

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

June 1, 2007

City Hall Conference Room A

7:30 a.m.

Members Present: Dana Levenson, Chairman; Everett Eaton, Vice-Chairman; Robin McIntosh, William Gladhill, Paul Harvey Sr., Michael Murray, Tom Ferrini, Cliff Taylor, Lisa DeStefano John P. Bohenko; City Manager

Members Excused: Edward Hayes

Members Absent: Ned Raynolds

Staff present: Nancy Carmer, Economic Development Program Manager

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Chairman Levenson opened the meeting at 7:30 a.m.

**Minutes**

Commissioner Gladhill made a motion to accept the minutes of May 4, 2007. Motion was seconded by Commissioner Ferrini and passed unanimously.

**FY 08 Chamber of Commerce Partnership Funding Request**

Chairman Levenson invited Chamber President Dick Ingram to present the proposal for FY 08 funding of the public/private partnership between the city and the Greater Portsmouth Chamber of Commerce. Commissioner DeStefano recused herself from the discussion stating that she is incoming Chair of the Chamber Board of Directors.

Mr. Ingram referenced the written proposal he submitted to the Chairman and explained the increase in funds requested. He said that there has been an expansion of the visitor service center due to the Chamber’s successful destination promotion efforts. The written proposal documents the increase in service requests received. Quite simply there is a need to help defray the cost of this service that the city admittedly is unable to provide in-house. He provided North Conway, NH and Kennebunkport Maine as examples of communities that receive municipal assistance with their visitor service centers. Manchester attempted but ultimately failed to sustain a visitor and convention center due to inadequate funding.

In response to questions about a new facility at the Albacore site on Market Street extension he explained that the original plan was to share a new facility at the site with the United Way. This plan was derailed because of the new road accessing the Route 1 By-pass. However, now that the road is in place they will continue to pursue the site for relocated offices.

In reference to the funding request, Chairman Levenson advised the EDC that there is currently \$63,000 available in discretionary funds in the upcoming budget. He also stated that he personally views the partnership as adding value to the city’s overall economic development efforts and acknowledged the quality work performed by the Tourism Manager and Committee. He proposes funding the request at \$40,000 as a lump sum for promotion of Portsmouth. The quarterly reporting to the EDC would continue under this proposal.

City Manager Bohenko supports the partnership at the level proposed by Chairman Levenson

noting that the partnership is unique, has stood the test of time and provides an important economic development function unduplicated at the city. Commissioner Ferrini concurred as did Commissioner Eaton noting that the Chamber's efforts in the save the shipyard effort were key to its being removed from the base closure list.

Commissioner Taylor moved and Commissioner Harvey seconded the motion to find the Chamber at the \$40,000 from the UDAG discretionary funding line item. The motion carried unanimously with Commissioner DeStefano abstaining.

**Report on Commercial Market - Susanne E. Dailey, Research Analyst, Grubb & Ellis/Coldstream Real Estate Advisors, Inc.**

This agenda items was postponed to a date to be determined due to a last minute cancellation by Ms. Dailey.

**EDC Reports/Updates**

- Copies of the Americans for the Arts Economic Prosperity Study by Art-Speak and the city were distributed and the value of the cultural businesses as a significant contributor to the local economy was discussed.
- The May 2007 Chamber Government Affairs Committee was postponed until June 15, 2007.
- On June 7<sup>th</sup> the Planning Board will hold a public hearing on the Site Review and Subdivision Application for the Westin Hotel/Conference Center/Garage. At the hearing, EDC Vice Chairman Eaton will make a brief presentation on the economic benefits of the public-private partnership for the proposed project.

**EDC Action Plan Projects**

- a) Islington St. Corridor Action Plan – RFPs due June 11<sup>th</sup>  
Ms. Carmer reported that there has been brisk interest in the RFP and the city is looking forward to the deadline to evaluate and select a consultant. EDC participation may be solicited in August depending on the selected consultant's implementation schedule.
- b) I-95 Exit 7 Gateway Improvements – Mr. Bohenko reminded the EDC that there are currently several infrastructure projects underway in the gateway including Exit 7 interchange modifications and sidewalk construction on both sides of the street. The City's Capital Improvement Plan includes \$25,000 in FY 08 for design of improvements to the gateway and \$250,000 in the next two years for construction of improvements. Ms. Carmer provided copies of the RFP Scope of Work for review. The schedule is to send out the RFP in September. EDC participation will be sought during public input sessions and to review of conceptual plans for the improvements.

**Other Business**

- a) *EDC liaison to Downtown Business Association (DBA)*. Ms. Carmer attends the monthly DBA meetings and summarized several initiatives that the DBA is undertaking including Friday Night Lights extended retail hours, a new DBA website, and a potential speakers series. The organization is also developing plans for new Christmas decorations. She

invited members to participate with the DBA, specifically on the potential speaker series for next year. It was suggested that the EDC invite the DBA to an EDC meeting to discuss mutual goals and programming.

- b) The Manager asked if there are two Commissioners willing to serve on the consultant Islington Street Project selection committee. Lisa DeStefano and Michael Murray volunteered.
- c) In addition to holding future EDC meetings off-site at local businesses, Chairman Levenson stated that in planning for future meetings, he and Ms. Carmer have discussed a business retention scheme in which some of the city's top employers would be invited to an EDC meeting to inform members of the businesses' operations and to learn what the city can do to improve the business climate for these valued employers.
- d) Chairman Levenson complimented the city on the excellent work being done on Congress Street and in other parts of the community noting that the downtown "looks terrific."

**Public Comment Period** – David Choate of Coldstream Real Estate Advisors asked that the Nobles Island Executive Committee be invited to the Exit 7 Gateway stakeholder meetings. He also suggested irrigation in the traffic medians if the proposal calls for extensive landscaping. The City Manager cautioned that the city needs to be cognizant of traffic hazards associated with sprinkling near a heavily traveled area so as to avoid creating accident hazards from the spraying water.

**Next Meeting Date** – September 7, 2007

Also, on September 21st there will be a special meeting on the Americans for the Arts Economic Prosperity Study with guest Americans for the Arts representative Randy Cohen.

Respectfully submitted,  
Nancy M. Carmer  
Economic Development Program Manager