries were featured on Friday night. The touchless ordering system went well. The tables are spread out. On Saturday, there was the sold-out fashion show. There have not been issues with crowds or the mask requirement. Feedback from PopUpNH was positive. **Martha Fuller Clark:** There appears to be more people wearing masks downtown than there were a month ago. **Laura Brown:** Tristin Law, the General Manager, will be submitting an opinion piece to the Portsmouth Herald acknowledging and thanking the contributors.

James Petersen: This has been a complex project. Thank you to the City for staying on it and making it happen. Thank you to everybody on this call who contributed.

Streets Subcommittee Update

Anne Weidman has spoken to and gotten ideas from two design companies that are working with cities all across the country designing outdoor spaces by the square foot. NYC has no indoor dining whatsoever, and their licenses expire October 31. They have no approved or published winter survival plans, though I'm sure they're talking about it, she said.

New Business—Moving Indoors

Peter Rice: I'm convinced that some of the barriers will be out there [in the street] this winter, but my staff is not looking forward to dealing with them. If the barriers are in place, there will be less places to push the snow and at greater expense. The authorization for restaurants to be out in the streets is until the end of October. If it goes beyond that, it would have to be approved through the City Council. We will do whatever the Taskforce and the City Council directs us to do.

Mark Stebbins: Let's say we go through the first week in November, and if it snows beforehand, everything closes down at that point.

James Petersen: In describing the anticipated weather. September and October are good months for being outside. It is more challenging from November 1 to December 15. From December through the end of February, you are almost guaranteed that it is going to be winter. There won't be any more reliable breaks in winter weather.

Russ Grazier: Looking past October 31, it might be easy to survey the restaurants that have the barriers and find out if they want to go on past October 31. Maybe some barriers should be taken down earlier than others.

Valerie Rochon: The barriers are going to have to be completely gone at some point. What events can happen off-street? Perhaps the sheds on Bridge Street can be repurposed for a Christmas function.

Martha Fuller Clark: There are great Christmas fairs in Europe. We need to find out how they handle the cold and snow. Maybe we can continue to do things with the Bridge Street lot.

Next Regular Meetings (Zoom)

All Wednesdays @ 2:00 P.M.	Weekly Taskforce
All Mondays and Wednesdays @ 3:00 P.M.	Street Use Subcommittee
All Fridays @ 9:00 P.M.	Street Use Subcommittee
By the end of the year	Task Force dismantled

Adjourn

- Motion: Russ Grazier moved to adjourn. Alan Gold seconded. The motion passed unanimously. The time was 3:00.

Respectfully submitted,
Patience G. Horton
Recorder