



**Blue Ribbon Committee to Reopen Portsmouth 2021
City of Portsmouth, New Hampshire
Remote meeting via Zoom – February 10, 2021 – 2:00 p.m.**

CALL TO ORDER:

Co-Chair James Petersen called the meeting to order at 2:00 p.m. and read the following declaration:

Per NH RSA 91-A:2, III (b) the Chair has declared the 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 2021-01, and Emergency Order numbers 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.

ROLL CALL of MEMBERS:

Voting Members Present: Co-Chairs James Petersen and Mark Stebbins; Alan Gold, Ann Birner, Anne Weidman, Deborah Anthony, Jeff Goss, Jim Lee, John Akar, John Golumb, Karen Bouffard, Kathie Lynch, Valerie Rochon, City Manager Karen Conard, City Health Officer Kim McNamara.

Non-voting Member Present: Councilor Petra Huda.

Voting Members Absent: Bianca Monteiro, Sen. Martha Fuller Clark.

Other City Staff Present: Jessica Griffin, Marian Steimke, Nancy Carmer.

Others Present: Andrew Bagley, Ben Van Camp, Cliff Lazenby, Wm. North Sturtevant.

WELCOME AND APPROVAL OF 2/3/2021 MEETING MINUTES:

Ann Birner moved to approve the minutes of the 2/3/2021 meeting, seconded by City Manager Conard. On a roll call vote of 13-0 with 2 abstentions, the minutes were approved.

HEALTH UPDATE – Kathie Lynch

Kathie Lynch shared the COVID-19 dashboard of 2/8/21. She discussed case counts and positivity rates were higher than in November. Almost 9% of the NH population has gotten the first dose. FAQs were updated to include double masking. They continue to monitor numbers post super bowl. She noted a decline in cases is due to being beyond the holiday season and it does not appear to be related to vaccinations.

The role of vaccine is to prevent disease not prevent transmission – that would require additional study. Double masking is important to catch up to strains and variants of the disease.

CITY UPDATE – Karen Conard

The City Manager gave two updates. The Council voted to waive the permitting fees and formally acknowledged modifications in order to help people be permitted in the outdoor realm. The 10 picnic tables were being put together, and it would be best to coordinate with restaurants that may not have accessible outdoor space so they could utilize these tables.

RESTAURANTS & RETAIL UPDATE – Valerie Rochon

Without restaurants being open there have been drop-offs in other businesses. We'll see more people getting out and about after getting vaccinated. Shops looking forward to spring.

Kim said permitting has opened up for some types of structures. As of the following day, Portsmouth restaurants can start applying for outdoor igloo style dining spaces. Those present discussed informing people to still wear masks even after getting vaccinated. Councilor Huda asked about enforcement on igloos and picnic tables about gathering spaces. Kim said they were cautious about that, and if there was an issue, they can take a look. Kim said people will be under the control of the restaurants who are pretty savvy about their patrons. People will be tending to be cautious.

John Golumb said he never saw any issue with people congregating at the three city tables on the waterfront which have been there over 10 years. He's confident in what Karen C. and Kim are proposing.

Anne Weidman said the restaurant group did not consider the alternates to the jersey barriers because barriers are the affordable option. Businesses all said they want the barriers uniform. They really did not want art. The group asked if they could just be a nice color so the focus is on the restaurants and people and not on the art, but maybe a gradient of color. They discussed challenges with softening their spaces with plants and would consider planters that straddle the top of a barrier. The group discussed money for paint for the barriers, unifying barriers and identifying the money for that. Valerie discussed graffiti. Parklets got interest but they will be too expensive to put into place. They mentioned fundraising. Restaurants want barriers painted; barriers to be pretty; something simple and uniform; they don't want to see eye pollution and distractions from the business.

Chair James wanted to discuss a plan to move forward from this point.

Karen C. said there was a remaining balance in the approved money for efforts in the outdoor realm – last year they spent in the \$48,000 - \$50,000 range, but they need to bring any requests to the City Council.

EDC UPDATE – Alan / Nancy

Alan mentioned an RFP document from DOT specific to barriers that could be modified and used for a call out to the community for barrier design ideas. He suggested a small review group to rate the submissions. Those present discussed needing a budget to be associated with an RFP before it can be released, and then proposing it to the Council. They would need to have brushes ready by April 22nd. Alan talked about barrier logistics, placement and working with the City. Those present discussed painting barriers indoors versus positioning them first; and using workforce or high school tech-education students for painting barriers. Alan mentioned the previous week's retreat, and that the EDC offered to convene a session with the various committees to begin sharing information in a more organized way, which will be discussed at the next EDC meeting.

Nancy Carmer added it would be representatives of each committee and said we are looking long term too. She mentioned understanding the measures of success, looking at outcomes, City practices and being more creative and innovative. They had discussions about the vulnerabilities of the hard-hit businesses, the public service safety net, and getting feedback on a more regular basis. She mentioned the unknowns of the commercial real estate market.

STREETS – Mark

Mark asked if permits have been applied for. Karen C. said 11 restaurants had already reached out. A local engineer is volunteering his time with CAD design for layout. A second person is helping with accessibility.

PUBLIC COMMENT

There was no one from the public that wished to speak.

ADJOURN

Valerie Rochon moved to adjourn, seconded by John Golumb. On a roll call vote 14-0 the motion passed and the meeting adjourned at 2:56 p.m.

Respectfully Submitted – by Marian Steimke