

MEETING MINUTES
PORTSMOUTH ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT COMMISSION

September 7, 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., Edward Hayes Tom Ferrini, John P. Bohenko; City Manager
Members Excused: Lisa DeStefano
Members Absent: Michael Murray, Ned Raynolds
Staff present: Nancy Carmer, Economic Development Program Manager

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

Minutes

Commissioner Eaton made a motion to accept the minutes of June 1, 2007. Motion was seconded by Commissioner Ferrini and passed unanimously.

Discussion of ProPortsmouth Funding Request

Chairman Levenson opened the discussion on the request from ProPortsmouth (PP) for city financial support of operations. The request letter states that the organization adds to the city's economic vitality through its events including First Night Portsmouth, Children's Day, Summer in the Street, and Market Square Day and the associated visitor attraction to these events. The organization requests \$5,000 to support staff and \$15,000 to enhance programming.

Questions from the Commission included where the funds would come from, what the current city in-kind costs are for the events, if the organization is part of the Chamber of Commerce and what the guidelines for funding would be. There was clarification of the fact that PP is a separate 501 © 3 organization that pays monthly rent to the Chamber. The City Manager said that the ultimate decision for the funding request will be made by the City Council. He noted that there are numerous events in the city that require street closure. He added that the EDC should probably establish a set a guidelines for such funding requests as others like this one will most likely be submitted. He said the PP program has merit and should be considered seriously by the EDC.

Chairman Levenson said although the proposal is well thought-out, he is concerned that the EDC will now be put in a position to determine which street closure events are worthy of city support and the list of requests will grow. He feels that the Chamber/City partnership and the Art-Speak partnerships are different than the PP because these organizations leverage the money that is provided to them with membership dollars, grants or donations for their respective programs and they compliment the city's economic development program. The city would not likely hire a staff person for event production which is why this request differs from the other partnerships.

After further deliberation the EDC decided to establish a subcommittee to create guidelines for funding requests. Robin McIntosh and Ed Hayes will serve on the committee and bring a recommendation back to the EDC. Ultimately, the goal is for an EDC to make a recommendation to the City Council for action on this and other requests.

EDC Reports/Action Plan and Project Updates

Partnership with HarborCorp LLC on Westin Hotel/Conference Center/Garage

At the August 16th Planning Board meeting, a lot line adjustment application for the project was approved. In other related activity, the Ocean Properties court case on the city bond for the garage is in progress. A decision is expected in thirty days.

Islington St. Corridor Action Plan and Arts District Study Update and Subcommittee meeting schedule

Richardson & Associates of Saco, Maine have been selected to undertake the study. A kick-off meeting was held on August 23, 2007. Lisa DeStefano and Mike Murray are the EDC subcommittee representatives for the project. A project schedule was distributed. Chairman Levenson asked that the press be kept abreast of action on this project. Ms. Carmer will issue a press release on the consultant selection and project schedule.

Exit 7 Gateway Improvements Project

A RFP for this project has been issued and proposals are due October 4th. Anyone wishing to serve on a subcommittee for this project should contact Ms. Carmer.

Chamber of Commerce Search for new President/Vice President

Vice-Chairman Everett Eaton sat on the selection committee for the Chamber positions. There were several qualified applicants and ultimately Doug Bates was selected. Mr. Bates has been the Executive Director for Leadership Seacoast and has previously served on the Chamber Board of Directors as Treasurer. The next step is to hire a Vice-President. There are several qualified applicants from the initial round of interviews for President that will be asked to consider the VP position.

WiFi Project

This past spring the NH Department of Resources and Economic Development (DRED) solicited grant applications statewide for ten \$10,000 Telecom and Telecommunications grants to develop WiFi systems. The Greater Portsmouth Chamber of Commerce in collaboration with the city, local technology businesses and UNH submitted a grant application to expand the city's current free wireless access in the downtown. The Chamber/City received word in August that a \$10,000 grant was awarded.

The objective of this project to expand the existing Chamber of Commerce free Wireless Fidelity (WiFi) spots in the city in collaboration with several partners in the city including the municipality, education institutions and local businesses. In the process, the project will create an opportunity for technology businesses to test their wireless innovations (VOIP, Pod casts. etc.) in a compact city environment.

Cruise Ships

As a result of the success of the tall ship visit of to Portsmouth in July, the City Council recently created an exploratory committee to determine the feasibility of bringing cruise ships to the city

Other Business

Workforce Housing

In keeping with the action plan item on this topic, a letter has been drafted to NH Speaker of the House Terie Norelli requesting a meeting to discuss what might be done on a more regional and state level on this challenging subject matter.

Ms. McIntosh will be attending a workforce housing conference in Lebanon this month to speak on proposals for workforce housing in the Atlantic Heights area. She will report back on in October.

Public Comment Period

David Choate of Coldstream Real Estate Advisors raised the issue of the unintended consequences of the Northern Tier development and specifically the Parade Mall redevelopment (or "Port View" project). Rents in the leasing documents are \$32 per square foot triple net which puts the project leases on par with the highest rents in the city. Despite the fact that the project meets parking regulations, Mr. Choate believes that there will be an ensuing unmet parking demand when the office space is leased and feels that the Worth Parking Lot municipal garage project should be brought back for consideration. He also suggests that public transportation to satellite surface lots should be considered such as Dover, NH employs for workers in the downtown mill buildings.

City Manager Bohenko reminded Mr. Choate that in 2003 the EDC funded a feasibility study for a municipal garage at the Worth Lot and, based on the study results, recommended to the City Council that the garage be built to provide parking for anticipated Northern Tier development. The EDC also supported the trolley system that brings central business district employees to and from downtown to satellite lots. He suggested that Mr. Choate contact the City Council regarding the need for the Worth Lot parking garage.

Next Meeting Dates

- Sept. 21, 2007 , 8:00 -9:00 AM - Special meeting on the Arts and Economic Prosperity Presentation and Report by Randy Cohen of Americans for the Arts
- October 5, 2007- Regular monthly meeting

Respectfully submitted,
Nancy M. Carmer
Economic Development Program Manager