

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

January 4, 2008

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, Ken Smith, Jack Blalock, Lisa DeStefano, John P. Bohenko; City Manager

Members Absent: Michael Murray

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

**Minutes**

Draft meeting minutes of December 7, 2007 were unanimously approved (Ken Smith and Jack Blalock abstained).

**Presentation: Quarterly Reports on Tourism and Business Development for the period October 1, 2007 - December 31, 2007 by Chamber President Doug Bates, Greater Portsmouth Chamber of Commerce and introduction of new Tourism Manager.**

Chamber President Doug Bates, presented the quarterly report to the Commission. He announced that the Chamber has hired a new Tourism Director. Her name is Nicki Noble. She could not be in attendance because of a prior commitment. The Chamber is currently working on new maps and the *Guide to the Seacoast*. The last printing of 125,000 copies of the *Guide* has all been distributed. The date for the 2008 Tourism Summit has been set for March 12, 2008. He reported that in the hospitality and tourism market, hotel occupancy has been way up but this increase has not been reflected across the board in restaurant activity. Mr. Blalock stated that his restaurant has had a very good season.

**EDC Project Updates**

*Portwalk Underground Parking Opportunity Bond Approval and Next Steps*

Mr. Bohenko stated that the City Council has approved the binding agreement with the Portwalk. The agreement allows for some elements of the arrangement to be negotiated as the project proceeds. The City will operate the parking garage and will own 325 spaces on one underground level and the developer will own 325 spaces on another level. When not in use, the City can sell Portwalk's transient parking spaces. The city's cost for its level of parking will be \$12.5m funded by municipal bonds.

The developer is currently seeking land use permits for the second underground level of parking and is currently before TAC (Technical Advisory Committee) and will go before the Planning Board on January 17, 2008. The City Council can still get out of the contract by January 18, 2008 at no cost or by February 15, 2008 with a \$50,000 fee. If the project costs in excess of \$12.5m, the City will also have the opportunity to opt out of the contract.

Mr. Bohenko provided a summary of how the city accounts for and uses parking revenues. He stated that in the past the parking revenue went into the city's General Fund to reduce property taxes. Now, the revenue is put into a Special Revenue Fund to use specifically for parking operations. In the future, the plan is to put the revenue into an Enterprise Fund dedicated for parking operations. Currently the \$1.4m generated in parking revenue is used to reduce the property tax rate.

*Islington St. Corridor Action Plan and Arts District Study*

Mr. Bohenko stated that the meeting scheduled for January 15, 2008 has been postponed. The consultant has developed three project action scenarios that require additional analysis and staff review. The rescheduled date will be advertised.

Exit 7 Gateway Improvement Project Update on kickoff & stakeholder meeting

Mr. Bohenko said that The Cecil Group has been hired to develop the gateway improvement design. They have completed the existing conditions analysis of the project area and are currently conducting stakeholder meetings. Funds for construction drawings and design implementation have been set aside in the City's Capital Improvement Program over the next two fiscal years.

Westin Public Parking Garage and Conference Center

Mr. Bohenko stated that the Judge in the case has given the City until March 2008 to adjust the agreement with the developer. He is optimistic about a positive resolution.

Woodbury Avenue

The City is looking at traffic calming and is planning a meeting with stakeholders, property owners, and staff. The Council has approved \$1m last year. The project area is Newington to Bartlett Street.

Follow-up to December 2007 Workforce Housing Discussion

Chairman Levenson commented that Nancy Carmer did a great job on the minutes from the discussion of the Workforce Housing meeting and suggested that the EDC report back to the City Council regarding the comments made by Terie Norelli. He suggested they proceed with a follow up letter to the City Council that the EDC stands willing to go forward with workforce housing advocacy.

Mr. Bohenko stated that the Lafayette School project has 10 units of workforce housing before the Technical Advisory Committee and then the plans will be brought before the Planning Board. The Lafayette School lease is \$1 for 99 years, similar to the Cottage Housing Project. The plan has not yet been before the neighborhood group.

**2008 EDC Action Plan Priorities**

Mr. Bohenko suggested that the Commission review the Action Plan and go over it at the next meeting. One action item which Mr. Levenson suggested is for the Commission to meet with the City's largest employers to learn more about operations and address any concerns they may have. Mr. Levenson also suggested that the EDC work with the Downtown Business Association (DBA) to see if there the Commission can do a better job with dialogue between the city and downtown merchants.

Mr. Eaton asked if the Commission could get an update on the Little Bay Bridge Project. Mr. Bohenko stated that he would track down the best person to provide an update.

Mr. Levenson suggested working closely with the Chamber regarding the Action Plan and suggested putting it on the agenda for next month.

**EDC Board Elections**

Mr. Gladhill made a motion, seconded by Mr. Smith to re-elect Mr. Levenson as chair. Motion carried unanimously. Ms. DeStefano made a motion, seconded by Mr. Smith to re-elect Mr. Eaton as vice-chair. Motion carried unanimously.

## New Business

Councilor Dwyer spoke about the Greenstar Project in Alaska regarding sustainability in restaurants (recycling, air quality, collaboration with the community). She said that it would be a good model for municipalities. Mr. Bohenko stated that he would do research on the Greenstar Program and try to interact with the Chamber on this issue. Mr. Bohenko suggested a combined meeting with the Sustainability Committee, with the EDC taking a secondary role.

Mr. Levenson suggested focusing on intermodal transportation (satellite parking, bike lanes, Portwalk Bike Station) as elements that contribute to sustainability. He also suggested making a pedestrian friendly downtown a priority.

David Choate, asked the Commission to consider the Lafayette Road south (from Yoken's to the former Edwards Toyota) as a priority for attention. Perhaps the EDC could engage the business owners in an exchange. This will be further discussed at the February 1<sup>st</sup> meeting.

As an FYI, he stated that the Kentucky Fried Chicken (KFC) on Woodbury Avenue has closed and that Nike Bauer Building is on the market. Also, the Passport Center at Pease is planning an expansion. He added that the residential subprime market is not affecting local commercial activity. Lastly, Mr. Choate suggested that the EDC be proactive on some of the large projects in the land use process such as the Meadowbrook.

Councilor Dwyer spoke about form-based zoning and that the Planning Board is working to address these issues.

The meeting adjourned at 8:45. Next meeting date is February 1, 2008.

Respectfully submitted,

Terry Poulin  
Community Development Department