

MEETING MINUTES
PORTSMOUTH ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT COMMISSION

April 4, 2003

Sheraton Hotel and Conference Center

7:30 a.m.

Members Present: Tom Ferrini, Chairman; John Hynes, Mark Simpson, Cliff Taylor, Dana Levenson, Edward Hayes, Everett Eaton, Steve Alie, Paul Harvey Sr., John Bohenko, City Manager

Members Absent: Scott Pafford

Chairman Ferrini called the meeting to order and thanked Shari Young, General Manager of Portsmouth Harborside Hotel and Conference Center for providing the meeting room and continental breakfast.

Presentation to Former Chairman Mark Simpson

Chairman Ferrini opened the business meeting by presenting a plaque to Commissioner Simpson acknowledging his service as EDC chair from 1997-2002. Chairman Ferrini highlighted the activities of the EDC during that timeframe and thanked Commissioner Simpson for his capable leadership.

Minutes of March 7, 2003

Commissioner Cliff Taylor moved and Commissioner Levenson seconded the motion to approve the March 7, 2003 meeting minutes as amended. The motion passed unanimously.

Progress Report from Implementation of Cultural Plan

Christine Dwyer, Chair, Portsmouth Arts and Culture Commission updated the Commission on implementation of the Cultural Plan. The new commission has been meeting three times a month since January. Significant progress has been made towards incorporation as a non-profit and establishment of by-laws. The group has met with the Manchester Arts Build Community to learn from Manchester's experience in establishing a cultural commission. Also, a three-year plan has been developed for implementation of the Portsmouth Cultural Plan. Work is currently underway on a website for the organization with the assistance of staff and resources from local businesses Rumbletree and Harbourlight Productions. The website will serve as a directory and a clearinghouse for all arts and cultural activities citywide including ticket sale information.

One initiative currently underway is a space needs study. A subcommittee is working on convening a group of local realtors and developers on May 12, 2003 to discuss opportunities for increasing the availability of affordable studio, performance and gallery space for artists and non-profit cultural organizations. The idea is to curtail the exodus of arts groups and individual artists from Portsmouth due to insufficient space needs.

On the fundraising front, the Arts and Cultural Commission has submitted a grant to the NH State Council on the Arts. Other grants are being sought along with funding from GPCF. Ms. Dwyer thanked the EDC for the \$10,000 allocation of UDAG funds for the upcoming year.

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Chairman Ferrini thanked Ms. Dwyer for the update and expressed his hope that she would return on a regular basis to keep the EDC informed of the Commission's activity as well as to involve the EDC in the organization's initiatives as needed.

Portsmouth Master Plan Economic Development Roundtable Discussion

Rick Taintor of Taintor and Associates and their subcontractor, Bruce Mayberry, were present to summarize their initial findings on Portsmouth's economy and to listen and respond to the Commission's input. Mr. Mayberry told the EDC that the roundtable is an opportunity to discuss economic development priorities and strategies with a ten to twenty-year horizon.

Mr. Mayberry reviewed his observations regarding Portsmouth's demographic profile, the tax structure, local housing inventory, business retention and attraction trends and development rates. He spoke of the high quality of life in the community and its relation to economic development.

What followed was a discussion various economic development topics outlined in the attached summary.

Other Business/Updates

Riverwalk Update- At the request of Commissioner Levenson, Ms. Hayden updated the EDC on the Piscataqua Riverwalk project. Funding for the project has been secured from grants and cash flow from the deck lease between the City and Poco Diablo's restaurant. The length of the walk has been reduced from the original conceptual design due to property ownership issues. The walk is now proposed to begin at the Ferry Landing restaurant and end at a point perpendicular to Chapel Street.

Public Comment Session

No members of the public present wished to comment.

Adjourn Meeting

Next Meeting – May 2nd in conference room A in City Hall.

Future Meetings- In response to an expressed desire to tour additional businesses in the community, the City Manager Bohenko polled the Commission about touring Flextronics and the Emerging Technology Center of the Community Technical College at Pease Tradeport. Commission members encouraged staff to investigate these possibilities and get back to the EDC.

With no other business, the meeting was adjourned at 9:00 AM.

Respectfully submitted,
Nancy M. Carmer
Community Development Program Manager

EDC Master Plan Discussion Notes
April 4, 2003

I. Business Retention/Attraction

A. Factors to Address

- 1) Diversity of Business
- 2) Quality of Business
- 3) Sustainable Businesses
- 4) Parking
- 5) Commute Issues
 - (a) To urban core
 - (b) To outer area
 - (a) Impact of train service
 - (b) To “live here/work here”
- 6) To increase in housing \$
- 7) small business Newburyport vs. Portsmouth
- 8) Tradeport-Pease
- 9) Proximity to University
- 10) Maintain overall high quality of life

II. Land Use Potential

- 1) Vacant land minimal
- 2) Pease build out

III. Opportunities

- 1) Revitalize shopping center outside downtown (i.e. Southgate Plaza)
- 2) Possibility of increasing height limit outside in these areas outside of the CBD – maximize the land to allow preservation of open space elsewhere.
- 3) Infill
- 4) Northern Tier
- 5) Re-development (Islington/ Route 1)
- 6) Employ design review standards in revitalization of these areas to create attractive commercial nodes

IV. Workforce Housing

- 1) Challenge locally
- 2) Regional co-op needed
- 3) Fair share
- 4) Lag in housing has negative impact on economic development potential
- 5) Transportation is a factor – must coordinate with intermodal transportation

V. Downtown

- 1) Sense of scale is critical – can it be greater?
- 2) Maintain Sense of place
- 3) Enhance Ambiance
- 4) Preserve and enhance walkability and pedestrian ease

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- 5) Mixed use
- 6) 1st Floor Retail
- 7) livability/services needed-drug store & grocery store

Design Review Citywide

- a) Via zoning – creates desired visual impact in all parts of city
 Signage (ex. Hilton Head)
 Historic Review vs. Architectural review
- b) Contract zoning-“mini master plan” for specific areas
- c) Site specific
- d) Legal in NH?
- e) Other innovative zoning (overlay districts, performance standards)

Working Waterfront favored

- 1) Issues-
 - a) Dredging
 - b) Size of ship serviced

Commercial Nodes

- 2) Include essential services (retail)
- 3) Reduces traffic to other areas

Transportation Access

- 1) Nuclear City/Satellite concept
- 2) Gateway aesthetics
- 3) Pedestrian
- 4) Vehicular
- 5) Need for wayfinding cohesiveness
- 6) Recreational opportunities with connectivity
- 7) Schools-Bus. Attraction
- 8) Business Retention
- 9) Efficiency of Use
 Downtown-direct other development to outskirts
- 10) Encourage flexibility re: entrepreneur design – let private entities be creative with options
- 11) How? Incentive through zoning

2nd parking garage

- Need it
- Need an attractive one

McIntyre Building- encourage mixed use / incorporate public open space/ public sculpture