

**MEETING MINUTES**  
**PORTSMOUTH ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT COMMISSION**

May 6, 2005

Conference Room A

7:30 a.m.

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

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**Minutes**

Commissioner Harvey moved and Commissioner Eaton seconded the motion to approve the meeting minutes of March 11, 2005. The motion passed unanimously.

**Quarterly Reports on Tourism and e-coast activities for the period January 1 – March 30, 2005**

Chamber President Dick Ingram and Marge Hubbard, Tourism Manager and Ginny Griffith, Business Development Manager were present to present the quarterly report for tourism and business development activities. Ms. Hubbard discussed the success of the annual Tourism Summit held at the Wentworth Hotel in New Castle in April as well as the favorable sales mission to Canada. To kick off the tourism season, the Chamber has begun distribution of the 2005 edition of the Guide to the Seacoast. Copies of the Guide were distributed to the EDC members.

Chairman Levenson asked Ms. Hubbard if the higher gasoline prices were negatively impacting tourism. Ms. Hubbard responded that in many ways, the region is at an advantage because compared to Europe, the price for vacationing here is a bargain. Also, for people avoiding inflated airfares Portsmouth is not too far a drive from major population centers. And for Boston residents, the short drive is not costly and the hotel and amenity prices are cheaper than Boston.

Ms. Griffith touched on the business development work of the Chamber in the past quarter. The Mid-Day Meet Program, a networking opportunity event, has been a success and is consistently drawing 20-30 people. She also highlighted the work that the Chamber has done for the Seacoast Shipyard Association (SSA) in anticipation of publication of the Secretary of Navy's list of base closures. The Chamber was instrumental in developing the SSA website and also in soliciting and delivering 10,000 letters that explain the value of the shipyard to the region to the Department of Defense in Washington. Lastly, she summarized the activities of the eCoast including the venture capital awards to local companies Pannaway Technologies (\$17 million) and Nitro Security (\$6.5 million). Mr. Levenson thanked the Chamber representatives for their reports.

**City/Chamber Partnership review-UDAG Budget allocation**

Mr. Ingram gave a brief history of the genesis of the City/Chamber partnership. In the early years of the arrangement there was a major focus on attracting technology companies and on creating a supportive environment for the burgeoning cluster of technology firms cropping up in the Seacoast (eCoast). He traced the evolution of the partnership as the economy changed, noting that the eCoast focus of the partnership changed. There was a shift to retention of the technology companies that survived the economic downturn and to expansion and business development activities for

Portsmouth's entrepreneurial community. Programs such as Big Fish Little Fish, and educational programs such as the Year of Growing Sales were spawned. Finally, he noted the mutual benefits of the partnership and the opportunity it provides for jointly delivering a strong message that Portsmouth is a good place to work, live and grow a business. As much as the Chamber would like to continue the partnership at the \$40,000 level, it is sensitive to current UDAG budget constraints. Therefore, the Chamber is requesting \$35,000 to be allocated as follows: \$5,000 to support the Guide to the Seacoast, \$15,000 to support the Tourism program and \$15,000 to support the Business Development Program.

Ms. Carmer reviewed the discretionary funds available in the UDAG budget (\$49,000) and explained that if the Chamber's request were approved it would leave a balance of \$14,000 in that line item. Commissioner Harvey moved and Mr. Hayes seconded a motion to fund the City/Chamber Partnership in the proportions requested. The motion passed unanimously. Mr. Bohenko said that the recommendation would be brought to the City Council for approval at the May 16, 2005 City Council meeting and welcomed EDC attendance for support.

### **Updates**

#### *Northern Tier Update*

1. Sheraton Hotel & Conference Center Expansion - Project is moving forward and is currently in work sessions with HDC. Next work session is May 11<sup>th</sup> at 7 PM.
2. Hilton Garden Inn Groundbreaking occurred in April.
3. Former Portsmouth Herald site is under agreement. City has had on-going discussion on redevelopment of the site with the buyer. Development concepts are in keeping with Northern Tier Feasibility Study.

#### *Pease Update*

1. Whaleback Software relocation – Relocation of software development company with thirty employees from Salem, NH to Pease.
2. Summer performance series – Tenant Association at Pease is working with the city to host a Friday noontime concert series on four consecutive Fridays in the summer. Concerts will be held across from the Manchester Square retail area.

#### *Save Our Shipyard Rally*

The City Manager, City Councilors, representatives of our local and federal delegation and shipyard workers joined their Maine counterparts in a rally on April 23<sup>rd</sup> at Gate 1 of the Shipyard. Despite the rain, there was a strong and unified message that the shipyard is the best at what it does and that the region and nation benefit from the yard and the Coast Guard dock at the shipyard.

### **New Business**

#### *CEDS Update and Project Identification*

Ms. Carmer summarized the Rockingham County Comprehensive Economic Development Strategy (CEDS) update process, noting that in order to be eligible for future federal EDA funds, the County must update the CEDS and include potential projects for the next five years. The city submitted an infrastructure project for a road off of Route 33 into a potential 16-lot industrial park. Conceptual plans are very preliminary at this stage. The EDC will be kept informed as the CEDS process

### **Federal Home Loan Bank Competition - Student Project Presentation of 361 Hanover Street Artist Live/Work Development**

Four Harvard and MIT graduate school students representing 'Team Angell' in the Federal Home Loan Bank Competition gave a presentation as part of a student exercise to create housing. The team selected a hypothetical mixed-use development off Rock and Hanover Streets for their project. The

conceptual development envisioned affordable live/work space for artists combined with first floor lease space for the Portsmouth Arts and Music School. The students presented their extensive financing proposal for the development as well as the design concept for a landmark building anchoring one end of an Arts Corridor. Included in the proposal was an innovative artist certification program and a complex financing matrix which used tax credits, New Hampshire Housing Finance Authority funding, HUD HOME funds and non-profit lease income. The project was initiated by Art-Speak as part of their efforts to implement the Cultural Plan and to raise awareness about developing this type of space for the City's creative workforce. The EDC thanked and praised the students for their excellent work and the dialogue they created as a result of their efforts.

**Public Comment**

Mr. Choate noted that the Shultz Brewery property off Islington Street has a qualified developer. More information will be forthcoming as the project progresses.

**Next Meeting**

Next EDC Meeting is June 3, 2005.

With no further business, Commissioner Hayes moved to adjourn the meeting at 9:00 AM. Seconded by Commissioner Hynes. Vote to adjourn is unanimous.

Respectfully submitted,  
Nancy M. Carmer  
Community Development Program Manager