

**MEETING MINUTES OF THE PORTSMOUTH
ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT COMMISSION
February 7, 2020**

Members Present: Bob Marchewka, Chairman; Philip Cohen, Vice Chairman; Sarah Lachance, Tom Watson, Alan Gold, Ron Zolla, City Councilor Cliff Lazenby; Katelyn Kwoka; Everett Eaton Assistant Mayor Splaine

Excused: Dana Levenson

City Staff: City Manager Karen Conard, Economic Development Program Manager Nancy Carmer

Welcome 2020 EDC City Council Representatives Assistant Mayor Splaine

Chairman Marchewka opened the meeting and welcomed Assistant Mayor Splaine as one of the City Council representatives to the EDC.

Approval of draft meeting minutes of January 10, 2020

Commissioner Watson moved and Commissioner Kwoka seconded a motion to approve the draft meeting minutes of January 10, 2020. The motion carried unanimously.

Legislative Action Update/Opportunities

Staff Attorney to the City Council Legislative Subcommittee Jane Ferrini provided a description of the NH legislative season process and the work that the City's is currently undertaking related to the more than 1,000 bills submitted. She summarized several bills that the Committee is working on and mentioned that Assistant Mayor Splaine has testified on in Concord in the past month including the bill to create a local option fee for hotels. Opposition around the current bill is that (as testimony by the Chamber Collaborative of Greater Portsmouth President Rochon points out) does not specify that revenues from the fee must in part go to promote tourism in addition to offsetting local infrastructure and service costs associated with the industry. Other opposition to the bill comes from the campground sector and the NH Hospitality lobby.

Another bill relevant to economic development that is up for consideration focuses on the distribution of the rooms and meals tax and the effort to urge the state to revisit the formula and at the very least, achieve the goal of providing 40% of meals and rooms tax revenues back to NH cities and towns as originally outlined in the legislation.

Assistant Mayor Splaine suggested that a better alternative to legislation in the short term might be to establish a coalition of NH Mayors representing communities and focus on finding common ground to address the myriad of additional cost burdens transferred to localities regardless of whether or not there is a local tourist economy.

Subcommittee Updates

1. Education /Research Subcommittee (EDC members: Cohen, Watson, Levenson, and Lachance)

Commissioner Lachance reported that the subcommittee has met twice and discussed a project that would allow the City to better communicate and visualize the impact of development, capital investment, and residential/commercial tax revenue on the city's budget and property taxes. The goal would be to develop a model that is not a "one-off" effort but rather evolves and could be a tool in the future for the city for conversations within city government and to communicate to residents and business owners.

To that end, Ms. Lachance discovered that UNH offers a dual program in data science and public policy. During a conference call with UNH Professor Bromberg, the subcommittee discussed the goal of jointly collaborating on developing the model envisioned by the subcommittee. Professor Bromberg said there were several options for working collaboratively on the model. The subcommittee needs to further discuss the level of student participation (undergraduate, graduate, research candidate), and define project parameters in order to align with the school calendar.

2. Transportation Planning Subcommittee (EDC members: Watson, Gold, Zolla and Lazenby)

Commissioner Gold reported that the Subcommittee is poised to work jointly with the to-be-determined Parking, Traffic and Safety (PTS) Committee members on this topic. Ms. Carmer reported that she and Planning Director Juliet Walker met with the City Manager to provide the background on the microtransit initiative. Ms. Walker will speak with the Chair of the Parking, Traffic and Safety Committee to discuss the project and PTS joint committee membership.

3. *Advocacy (EDC members: Kwoka,, Lazenby)*

Ms. Kwoka, said that she will be better able to report out at the next meeting when there is a better idea of how the legislative committee work proceeds and how the EDC can align with that group. In general, the subcommittee goal is to support local and state efforts to create and maintain workforce housing and better define the EDC's process for determining advocacy opportunities around that and other goals. Councilor Lazenby agreed and added that he envisions the actions of the advocacy subcommittee will tie into the work of the research subcommittee.

Council Representative Report Out on upcoming business that warrants EDC attention or action

1. *McIntyre Redevelopment*

Councilor Lazenby reported that action by the City Council to deny the draft ground lease with the City's development partner Redgate/Kane will be the topic of an upcoming non-public meeting. At the meeting he expects the Council to hear from the city's attorneys as there is a risk of litigation if the denial is not overturned within 30 days. Assistant Mayor Splaine agreed with Councilor Lazenby's synopsis and the desire to "proceed with caution." He noted that he feels that there is a pathway to negotiate and find a compromise.

2. *City Councilor Kennedy request for EDC to review activities to assist small businesses*

Councilor Kennedy submitted a list of questions she heard on the campaign trail to the Mayor and requested responses. The questions cover a variety of issues and City staff from the appropriate departments are providing written responses. One of the questions is, "What does our city do to support small business to make sure we have a vibrant community?" Ms. Carmer will draft the response regarding small business and asked if the EDC wished to contribute. Commissioners Marchewka, Cohen and Gold will assist. Assistant Mayor Splaine suggested that the response focus on microenterprise assistance and outreach.

3. *EDC presentation at future City Council meeting*

Chairman Marchewka said he and Vice-Chairman Cohen wish to address the City Council on behalf of the EDC to provide a brief presentation on EDC initiatives and its willingness to be a resource for the Council and residents on issues related to economic development. Following that presentation, the Council representatives to the EDC can report out on an on-going basis when appropriate. Councilor Lazenby added that he thinks this idea provides an opportunity for the City Councilors to think of the EDC as a resource for things that come before them just as they do the Planning Board and DPW departments. Vice-Chairman Cohen said the hope is to open lines of communication between the two entities and the community.

Commissioner Zolla thinks that Councilor Kennedy's questions can be a catalyst for a cooperative dialog around a project that could lead to policies such as how to assist small business. Commissioner Watson said that in addition to the short-term response to Councilor Kennedy's questions, the EDC might consider surveying small business to assess their needs to be successful. Other members suggested rather than another survey on the heels of the recent business expansion and retention surveys, the EDC could consider targeted focus groups on the challenges raised in the (BR&E) report. City Manager Conard suggested framing an "ask" to the entire City Councilor specifically what they wish the EDC to focus on to support small business.

Other Business

1. *Central Business District Economic Revitalization Zone*

Ms. Carmer informed the EDC that the State of NH Division of Business and Economic Affairs approved the City's request to expand the Central Business District Economic Revitalization Zone. There are two interested

companies located in the expanded zone wishing to take advantage of the program. A press release will be drafted and the website will be updated to inform stakeholders.

2. *Zoning Amendment reporting/Information*

The EDC would like to receive copies of proposed zoning amendments with potential economic development impacts to determine if there is advocacy role for the EDC.

Public Comment

David Choate of Colliers International Commercial Real Estate spoke on the topic of the Housing Appeals Board, HB 1632 relative to Housing Opportunity Zones, and HB 1629 relative to Training for Land Use Boards.

Chamber Collaborative of Greater Portsmouth President Valerie Rochon distributed copies and spoke about the Collaborative's response to the City Council regarding Councilor Kennedy's comment on the Chamber's lack of support for small business. She also offered to provide any information the EDC might request in working with the Council on small business support.

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

Adjourn The meeting adjourned at 9:15 AM.

Respectfully submitted,
Nancy Carmer
Economic Development Program Manager