

City of Portsmouth, New Hampshire
Portsmouth Citizen Response Task Force
Remote meeting via Zoom
Meeting Minutes for Wednesday, September 9, 2020, 2:00 P.M.

Call to Order

Co-Chair James Petersen and called the meeting to order at 2:00. Karen Conard, City Manager, represented Staff and was the moderator. Patience Horton took minutes. This meeting, the 15th general Task Force meeting, lasted one hour. Votes were assessed with a show of hands.

Task Force present:

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

Task Force absent:

13. Marylyn Morin, Pediatric Nurse Practitioner (Health Care Professional)
14. Deborah Anthony, Gather Pantry Market (Non-profit)
15. Kathryn Lynch, (Non-profit Health-care Organization)
16. Senator Martha Fuller Clark, NH State Senate District 21
17. Karen Bouffard, The Real Estate Market, Inc. (Real Estate)
18. Jeffrey Goss, The Clipper Tavern (Restaurant)
19. Samantha Finigan, Gus & Ruby Letterpress (Retail Business)
20. Nathan Moss, Citizen-at-large
21. Joe Scarlotto (Restaurant)

City Staff present:

1. Peter Rice, Director of Public Works
2. Todd Germain, Fire Chief
3. Stephanie Seacord, Public Information Officer
4. Joe Almeida, Facilities Manager
5. Kristin Shaw, Deputy Health Officer
6. Robert Merner, Police Chief
7. Nancy Carmer, Economic Development Commission Manager
8. Patrick Howe, Deputy Fire Chief

Also present: App

- 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: Mark Stebbins moved to approve the Minutes of August 26, 2020. Russ Grazier seconded.

In discussion, the specific results of the 16-1 email-vote motion in support of the Task Force's approval of the City Council's third reading of the proposed mask ordinance were requested. In support of the motion were James Petersen, Mark Stebbins, Sarah Lachance, Valerie Rochon, Alan Gold, Deb Anthony, Russ Grazier, Sam Finigan, Ann Birner, Bianca Monteiro, Kathie Lynch, Mary Morin, Martha Fuller Clark, John Golumb, Karen Conard, and Kim McNamara.

Four people did not vote. One person voted against, Jim Lee.

The motion to approve the Minutes of the August 26 passed unanimously.

Health Subcommittee Report

The subcommittee has met twice since last reporting to the Task Force. The vote on the proposed City mask ordinance has been postponed, therefore distribution of associated letters (to the Governor and surrounding towns on this topic) as previously discussed has been delayed.

Christine Burke, the school district's Wellness Coordinator, joined a recent meeting for an exchange of ideas and information. She provided an update on school reopening plans and listened to a summary of the subcommittee's work. Directly advising public institutions such as city schools is not within the scope of the charge to the task force, but documents such as FAQs that are approved and posted on the city website are for the use of members of the public at will. TBD, how to inform other relevant organizations such as private schools of the availability of these resources for their information only.

Work continues on FAQ documents, along the lines of the recently approved and posted Testing FAQ. The Ventilation FAQ, spearheaded by James, is coming along. The content is fairly complex, and it may be longer when completed and take longer to complete. Work is just beginning on an FAQ, as yet unnamed, that will focus on recommendations for household management in the event a member becomes COVID-19 positive. Most spread occurs at home when community infections begin to rise. Next

meeting will include an agenda item on how to keep FAQs up-to-date in the context of fast-changing information.

This week's dashboard was reviewed. Case numbers are rising in NH, of concern especially so early in the return-to-school season. Maine seems to be stabilizing after an uptick associated with the "super spreader" event in Millinocket about a month ago. The MA data from JHU on the circulated dashboard (dated 9/7/20) appear to have some aberrations but the JHU website elsewhere showed a reasonable 1.7% rolling average percent positivity over the past 7 days. More "hotspots" are being seen in the Midwest now, as depicted on the NYT national map. Outbreaks at colleges and universities have been widely reported by news outlets. A question was asked as to whether UNH student test results are included in NH case numbers? A recent public comment from Health and Human Services Commissioner Lori Shibinette suggests that such tests taken after arrival in NH will be included, while those conducted before arrival will not. Bottom line: follow data for trends and continue to encourage vigilance.

The subcommittee is considering an informational program on flu vaccine, now available for the 2020/21 season, based on the belief that avoiding double infections and/or the weakening effects of influenza during the COVID-19 pandemic will support improved public health.

Subcommittee members have received requests for feedback on commercially available and promoted products. The subcommittee will not endorse such products but will provide basic facts and resources for additional information as appropriate, focusing on public safety. *Submitted for the minutes by Ann Birner.*

Streets/Fall/Winter subcommittee Report

1) Extension of Fall Permits to October 31

Karen Conard: All permits related to the outdoor realm expire on October 18. That includes all restaurants and the PopUp venue. A Request for an extension to October 31 shall be submitted by the Task Force to the City Council.

Russ Grazier: I thought everything was already booked through October 31. The rentals for fencing and portapotties go through the 31st.

Peter Rice: Though the costs were budgeted to the end of October, there is a hard deadline of October 18. That is a policy decision.

Valerie Rochon: The restaurants are hoping for a restaurant event the weekend after Columbus Day, which is Monday, October 12. It would be great if they could stay open for that and longer.

Karen Conard: Going beyond October 18 does not necessarily mean that the City will pick up those costs.

- Motion: Jim Lee moved for the Task Force to approve the extension of the Bridge Street Lot and Street Use to October 31 and to request the City Council to ratify that extension. Valerie Rochon seconded. The motion passed unanimously.

2) Heaters and Blankets

Valerie Rochon: Restaurants and The PopUp are interested in outdoor patio heaters. Scarcity of fuel cylinders might be like the demand for toilet paper was during the lockdown, and downtown storage for fuel cylinders, which have to be in cages, is an unknown.

Deputy Fire Chief Patrick Howe: There are strict limitations of where you can put cages for the storage of spare fuel canister tanks.

Valerie: We've received a quote for 25,000 polyester fleece lap blankets. They would cost about \$5.00 each. Once purchased, they would be folded up and carried away by the customers. Perhaps their purchase can be subsidized by some of the money that was allocated to the public realm.

Kim McNamara: Distributing blankets would be environmentally bad. Many blankets will end up on the trash heap.

Patrick Howe: You have to be careful with the use of polyester blankets, which are quite literally made out of petroleum. You don't want to combine them with patio heaters.

Mark Stebbins: Perhaps the restaurants should take on heaters and blankets themselves.

Bridge St Lot Subcommittee

1) Thursday evenings

- Motion: Bianca Monteiro moved to allow the PopUp to continue with Thursday evenings through October 18 or October 31, whichever the end date turns out to be. The closing time would be 9:00. This would depend on ratification from the City Council. John Golumb seconded.

In discussion, Russ Grazier: When plans were laid out for the PopUp in June, Thursdays were to be eliminated from the four-day weekend after Labor Day. However, it's been proven that the participants need those Thursdays to generate enough revenue to keep going.

Kim McNamara: The final seating arrangement in the PopUp is much better than originally because the overall amount of seating has been reduced. The tables and seats are more spaced out so there are wide areas for people to move in.

James Petersen: Any concern about noise on Thursday nights? Andrew Bagley: Though lightly amplified, acoustic guitars and song are booked. It is a friendly environment. The neighbors sit out and particularly enjoy Thursday nights.

This motion to extend the Thursday night scheduling passed unanimously.

- 2) Russ Grazier: In August, the lot generated \$64,000 in revenue. The majority of the money supported the Portsmouth restaurant businesses that were active on the lot. Performances generated about ten percent of the business. Additional money came in from non-profit activity. The restaurateurs thought August was slower than expected, and it is anticipated to be significantly better in September.
- 3) Russ Grazier: We should ask PopUpNH to give us very detailed proposal for any ideas of going beyond October 31. It would be good for the Task Force to start talking about how we can move past December 31, if it looks like we need to.

Adjourn

- Motion: Valerie Rochon moved to adjourn. Alan Gold seconded. The motion passed unanimously. It was 3:00.

Respectfully submitted,
Patience Gifford Horton
CRTF Recorder