

City of Portsmouth, New Hampshire
Portsmouth Citizen Response Task Force
Remote meeting via Zoom
Meeting Minutes for Wednesday, September 30, 2020, 2:00 P.M.

Call to Order

Co-Chair James Petersen called the meeting to order at 2:00. Stephanie Seacord, public information officer, represented staff and was the moderator. Patience Horton took minutes. This 18th general Citizen Response Task Force meeting lasted one hour. Votes were taken with all in favor saying aye.

Task Force present:

1. James Petersen, Petersen Engineering, Co-Chair
2. Mark Stebbins, ProCon Construction, Co-Chair
3. Karen Conard, City Manager
4. Ann Birner, PharmD (Health Care Professional)
5. Kim McNamara, Health Officer (via phone)
6. Russ Grazier, PMAC (Non-profit)
7. Valerie Rochon, President, Chamber Collaborative of Greater Portsmouth
8. Sarah Lachance, Economic Development Commission
9. John Golumb, Poco's Bow Street Cantina (Restaurant)
10. Kathryn Lynch, (Non-profit Health-care Organization)
11. Jim Lee, REMAX Shoreline (Real Estate)
12. Deborah Anthony, Gather Pantry Market (Non-profit)
13. Senator Martha Fuller Clark, NH State Senate District 21

Task Force absent:

14. Bianca Monteiro, York Pulmonary Associates (Health Care Professional)
15. Alan Gold, Economic Development Commission (City)
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)

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: Jim Lee moved to approve the Minutes of September 23, 2020. A correction was made in the roster. Kathryn Lynch seconded. The motion passed unanimously.

Health Subcommittee Report

Kim McNamara: “Tomorrow, Thursday, October 1, the Health Department will publish the process needed for restaurants to apply for indoor seating under the Governor’s new guidelines announced September 24. It will be a simple addition to the restaurants’ current permits, and will need to include information on who evaluated their HVAC systems for compliance with the guidelines. The Portsmouth City guidelines are expected to generally follow the Governor’s.”

James Petersen: In the press release, the Governor allows for partitions in restaurants to promote social distancing. Ann Birner: How far apart tables need to be will be complex. We are suggesting that each restaurant considers the guidelines in context with their own restaurant.

Karen Conard: It important to stress that [the City] is very willing to help those people who wish to adhere to the new guidelines for barriers between the tables. Anecdotally, I approached several restaurants. Some of them are interested in pursuing this. Others don’t want to be involved with it because it doesn’t increase their overall seating capacity. One restaurant expressed it does not want to wash down and spray the barriers with the public present.

HEALTH SUBCOMMITTEE 30 SEPTEMBER 2020 CRTF MEETING By Ann Birner

The Ventilation FAQs webpage will go live when the City Manager approves. When James has finished his updates to the GoogleDoc, Stephanie Seacord will convert it to a PDF that will be posted on the City website as soon as the webpage goes live.

“The subcommittee continues to discuss its authorized scope of work and where value to the public has been or could be added. Approved documents may not be easy to find, and a request has been made for documentation of number of hits and/or downloads. The Health Department has a banner prominently placed on the City website leading to COVID-19 information and resources. Kim McNamara authorized links to HSC documents on a sidebar at that site, as long as such documents are clearly identified with respect to authorship (by the HSC) and approved for posting by the Task Force. Document availability and location may be publicized on Channel 22.

“In a recent press release the arrival of supplies in NH to support rapid antigen testing was announced. This is informational for CRTF members; as questions remain regarding distribution and availability, HSC will not update the Testing FAQ document at this time.

“NH now allows indoor dining without the previous 6’ distance requirement if protective dividers are utilized. The Health Department has requested further information on the science behind this decision and awaits a reply. The HSC recognizes and appreciates the urgency felt by restauranteurs as outdoor dining becomes impossible. We do not take a position on this matter at this time other than to simply suggest that each business review and consider the [state guidelines](#) and make a decision based upon individual circumstances. Airflow should not be impeded by these dividers per the new guidance, and as emphasized by James.

“Several ‘activity rankings’ for public posting were reviewed by the subcommittee, with a discussion of the pros and cons of each. A decision was made to bring the “TexasMed Activity Risk Chart” to the Task Force for review, and to propose public posting on the City website. Following a discussion with several CRTF members voicing concerns, the proposal was not moved forward. The topic will go back to the subcommittee for discussion of those concerns as listed below.

- Risk categorization should be in context (more relevant to scope and scale of local activities, with reference to variabilities such as size of group etc.)
- Does not account for variety in venues (e.g. sold out concert in a large venue vs half capacity at our Music Hall; adaptations taken by local business such as ventilation upgrade at Music Hall)
- Posting such a table may be overstepping the charge to the CRTF to “help open the city”
- Too vague, too broad
- Texas not fully relevant to Portsmouth
- Request/suggestion for a Portsmouth specific adaptation”

Mark Stebbins: I wonder if we are overstepping the bounds of our Charter. Maybe we are going too far based on what our charge is.

James Petersen: We are gathering as much information as we can. There is a role for the Health Committee to look for any ways we can to help our restaurant workers not get sick so they can go to work. That is how we are tied into the Charter.

Ann Birner continued reviewing the Health Committee report. “The weekly dashboard was quickly reviewed. NH weekly/rolling cases trend is down per JHU but the state data show a very recent uptick. ME is stable. Recent MA data from JHU show a favorable rolling average percent positivity of 0.6% but, as of today, the daily positivity is 3%. Boston’s Mayor Walsh just announced the city will not move forward in the next step of reopening and in fact is likely to soon be placed into a high-risk category. Will continue to

watch and recommend vigilance. Portsmouth cases continue to be relatively low at less than 5.” *Ann Birner submitted this report to the minutes.*

Streets/Fall/Winter Subcommittee

Mark Stebbins: There is no new activity on the streets. We asked a number of restaurateurs to form a committee to give us advice about what more the Streets Committee can do to help restaurants through the winter.

Bridge St. Lot Subcommittee Report

Andrew Bagley: We are getting a quote this Friday on moving sheds to a local storage area, which is yet to be determined. [Mark Stebbins: I think we could find you a place in a parking lot or a gravel-based area in Portsmouth to store those.]

Andrew Bagley: Not only do we need to move the sheds, we need to schedule with a rigging company to move the sheds. We will have to get permits to move a wide load. That increases the cost and the complexity of the move. The shed moving will be well over \$10,000. We will load the restaurant equipment into the sheds and shrink-wrap the sheds in plastic.

Laura Brown: We are raising money with a raffle. The prize will be \$2,000 in downtown gift cards. Google PopUpNH to find the link.

Andrew: The PopUp generated over \$200,000 worth of direct economic activity.

Other Business

Valerie Rochon: During the Chamber’s annual awards event, the Powerhouse Pandemic award was presented to the City Manager, Karen Conard, and the entire staff of the City of Portsmouth.

In her award letter to Karen Conard, Valerie wrote, “Your leadership, and that of your senior staff, and the managers and staff of every City Department, even the Easter Bunny, have been role models for the CAN-DO attitude that has kept many of our businesses and organizations, especially those in the arts and hospitably, IN business since March.” The letter continued. “Working in collaboration with the City Council, the Clipper Strong Fund, the Citizens Response Task Force, and the Design Alliance, you and your team have, quite simply MADE IT HAPPEN.”

City Manager Karen Conard and the DPW Director Peter Rice closed the meeting by thanking and praising the Task Force for meeting the challenge with their personal time and efforts—a tribute to the spirit of Portsmouth.

- Motion: Russ Grazier moved to adjourn. Valerie Rochon seconded the motion, which passed unanimously. The time was 3:00.

Respectfully submitted,
Patience G. Horton