

City of Portsmouth, New Hampshire
Portsmouth Citizen Response Task Force
Remote meeting via Zoom
Meeting Minutes for Wednesday, September 23, 2020, 2:00 P.M.

Call to Order

Co-Chair James Petersen called the meeting to order at 2:00. Nancy Colbert Puff, Deputy City Manager, represented staff and was the moderator. Patience Horton took minutes. This 17th general 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. Mark Stebbins, ProCon Construction, Co-Chair
3. Karen Conard, City Manager
4. Kim McNamara, Health Officer
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. Bianca Monteiro, York Pulmonary Associates (Health Care Professional)
10. Sarah Lachance, Economic Development Commission (City)
11. John Golumb, Poco's Bow Street Cantina (Restaurant)
12. Kathryn Lynch, (Non-profit Health-care Organization)
13. Jim Lee, REMAX Shoreline (Real Estate)

Task Force absent:

14. Deborah Anthony, Gather Pantry Market (Non-profit)
15. Senator Martha Fuller Clark, NH State Senate District 21
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)

Since Resigned

20. Nathan Moss, Citizen-at-large
21. Samantha Finigan, Gus & Ruby Letterpress

City Staff present:

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

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 September 16, 2020, as written. Alan Gold seconded. The motion passed unanimously.

Resignation from the Task Force

James Petersen: The Task Force has received notification from Samantha Finnegan and Nate Moss and that, due to business pressures, they are submitting their resignations.

- Motion: Alan Gold moved to accept Samantha Finnegan and Nate Moss's resignations. Jim Lee seconded. The motion passed unanimously.

Bridge St. Lot Subcommittee Report

Karen Conard: The City Council is willing to extend the Bridge Street lot and Outdoor Dining through Sunday, November 1. They are offering the option of extending the outdoor dining in the public realm beyond November 1, warranting decent weather and the will of restaurateurs.

Russ Grazier: On Monday, November 2, the fencing and portapotties will be returned because that is as far that those rentals go. The Task Force's tenure is only through the end of this calendar year, and we don't know what next spring and summer look like. However, if PopUpNH is needed next summer, businesses and non-profits can take advantage of what has been learned this year.

CRTF HEALTH SUBCOMMITTEE REPORT

September 23, 2020

Ann Birner: The subcommittee has been discussing the City Council's charge to the Task Force and how best to share our concerns regarding indoor activities while remaining within the scope as outlined in that charge. Informing the public may contribute to keeping the city society and businesses open. Such questions as what to include in the "Household Readiness" (AKA "Daily Life") FAQ, and whether to post scientific studies for public viewing, as opposed to limiting postings to guidelines and summaries, are in discussion.

The subcommittee was asked to consider whether plexiglass/plastic dividers between tables at restaurants might be utilized to enable table placement in closer proximity. At

this time such barriers are not allowed, according to the State's Attorney General. The Health Department will continue to follow this topic. Valerie Rochon commented that it might come up during Governor Sununu's press conference on Thursday.

The subcommittee asked for a vote to approve the Ventilation FAQ for public posting. This is despite a limited (24 hours since distributed to TF members yesterday) review period, given the fact that the document was previously circulated, the nature of subsequent revisions is considered to be minor and/or responsive to last week's discussion, and the demand for this particular FAQ document is high. Discussion points prior to the vote included: a request for more detail on ultraviolet light, level of direction available to business owners, prioritization of recommendations in the document, addition of links to resources, and a proposal for James to participate in a "Chamber Chat Live" opportunity for further discussion. These proposed elements will be expanded if present or incorporated if not already present, and James agreed to the Chamber Chat Live proposal. A move to approve the FAQ was made, seconded, and passed.

Question to HSC members: what can be done to support performance venues and restaurants, particularly as outdoor activities become limited? Keep looking at the case numbers, mask ordinance should help, avoid large gatherings. Locally we benefit from relatively low case numbers, but this may not be true for visitors from elsewhere. Given the nature of the pandemic and the multitude of risk factors which are not all under the control of the business managers, it is not possible to endorse or grade businesses even though they may be doing everything they possibly can to foster a safe environment. For example, clientele behavior can influence risk and may vary from one day to the next. Health Department is closely following vaccine and treatment developments. Public education is also important. Important to layer/add protective measures on one another whenever possible e.g. mask PLUS social distance, not mask OR social distance.

Comment: Public may not understand relevance of "percent positive" data point.

In reply to a question there ensued a brief discussion of how the City mask ordinance is being publicized: with signs going up around town today, and lighted signs at entries to town and in Market Square. Chamber of Commerce is also publicizing via social media and newsletters. City's Public Information Officer announced on Facebook and is developing an "FAQ" document to help the public understand the ordinance.

In interruption to the Health Report.

- Motion: Russ Grazier moved for the Task Force to endorse, ratify, and approve the Ventilation FAQ that was distributed by Stephanie Seacord through Google Docs yesterday. John Golumb seconded.

In discussion, James Petersen said that communication between Task Force members will always be a challenge. We can get details into the FAQ in any way

people choose us to. We'll approve this as a working document as many times as we need to as we add content.

Valerie: Is there is some way to provide information on some of the brand filtration systems that people are researching?

James: If somebody has a specific circumstance, they should be consulting with their contractor on what makes the most sense. Different applications respond to different circumstances. You can't get behind a product because that might mislead someone to think that that product is going to fit all circumstances.

The motion to post the Ventilation FAQs passed unanimously.

Ann continued the Health Committee report:

NOTED: letters approved by the task force for distribution to Governor Sununu and surrounding towns regarding mask regulation are on hold. Stay tuned.

The weekly dashboard was reviewed. Across NH/ME/MA cases are up, but testing is also up and percent positivity results are down. Last week's reported (by Johns Hopkins University) positivity for NH at 2.5% is not in agreement with the state data which, has not approached that level recently. Current status regionally is cautiously described as stable. As usual we advise continued vigilance. *Submitted by Ann Birner.*

Signage

Peter Rice: There are 30 10-by-60-inch signs that were posted today. A number of smaller ones have also been posted. I'm posting them where people come into the city, at the garages, at Market Square, and on the Vaughan Mall.

Mask Ordinance

Valerie Rochon: News of the mask ordinance is on our and the City's social media. It will go into our newsletter at the beginning of the month to about 16,000 friends of Portsmouth. We are trying to reach out to visitors in every way we can.

Stephanie Seacord: We are also working on a mask ordinance FAQ at the city level. What does mask ordinance mean? Where do I wear a mask? Am I under arrest if I don't wear a mask? We are advancing that information as quickly as possible.

Streets/Fall/Winter Subcommittee

Mark Stebbins: We have been extended to November 1. After that, the question is how to keep restaurants open and busy through the winter. Gov. Sununu is going to address this

in a press conference on Thursday. The reality is that somewhere between 30% and 40% of their regular seats are usable inside even though they are allowed to put 100% in.

John Golumb: Some restaurants, like Portsmouth Pizza Factory, have built their model on To Go. We are not going to survive with it. There is no way we can even break even. We tried it in March, and we did \$300 in one week, so we shut down. I don't plan to do To Go this winter.

Extension of outdoor liquor licenses

Karen Conard shared a letter to the State Liquor Commission requesting an extension of existing liquor at on-street-dining venues at least to November 1, and potentially to November 30.

- Motion: Alan Gold moved to support the possibility that liquor requirements be extended. Valerie Rochon seconded. The motion passed unanimously.

Fire Pits

James: Last week the Deputy City Manager showed some fantastic gas-fired fire pits. Is that being moved on?

Karen Conard: We will coordinate with the Fire Dept and Public Works to figure out what is feasible.

Adjourn

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

Respectfully submitted,
Patience Horton
CRTF Recorder