

City of Portsmouth, New Hampshire
Portsmouth Citizen Response Task Force
Remote meeting via Zoom
Meeting Minutes for Wednesday, June 10, 2020; 2:00 P.M.

Call to Order; Roll Call; Determination of Quorum (the requirement of a quorum was waived per Governor's Executive Order 2020-04, Section 8)

Jessica Griffin was the Zoom host. City Manager Karen Conard represented staff and was the moderator. Co-Chair James Petersen called the meeting to order at 2:00. A roll call was not given. These task force members were present.

1. Valerie Rochon, President of Chamber Collaborative of Greater Portsmouth
2. Deb Anthony, Non-profit representing the Arts Community
3. Russ Grazier, Non-profit representing the Arts Community
4. Kathryn Lynch, Non-profit representing Health Care Organizations
5. Mary Morin, Non-profit representing Health Care Organizations
6. Dr. Bianca Monteiro, representing Health Care Professionals
7. Ann Birner, representing Health Care Professionals
8. John Golumb, representing Restaurants
9. Jeffrey Goss, representing Restaurants
10. Karen Bouffard, representing Retail Businesses
11. Jim Lee, representing Retail Businesses
12. Samantha Finigan, representing Retail Businesses
13. Mark Stebbins, representing Hotel Industries
14. James Petersen, engineer, representing Hotel Industry
15. Senator Martha Fuller Clark, Citizen-at-large
16. Nathan Moss, Citizen-at-large
17. Sarah Lachance, representing Economic Development Commission
18. Alan Gold, representing Economic Development Commission
19. Kim McNamara, City Staff, Health Officer

Joe Scarlotto was absent.

Also present were the City's Planning Director Juliet Walker, Fire Chief Todd Germain, DPW Director Peter Rice, Councilor John Tabor, Economic Development Manager Nancy Carmer, Parking and Transportation Engineer Eric Eby, and Public Information Officer Stephanie Seacord. Patience Horton took minutes. The meeting lasted an hour-and-a-half.

- **Approval of the June 9, 2020, Meeting Minutes**

The Meeting Minutes of June 9, 2020, were approved as amended. No roll call was taken.

- **Message from the Co-Chairs**
- **Update from the Public Realm Venus Work Group**

These two agenda items blended into the conversation, parts of which are summarized here.

Kim McNamara, the City Health Officer, said the six-foot distances between people at each table have to be maintained. We do not want to have a spike in the transmission of the virus causing businesses and restaurants to close down again. That would be disastrous, she said.

Jeff Goss described his dire straits. Yesterday he took in \$564 in takeout sales. If you put that amount against the thousands and thousands of dollars in the monthly lease, property taxes and utilities, plus weekly payroll and vendors' charges, it is a disastrous problem, he said. When outdoor dining originally opened up, his takeout business dropped. When 50% indoor dining opens up, revenues will drop even more because he has to bring back more staff, he said.

Senator Clark said that by creating more outdoor dining, we might be causing the restaurants to incur more costs in terms of hiring more staff inside and outside. We might be seeing some businesses close, she said. One impact of that is the loss of property taxes on the City. We need to find ways to assist and keep both our retail businesses and our restaurants solvent until things begin to really pick up, she said.

City Manager Karen Conard said that restaurants are interested in closing downtown parking spaces in the streets to help businesses and restaurants survive. That is what people are eagerly watching this group for, she said.

City Planning Director Juliet Walker said that because too much shutdown would interrupt circulation and jeopardize public safety, closure of the downtown streets should be done on a limited basis.

Karen Conard said that Karen Bouffard had submitted a plan for the reconfiguration of downtown traffic and parking. Another plan has been offered by local business owners Joanna Kelly, Joe Kelly, and Al Flurry. They are being assisted by a group of design professionals led by Bob White.

Discussion of Creation of Subgroups

- A Foundry Garage subgroup will be led by Nate Moss. They will discuss utilization of the top floor of the garage for a performance arts venue, then report

their findings to the task force. Fire Chief Todd Germain said he will tour the group through the facility to point out the challenges of the concept.

- Mark Stebbins said that during this Friday afternoon's meeting, he will lead the task force through the plans for street closure and use of downtown public space.

Next meetings

Friday, June 12, 2020

8:30 A.M. Foundry Garage Group (reviewing Market Square Day plans, too)
2:30 P.M. General Task Force plus extended staff

- Chair James Peterson dismissed the meeting adding that the object of Friday afternoon's meetings will be to get deliverable comments prepared for Monday evening's City Council meeting.

Adjourn

The meeting ended at 3:30 P.M.

Respectfully submitted,
PG Horton