

MEETING MINUTES
PORTSMOUTH ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT COMMISSION

February 4, 2005

Conference Room A

7:30 a.m.

Members Present: Dana Levenson, Chairman; Cliff Taylor, William Gladhill, Everett Eaton, John Hynes, Paul Harvey Sr., Scott Pafford, Robin McIntosh, John P. Bohenko; City Manager
Absent: Edward Hayes (excused), Mark Simpson (excused)
Staff present: Nancy Carmer, Economic Development Program Manager

Minutes

Commissioner Taylor moved and Commissioner Hynes seconded the motion to approve the meeting minutes of January 7, 2004 as amended. The motion passed unanimously.

Graffiti Subcommittee Report and Recommendation

Commissioner Cliff Taylor said that the EDC Subcommittee had completed their analysis of the graffiti issue in Portsmouth. He said the group concluded that although Portsmouth has scattered graffiti incidents, it does not appear to be a large problem, but has the potential to become one if there are no reports or response to the incidents. Before turning the floor to David Moore to summarize the report, he thanked Dr. Harvey, William Gladhill and city staff for their work on the report.

Mr. Moore said that before making its recommendations, the graffiti subcommittee consulted with various stakeholders, Police, City department heads, graffiti removal vendors and other cities. The committee felt it was important that the scope of the problem fit the set of recommendations presented to the Economic Development Commission and the City Council.

According to Mr. Moore, the subcommittee's recommendations are a "holistic" approach to the graffiti issue and include three types of recommendations: enforcement, education and awareness, and eradication. For the enforcement component, the report recommends increased police patrols during strategic hours during the spring and summer as well as encouraging the public and businesses to report graffiti cases to police.

For the education and awareness components, the report recommends a public-relations campaign focused on beautification of the City. This would complement the work of the Mayor's Blue Ribbon Committee on Trees and Greenery for its beautification efforts as well as efforts of Art-Speak for its public art focus.

The report also recommends a six-month pilot public/private partnership with the Greater Portsmouth Chamber of Commerce to remove graffiti from privately owned buildings. Specifically, the subcommittee proposal provides property owners with a simple, timely, and low-cost solution to removing graffiti. In conjunction with the Chamber, the City of Portsmouth would retain a local graffiti removal vendor to respond to graffiti removal requests for services. The vendor would be chosen through a competitive request for proposals.

Following Mr. Moore's summary, Commissioner Taylor asked if the subcommittee had additional comments. Commissioner Gladhill feels strongly that the recommendations are an innovative solution and fits the scale of the problem. Ms. Carmer added that if the EDC and City Council accepts the report, the City would bring the initiative to the Downtown Business Association in

March to raise awareness and request the support of the business community. City Manager Bohenko said the next steps would be to accept the report and to bring it to the City Council on February 14th for their acceptance and for authorization to move forward with the recommendations in the report.

Commissioner Taylor moved to accept the report and send it to the City Council. Commissioner Hynes seconded the report. The motion carried unanimously. Chairman Levenson thanked the subcommittee members for their excellent work on the report.

Introduction to Government Affairs Committee (GAC) of Greater Portsmouth Chamber of Commerce

Chamber Board Member Timothy Fortier and Committee Members Jay Levy, Wendy Lull and Steve Alie of Alies Jewelers were present to inform the EDC of the Committee's purpose and work. Mr. Fortier thanked the EDC for the opportunity to attend the meeting and said that the purpose of the GAC is to research legislation pertinent to the region's business community and to work with the local legislative delegation to represent the region's interests. Mr. Fortier said that the delegation is truly the community's silent business partner for government affairs in Concord. He distributed a list of GAC members and the following list of GAC priority issues:

- Portsmouth Naval Shipyard
- Infrastructure /General Sullivan Bridge
- Environment and Quality of Life
- Education and Funding and Reforms
- Affordable and Accessible Health Insurance
- Workforce/Affordable Housing
- Economic Development and Tourism

The GAC meets monthly and has recently culled through over 150 legislative service requests with the goal of distilling the list down to a manageable number of bills to research and follow. He also distributed a list of bills that relate to the priorities highlighted above. When the list is finalized, GAC and businesses representatives will be asked to go to public hearings in Concord to testify for the local business community interests. A group of GAC members is planning a trip to Washington DC on Feb 16-17 to meet with the State representatives.

To assist local businesses understanding of state legislation on priority concern, the Chamber has scheduled a legislative forum on SB 110 and transportation issues for February 7th and a health care summit is scheduled for March 4th. A brief discussion ensued on the topics of SB 110, the General Sullivan Bridge and gambling.

Mr. Fortier invited the EDC to attend the upcoming forums as well as the GAC monthly meetings or to participate by letter writing or by testimony in Concord on bills. Chairman Levenson thanked the GAC representatives for their work and for attending the meeting.

Old Business

Sheraton Hotel & Conference Center Expansion Update - Mr. Bohenko said that environmental, geotechnical surveys and utility relocation work is proceeding on the project. The owner plans on beginning conceptual design review with the Historic District Commission (HDC) in March.

City Council Approval of Parking Impact Fee - The City Council unanimously passed third and final reading of the impact fee amendment in January. The only public comments were in favor of the proposed fee increase.

Seacoast Shipyard Association update and Washington D.C. Trip – Mr. Bohenko reported on his recent trip to Washington with retired Captain McDonough of the Seacoast Shipyard Association,

Mark Green, the City Manager of Sanford, Maine; Dick Ingram of the Greater Portsmouth Chamber of Commerce and Joel Stevens, the President of Kennebunk Savings Bank. During the two-day visit they met the Maine and NH delegation representatives as well as with representatives of the Departments of Defense and the Navy.

Mr. Bohenko said that the regional delegation is working very hard to inform the Navy and Defense Departments of the merits of the Kittery Naval Shipyard as they pertain to the eight BRAC evaluation criteria. Most important is the productivity of the Kittery Naval Shipyard, the skilled workforce, the "brain trust" and work ethic that exist at the Shipyard. Of equal importance is the adaptability of the shipyard and the synergies with local rail, Coast Guard and airport facilities.

Mr. Bohenko said that it would be a "terrible irony" if the shipyard was identified for closure given its superior performance, work quality and delivery schedule. He feels a letter writing campaign to the Secretaries of the Navy and Defense is critical to keeping the pressure on the decision-makers to acknowledge the importance of the shipyard to this region. Addresses and information will be provided to anyone interested in writing letters. Ms. Carmer will work with Mr. Levenson to send a letter on behalf of the EDC.

Draft EDC 2005 Action Plan

Ms. Carmer distributed copies of the draft 2005 EDC Action Plan for EDC review. The Plan includes the economic development goals included in the City's draft Master Plan as well a section describing the EDC priorities for this year. The Commission will revisit the Plan for adoption at the March 11, 2005 EDC meeting. In the interim, comments should be directed to Ms. Carmer.

2005/2006 UDAG Budget

Copies of a draft update of the 2005 EDC budget, UDAG program interest earned to date and a draft EDC 2006 budget were distributed. The administration and overhead portion of the 2006 EDC budget reflects a change in that the City's Community Development Block Grant will no longer be carrying 30 percent of the economic development budget administration and overhead costs. Discussion ensued on the current year activities and amounts to be encumbered from the current year to next. Staff will revise the budget to a simpler format for discussion at the March EDC meeting.

Public Comment

There were no people wishing to address the EDC.

Next Meeting

The next meeting is scheduled for March 11, 2005.

With no further business, Commissioner Hynes moved to adjourn the meeting at 9:30 AM. Seconded by Commissioner Taylor. Vote to adjourn is unanimous.

Respectfully submitted,
Nancy M. Carmer
Community Development Program Manager