

**MEETING MINUTES OF THE PORTSMOUTH
ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT COMMISSION
October 9, 2020**

Members Present: Bob Marchewka, Chairman; Philip Cohen, Vice Chairman; Assistant Mayor Jim Splaine, Sarah Lachance, Tom Watson, Alan Gold, City Councilor Cliff Lazenby; Dana Levenson; Ron Zolla; Everett Eaton; Katelyn Kwoka
City Staff: City Manager Karen Conard, Economic Development Program Manager Nancy Carmer

Zoom meeting statement

Chairman Marchewka began the meeting by reading the following statement:

Per NH RSA 91-A:2, III (b) the Chair has declared COVID-19 outbreak an emergency and has waived the requirement that a quorum be physically present at the meeting pursuant to the Governor’s Executive Order 2020-04, Section 8, as extended by Executive Order 2020-18, and Emergency Order #12, Section 3. Members will be participating remotely and will identify their location and any person present with them at that location. All votes will be by roll call.

Minutes- Approval of draft meeting minutes of September 10, 2020

Commissioner Gold moved, and Commissioner Lachance seconded a motion to approve the draft meeting minutes of September 10, 2020. Via roll call vote, the motion carried unanimously.

Pandemic Economic Recovery Response

Regional Chambers of Commerce CARES Act Project

Valerie Rochon, President and Chief Collaborator of Greater Portsmouth Chamber Collaborative reported that the six regional seacoast chambers of chambers have received \$2 million in state COVID 19 CARES Act funding. The group includes – in addition to the Greater Portsmouth Chamber Collaborative - Hampton Area Chamber, Greater Dover Chamber, Greater Rochester Chamber, Exeter Chamber of Commerce and The Falls Somersworth Chamber of Commerce, all which had been previously deemed ineligible for CARES Act funding due to their 501©6 tax status. The group submitted a successful application for funds that includes the following six campaigns and programs to assist the collective 2,500 businesses they represent:

1. Seacoast Economic Recovery Program - An economic recovery program to assist businesses in accessing the resources needed for developing an economic recovery plan. (Hampton Chamber)
2. Seacoast Destination Marketing - A destination marketing campaign to rejuvenate business and still consumer confidence in the tourism industry. (Portsmouth Chamber Collaborative)
3. Seacoast Business to Business Plan - A business to business plan to ensure businesses can access the tools and support to successfully recover. (Greater Rochester Chamber)
4. Seacoast Workforce Development Program - A workforce development program in response to COVID 19 impacts on the regional workforce. (Greater Dover Chamber)
5. Seacoast landing Age - Development of a landing page for seacoast businesses dedicated to resources and materials designed to aid in COVID relief and recovery. (The Falls Chamber of Commerce)

6. Seacoast Safe Program - A program designed to support businesses design and implement COVID health and safety guidelines to foster consumer confidence.

The Portsmouth Chamber Collaborative is the lead agency for grant oversight and implementation. All the chambers will be working with and referring businesses to economic development partners and resources at the seacoast and state level to ensure program success and minimize redundancy of efforts. All funds must be spent by December 31, 2020.

The Chair thanked Ms. Rochon for her report and the Assistant Mayor expressed gratitude for the good work it has done in collaboration with the City and the Citizen's Task Force to assist local businesses impacted by the pandemic. He expressed concern that a "state of exhaustion" with the sustained impacts of the virus is evident and it will be important to continue the important work of the Citizen's Response task Force (CRTF) to assist the community through the coming year. He thinks it is important to re-establish the CRTF in collaboration with the EDC to guide the recovery effort and to implement what has been learned from the pandemic experience thus far.

Citizen Response Task Force on Business Reopening- Update and Referral

Commissioners Gold and Lachance reported on the three Task Force subcommittees of on-street dining, Bridge Street Pop-Up NH performance/food venue and the health subcommittee. To date, the group has focused on tactical efforts to support local businesses by acting on requests for use of public space. The City Council is poised to act at its next meeting on extending outdoor dining beyond the current date of October 18th. Consequently, the Task Force is shifting discussions to ideas for "winter thriving" and other strategies to improve indoor dining safety and boost consumer confidence and how to respond to the economic consequences of onset of cold weather in the coming months.

Commissioner Lachance said it will be important to extend the work of the CRTF and use it as an opportunity to be forward thinking about best practices for business and community recovery. She suggested that the EDC send a statement of support to the City Council prior to the November 9th meeting at which it will vote on extending the task force into 2021. Based on positive EDC response, she made a motion to send a statement of support for extending the CRTF to the City Council with language emphasizing continued EDC representation and how the task force goals dovetail with those of the EDC. Motion seconded by Councilor Lazenby. Via roll call vote, the motion carried unanimously. Ms. Carmer will draft and circulate a letter to the City Council for EDC edits/ approval prior to sending to the City Council.

Commissioner Cohen asked if the City has analyzed the financial impact on parking revenues from closing the Bridge Street lot and metered on street parking for al fresco dining and for performances. City Manager Conard reported that 11% of parking spaces were impacted by the closures. When accounting for an increase in parking revenues from displaced parkers at other lots, metered spaces and garages as well as from the boost from the new Stay and Pay options, the net loss through October 15th was estimated to be \$25,000. Commissioner Gold pointed out that this loss may not be solely attributable to closure of the lot and metered space because the pandemic clearly impacted the amount of workers, resident and visitors frequenting the downtown.

Commissioner Cohen said that it would be great to develop an overall parking management strategy that would enable the city to retain the vibrancy that has been created without a detriment to

management plan and city overall. City Manager Conard suggested inviting the Parking Division Director to the next meeting to discuss this topic.

Update Clipper Strong Fund

City Manager Conard and Ms. Carmer reported that approximately 200 care bags were distributed to local businesses and the Advisory Committee launched the Clipper Strong Mini Grant application period. It is currently reviewing applications for grant awards and announcement by November 1st. Use of grant proceeds is flexible and can be applied to offset business expenses/losses related to COVID 19 disruption such as PPE, utility costs, workplace modifications, and rent etc.,. Awards will be made based on receipts for cost reimbursement. No staff from the City or from the fiscal agent Coastal Economic Development Corp. are involved in selecting grantees. Any residual funds left are being contemplated for a marketing campaign to boost business and consumer confidence for local companies.

Other economic recovery initiatives

Ms. Carmer reported on three items:

1. The state's live performance venue relief program - \$12 million of state CARES Act funding has been allocated toward live venues in the state that were unable to open during the pandemic. The City sent notice to all local venues and most have applied for funds.
2. In response to the plight of local manufacturers to find workforce, the Manufacturing Roundtable is planning to host a panel entitled "Hurdles to Hiring" in December with panelists from the state Economic and Labor Market Information Bureau, Workforce Housing Coalition and from a representative from Harmony Homes as a case study of what one local business is doing to assist employees in finding workforce housing. Commissioners Eaton and Kwoka offered to assist in the effort if needed.
3. The SBDC in collaboration with UNH Extension is hosting two 90-minute Business Resiliency webinars on October 21st and October 28th.

Council Representative Report on Upcoming Business that Warrants EDC Attention or Action

Councilor Lazenby spoke to the importance of the City Council extending the Citizen Response Task Force with EDC representation. He also reported that the City Council on October 19th will discuss a supplemental appropriation of \$150,000 for the McIntyre project to be used for gathering additional public input for review and for a redesign of the current plan and presentation at a subsequent public meeting.

Assistant Mayor Splaine repeated his suggestion earlier in the year for joint meeting between the City Council, the EDC and other boards and commissions involved in economic development to discuss "what kind of thrust we should all take to recover economically going forward." He feels that the EDC can provide leadership and insight during this discussion.

Other Business

Discussion on "Re-Boot" of EDC Retreat Initiatives

Under the facilitation of Commissioner Lachance, the EDC reviewed and discussed a plan to diverge from the October 2019 EDC Advocacy Plan to a strategy focused on a shorter term response to the economic impacts from pandemic. The Commission discussed a draft outline of a strategy concentrated on the three "R's" of retention, recovery and resiliency. The thrust will be on

leveraging collaboration between the EDC, local businesses and other economic development partners to capitalize on what we have learned and how we might best apply this experience going forward to benefit the community and local economy.

The strategy is a shift to a member engagement versus committee approach to EDC actions. It allows the Commission to seed and participate in existing workgroups or task forces established by other city boards/entities and provide economic insight and perspective and enables deeper participation in City Council meetings (i.e. attendance, advocacy).

The EDC consensus was to receive a copy of the draft outline in preparation for a two hour EDC retreat at a future EDC meeting to focus on the plan. Staff will work with Commissioner Lachance and Chairman Marchewka on planning the retreat.

Other EDC business

Commissioner Watson informed the EDC of the city effort to reboot the Prescott Park Master Plan through a phased implementation strategy with the goal of reviving the Arts Festival in the future. There will be a series of upcoming public meetings for public engagement on the project.

Public Comment - There were no members of the public present to comment.

Confirm Next Regular Meeting: November 6, 2020 7:30 AM

Adjourn At 8:50 AM City Councilor Lazenby moved and Commissioner Gold seconded a motion to adjourn. Via roll call vote, the motion carried unanimously.

Respectfully submitted,
Nancy Carmer
Economic Development Program Manager