



**Blue Ribbon Committee to Reopen Portsmouth 2021
City of Portsmouth, New Hampshire
Remote meeting via Zoom – February 3, 2021 – 2:00 p.m.**

CALL TO ORDER:

Co-Chair Mark Stebbins called the meeting to order at 2:00 p.m. and Kathie Lynch 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 #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-Chair Mark Stebbins; Alan Gold, Anne Weidman, Bianca Monteiro, Deborah Anthony, Jeff Goss, Jim Lee, John Akar, John Golumb, Karen Bouffard, Kathie Lynch, Sen. Martha Fuller Clark, Valerie Rochon, City Manager Karen Conard, City Health Officer Kim McNamara.

Non-voting Member Present: Councilor Petra Huda.

Voting Members Absent: Ann Birner.

Other City Staff Present: Jessica Griffin, Kristin Shaw, Marian Steimke, Peter Rice, Stephanie Seacord.

Others Present: Andrew Bagley, Jeffrey McMenemy, Kathy Beebe, Wm. North Sturtevant.

WELCOME AND APPROVAL OF 1/27/2021 MEETING MINUTES:

Valerie Rochon moved to approve the minutes of the 1/27/2021 meeting, seconded by Karen Conard.

Discussion: Valerie wanted to change her statement on Page 3 re: an offer to assist in design work, saying she misspoke, and it is not Bob White. Bob White should not be contacted to assist with pro bono work. The corrected minutes should instead state “Valerie will send an email to the restaurant community to let them know who can assist with design work”.

On a roll call vote of 15-0 the minutes as corrected were approved.

HEALTH UPDATE

Kathie Lynch shared the COVID-19 dashboard of 2/1/21. She pointed out that positivity rate and Hospitalizations are trending down. She warned of the concern of a potential COVID-19 Hurricane (where we would now be in the “eye”). She is hopeful about the continued roll out of the vaccine, protection and social distancing measures. She said they have updated the FAQ to address post-COVID concerns. She discussed support for service workers.

NON-PROFITS – How can we help?-Deb with guest Kathy Beebe, Haven

Deb Anthony introduced Kathy Beebe of Haven. Kathy B. said COVID shined a light on domestic violence. The need is intensified with folks requiring additional shelter. Haven has always had a small shelter and COVID made it smaller. Addressing additional needs results in additional costs: use of hotels. Haven has been working with landlords in the community to get folks into homes. Haven received a federal grant which will help subsidize some of those rents. They do a lot of work in the schools focusing on prevention. With virtual programming, they must be careful when these go into the home. They instituted a chat feature on the website. She said if anyone knows anyone with property, there is the need for safe shelter for people fleeing abuse. The Haven locations are in Portsmouth, Rochester and Epping. Haven teamed with Dover Housing who are building six units at Haven at the Falls. She said they were able to use some CDBG funds, and through the Executive Order, Haven received funds that were able to be used on the hotel funds to house clients.

STREETS

Valerie’s report on restaurant/retail input: Valerie attended a tourism committee meeting consisting of the community. While still confined by capacity levels, they are all looking positively toward the summer. There is hope that more folks are getting vaccinated than filing for unemployment claims. What is needed is more people coming into town.

She said the Hit the Decks outreach will be five days this year, she mentioned Restaurant week, and said they have sponsors, and will be doing some marketing. They are very excited about the barriers and want to work with artists to do a classy representation of Portsmouth. She discussed feedback from restaurants on takeout versus dine-in. She discussed collecting metrics, and this will inform decisions the group can make.

Anne Weidman’s ideas on barrier beautification: She raised the five topics she previously shared last week. She discussed ADA language, compliance and her interactions with the ADA. She mentioned the aesthetics and functionality piece.

Karen Conard / Peter Rice response to Anne’s 1/27 Ideas: The City Manager said the staff like the Savannah platforms and parklets. Staff would be amenable to jersey barriers in certain locations. Peter Rice mentioned points of conflict of platforms and parklets being leading edges and turning areas. He estimated early April to get barriers on the street after being painted. City Manager Conard said Melrose, MA has information on a kit for parklets. She spoke with Andover, MA regarding weighted planters, and she has the information regarding those. This information can be communicated through the online permit system.

Those present next discussed decorating, with BRC being the coordination – not the artistic – arm. Data on repetitive patterns indicate they cause less distractions to drivers. They discussed details and examples of an RFP to artists.

The City Manager said there could be policy decisions made to allow a more permanent situation, and this could inform the potential investments from business owners. She suggested the Market Square Reimagining process for this year, which already had funding. The 10 accessible picnic tables would be put in place the following week. She discussed the Arts committee and said more information to possibly be announced at the next Council meeting.

Chair Mark proposed the issue of making the permitting process for outside dining free again. The City Manager said Councilor Tabor will have under his name consideration of waiving fees and staff plans to mention potential modifications to the existing sidewalk license policy requirements. Chair Mark will write a letter to Council saying the BRC is fully behind this.

PUBLIC COMMENT

There were no members of the public that wished to speak.

MINUTE-TAKER/SECRETARY

City Manager Conard asked for volunteers to be a minute taker, taking skeletal, bare-bones minutes. Marian Steimke will continue until a replacement can be found.

John Akar moved to adjourn, seconded by John Golumb. On a roll call vote 15-0, the motion passed and the meeting adjourned at 2:51 p.m.

Respectfully Submitted – by Marian Steimke