

MEETING MINUTES
PORTSMOUTH ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT COMMISSION

October 5, 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, Lisa DeStefano, , Ned Raynolds, John P. Bohenko; City Manager
Members Absent: Tom Ferrini Michael Murray
Staff present: Nancy Carmer, Economic Development Program Manager

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

Recognition of Cliff Taylor for ten years of service on the EDC

Chairman Levenson thanked Mr. Taylor for his excellent service to the EDC and presented him with a gift clock commemorating his contribution. Mr. Taylor expressed his pleasure at serving and wished the EDC the best in its future work.

Minutes

Draft Meeting Minutes of September 7 and 21, 2007 were unanimously approved following a motion by Commissioner Harvey and second by Commissioner Hayes.

Presentation: Quarterly Reports on Tourism for the period, April 1–September 30, 2007

Nancy Carmer introduced Doug Bates, the new President of Greater Portsmouth Chamber of Commerce to give the quarterly Chamber of Commerce report and update on a search for Vice President/Tourism Manager. He noted that the businesses reported an excellent 2007 summer tourist season. Hotel nights were up 10%, the Chamber tours were up from the previous year as were hits on the Chamber website. Notable travel articles appeared in the *National Geographic Traveler* magazine and *Boston Globe*. Marge Hubbard was been retained to complete the JPP Grant application process.

Parking Update

Jon Frederick, City Parking Manager provided a summary of the following parking topics:

- 1) High Hanover Parking Garage (HHPG) –Currently 622 of the 952 spaces in the garage are leased. The garage filled to capacity 47 times thus far this year compared to 29 times in 2006. Upcoming garage roof and ceiling repairs are being planned and budgeted.
- 2) Pay & Display Meters – On September 6, 2007 the city installed the new pay and display meters and started a pilot program that enables users to use a credit card to pay for the meters. Response thus far has been good.
- 3) Park Magic – The city has started a pilot program that enables users to purchase a transponder and pay for parking remotely using a registered credit card. Testing is ongoing this month with Concord & Manchester. The DBA is soliciting volunteers for the test.
- 4) Parking Committee – the group is meeting soon to discuss snow ban coupons and free December holiday parking.

A discussion ensued about use of self-pay system in the garage. Mr. Frederick noted that the HHPG is not the best place for a self-pay system due to the fact that it has 4 entrances and each self pay station costs \$75,000. At the new Westin garage this will be more appropriate as there is only one entrance and egress location.

Mr. Levenson said that the city needs to stay ahead of the curve on parking demand, be proactive and should be considering a new garage in addition to the Westin Garage. Mr. Bohenko noted that there is 1 million square feet of development in play in the Northern Tier with the Westin, the Portwalk project and the redevelopment of the Portsmouth Herald site. He said that we should wait and see how the 976 Realty lawsuit case is decided and then evaluate the need to revisit the Worth Lot or another location for a garage. Commissioner Eaton noted that there can be protracted time for feasibility and site analysis for parking garages and thinks the city should not wait very long to consider alternatives if the Westin project is delayed by litigation. Commissioner Reynolds said the Worth Lot is problematic because of shading of the Vaughan Mall. The City Manager said maybe it is worthwhile speaking to the developers of Portwalk to see if another level of subgrade parking could be built. Commissioner DeStefano thought it is possible to go down one more level but it would need to be verified by subsurface tests. It was the consensus of the EDC for the City Manager to reach out to the owners of Portwalk to discuss shared parking opportunities.

EDC Reports/Action Plan and Project Updates

Progress Report on Draft Policy for EDC Funding Requests/ProPortsmouth request

Chairman Levenson opened the discussion on the request from ProPortsmouth for city financial support of operations. The Pro Portsmouth 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.

As requested in September, the EDC subcommittee consisting of Robin McIntosh and Ed Hayes brought a policy recommendation back for discussion. Ms. McIntosh summarized the policy which states that the EDC is not a funding entity within the City; however, on rare occasions, the EDC may make recommendations to the City Council to fund efforts or projects which support the goals and mission of the Commission. Funding recommendations to the City Council may be considered for broad based efforts from organizations that:

- augment the City's efforts to attract and retain businesses with specific emphasis on maintaining a diverse economic base, and
- support and educate economic sectors in their entirety within the Portsmouth community to sustain the continued growth and development of these sectors.

The EDC feels that the policy is fair and although it thinks that the ProPortsmouth is a great organization it feels that it should seek funds through the City Council. The City Manager thinks it is a good recommendation since there are many organizations that produce hundreds of events in the city and the EDC is not in a financial position to provide funding for the good work that they all do. On a motion to adopt the policy by Commissioner DeStefano and second by

Commissioner Harvey, the policy was unanimously approved. A copy of the request and the new policy will be sent to the City Council.

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

Richardson & Associates of Saco, Maine have begun the project. Stakeholder meetings were held on September 27th and were well attended. Ms. Carmer distributed a summary of comments to the EDC. The neighborhood stakeholder meeting will be held October 11th at The Pearl and a public input session will be held November 14th at the Library. The EDC is encouraged to attend.

Exit 7 Gateway Improvements Project – Project status/subcommittee participation

A RFP for this project has been issued and 10 proposals were submitted. The staff will develop a short list for consultant interviews next week.

Parking Issues in the Central Business District / New Parking Facility

Discussed under Jon Fredericks presentation.

Public Comment Period

David Choate of Coldstream Real Estate Advisors addressed the EDC and noted that Lodging Econometrics is a local business with expertise in the hospitality industry and may at some point be useful to the Commission.

He also suggested a fee for parkers who pay by credit card. He feels people will pay the surcharge for the convenience of using a credit card. Also, he informed the EDC of the recent Certificate of Need received by NE Rehabilitation Hospital of Salem for potential expansion of services at Pease in a 30,000 square foot building. Finally some larger lease transactions of note in the downtown include the old Police Station and 155 Fleet Street.

The meeting adjourned at 9:00 AM. Next meeting date is November 9, 2007.

Respectfully submitted,
Nancy M. Carmer
Economic Development Program Manager