



**Blue Ribbon Committee to Reopen Portsmouth 2021
City of Portsmouth, New Hampshire
Remote meeting via Zoom – February 17, 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 number 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, Jim Lee, John Akar, John Golumb, Karen Bouffard, Kathie Lynch, Sen. Martha Fuller Clark, Valerie Rochon, Nancy Carner for Karen Conard, Kristin Shaw for Health Officer Kim McNamara.

Non-voting Member Present: Councilor Petra Huda.

Voting Members Absent: Bianca Monteiro, Jeff Goss.

Other City Staff Present: Jessica Griffin, Marian Steimke, and Stephanie Seacord.

Others Present: Alexandra O'Keefe, Andrew Bagley, Ben Vancamp, Helen Crowe, Jeffrey McMenemy, Laura Brown, Richard DiPentima.

WELCOME AND APPROVAL OF 2/10/2021 MEETING MINUTES:

Kathie Lynch moved to approve the minutes of the 2/10/2021 meeting, seconded by Jim Lee. On a roll call vote of 13 in favor with 2 abstentions, the minutes were approved.

HEALTH UPDATE

Kathie Lynch shared her screen for the 2/15/2021 dashboard. Positivity in NH has dropped down, but numbers can fluctuate day to day. She said case numbers are coming down; expressed concern about the number of cases at UNH, and said vaccinations continue with almost 11% of NH residents

having been vaccinated. She expressed concern about the UK variant and stressed double masking, distancing and hand washing. Kathie said forecast on number of people vaccinated by end of May depends on new vaccines coming out, vaccine availability, and delivery systems.

Rich DePentima said NH is 47th in the country on being vaccinated and expressed concern that NH is holding back on the second dose.

CITY UPDATE – Nancy Carmer in for Karen Conard stated there was nothing new to report.

RESTAURANTS & RETAIL UPDATE – Valerie

Valerie gave a quick update. She solicited 3 business from each of the 9 industries, received information from 6 or 7 of the 9, and gave feedback. In general they are down 26 & 55% over last year for all industry segments. She stated commercial real estate is up, people are staying local and businesses need clear reasonable guidance on reopening. She read some responses. This information is from Chamber members, but they are businesses of different sizes. The business segments include retail, lodging, real estate, and restaurants.

NON-PROFIT SUPPORT Deb w/ guest Helen Crowe, Take out Hunger

Deb introduced Helen Crowe who discussed the launching of “Take Out Hunger”, addressed some concerns, and mentioned similar models in the country. She said they pay restaurants \$10 per meal which gives restaurants \$5 per meal. She said they pair a restaurant with a local nonprofit and fund raise the money to pay the restaurants. They started in January serving 400 meals per month in Portsmouth, and they are up to 12 restaurants and 9 nonprofits serving 650 meals per week. She would like to keep this program running through May, and beyond that will be based on need. She spoke about funding for states and municipalities for addressing food insecurity.

Helen said the restaurant and nonprofit work delivery out, signing an agreement in advance, so they are clear on the number of meals that will be delivered. The agreement is for 4 weeks at a time.

Nancy Carmer asked about breakdown of money. Helen said several of them pooled money to get started. They got press coverage and some large donors and corporate sponsors from that, but the majority is from individual donors at this point. www.Takeouthunger.org is the website. Gather is the fiscal agent and they have been fantastic, Helen said. She added that if they got a larger grant, it would allow them to grow.

STREETS – Mark

Alan reported they are making progress in understanding options and moving forward. At the prior week’s restaurant meeting, the consensus is parklets would be lovely, but funding was uncertain. They also would like to keep it classy but keep it simple. They expressed desire to paint barrier insides facing the customer. He said they have a rough cost estimate for getting them painted, but they are still sorting details of execution. He discussed how might beautification be determined and a need to balance ideas.

Chair Mark said he would love to have City Council give some money for the project.

Those present discussed painting and temperatures, with a strong push to not go past April 1st, as there will be large pushback from our restaurants

Karen B. suggested a direction and not getting bogged down with designs.

Those present discussed looking for volunteers to spray paint barriers.

Councilor Huda said any proposal needs to go through the channels.

PUBLIC COMMENT

Andrew Bagley discussed barriers and water barriers and said it would be advantageous to beautify the barriers in front of Commercial Alley as they were the most prominent and the ugliest.

Rich DiPentima mentioned reaching out to NH Art Association who may be willing to do artwork on barriers.

Alan discussed the challenge of snow removal if we get a lot of snow in March. We may have to go to a plan B. Barriers have to go down regardless of what they look like. John Akar appreciates everything being done and expressed concern with May being the best time to paint and painting them offsite. The group confirmed that if it is after April 1st, barriers are going on the street. John Akar said it is understood if we get 3' of snow that it is what it is.

ADJOURN

Jim Lee moved to adjourn, seconded by Karen Bouffard. On a roll call vote 15-0, the motion passed and the meeting adjourned at 2:57 p.m.

Respectfully Submitted – by Marian Steimke