

**MEETING MINUTES OF THE PORTSMOUTH  
ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT COMMISSION**

July 9, 2021 8:00 AM

Location: Carey Cottage, 400 Little Harbor Rd., Portsmouth, NH

**Members Present:** Bob Marchewka, Chairman; Philip Cohen, Vice Chairman; Tom Watson, City Councilor Cliff Lazenby; Dana Levenson, Alan Gold, Assistant Mayor Jim Splaine, Everett Eaton; Ron Zolla

**Excused:** Katelyn Kwoka, Sarah Lachance

**City Staff:** City Manager Karen Conard, Economic Development Program Manager Nancy Carmer, and Assistant City Attorney Jane Ferrini

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Chairman Marchewka called the meeting to order at 8:10 AM and thanked Carey Cottage CEO Molly Hodgson for hosting the meeting at the beautifully renovated non-profit incubator and co-working facility. Ms. Hodgson welcomed the group and gave an overview of the facility's programming.

Minutes

Chairman Marchewka asked for a motion to approve the draft meeting minutes of June 4, 2021. Motion made by Commissioner Cohen, seconded by Councilor Cliff Lazenby. Motion passed unanimously.

Presentation and Discussion on American Rescue Plan Act

Assistant City Attorney Jane Ferrini provided an overview of the municipal funds available from the US Treasury under the new American Rescue Plan. Portsmouth is considered a Metropolitan City under the Act by virtue of its status as a Community Development Block Grant recipient. This means it will receive funds directly from the US Treasury versus non Metropolitan Cities in the state which will receive their funds from the state. Portsmouth's share of the funds is \$12.9 million to be distributed in two equal payments in 2021 and 2022. The 2021 tranche has already been received and the City is in the process of reviewing the funding regulations and determining the best use of the funding.

The Treasury intends for the fiscal relief funds to be an "efficient and effective way to mitigate declines in jobs and output during the COVID 19 pandemic." The purpose is to stimulate the economy and bolster community recovery. The Act requires funds to be allocated by December 31, 2024 and expended by December 31, 2026.

Attorney Ferrini reviewed the various areas that the funds can be used including:

- Supporting urgent COVID-19 response efforts to continue to decrease the spread of the virus;
- Replacing lost public sector revenue to strengthen support for vital public services and retain jobs;
- Supporting immediate economic stabilization for households and businesses; and
- Addressing systemic public health and economic challenges that have contributed to the unequal impact of the pandemic on certain populations.

The Act requires public input, documentation of need and adherence to guidelines with scheduled reporting requirements throughout the planning and implementation process. City Manager Conard said that the Mayor is planning to establish an ARPA Evaluation Committee consisting of representative City Councilors, staff and residents to assist in determining the best use of the ARPA

funds. She will be making recommendations to the Mayor on participants and intends to include an EDC member on that list.

The EDC noted that this is a rare and challenging opportunity to assist the less fortunate and those most impacted by the pandemic. From an economic development perspective, it is an opportunity to possibly create a workforce housing as well as more accessible and affordable childcare and a revolving loan/grant program that would yield enduring benefit and economic vitality to the city and its business community.

Assistant Mayor Splaine believes it is important for the City Council to hear from a broad range of groups like the EDC and other city residents about creative uses of the funds. He believes that there are many people and businesses with needs that could be alleviated with ARPA funding and their voice is important in the decision making process.

City Councilor Lazenby believes that an EDC member should definitely serve on the evaluation Committee and moved that a letter be sent to the Mayor and City Council respectfully requesting an EDC member be appointed to the Committee. The motion was seconded by Commissioner Zolla and passed by unanimous vote.

Discussion on Business Expansion/Retention – deferred to the August 6, 2021 meeting

EDC Policy on Private Project Advocacy

The EDC reviewed a draft Private Project Advocacy Policy in response to the recent request for the EDC to advocate on behalf of Jimmy's on Congress for five parking spaces. Discussion on the policy centered on the conflict for the EDC to advocate for private projects that are in the process of city land use review or are under review by the City legal department. As an advisory committee to the City Council, members noted that the Commission's role is to advocate and respond to the City Council requests and to develop programs/opportunities that enhance business prosperity and community economic vitality. Historically, EDC advocacy has been for City initiatives such as the need for a second parking garage and promotion of professional office for the McIntyre versus a hotel use. In other situations, the EDC has not advocated for a land use board to approve a project. The Commission debated the need for a policy versus the ability to manage agenda requests for advocacy. Commissioner Zolla offered to provide edits to the policy language before a final decision is made.

Confirm Next Regular Meeting: August 6, 2021

The EDC adjourned for a tour of Carey Cottage and the GoodWork Seacoast Non-profit Incubator with Co-CEO and Molly Hodgson.

Respectfully submitted,  
Nancy Carmer  
Economic Development Program Manager