

MEETING MINUTES
PORTSMOUTH ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT COMMISSION

January 9, 2009

City Hall Conference Room A

7:30 a.m.

Members Present: Dana Levenson, Chairman; Everett Eaton, Vice-Chairman; Jack Blalock, William Gladhill, Tim Allison, Lisa DeStefano, Ken Smith, Susanne Delaney, Josh Cyr
Members Excused: Dr. Paul Harvey

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

Approval of Draft Meeting Minutes of December 5, 2008

Following a motion by Ken Smith and a second by Everett Eaton, the draft meeting minutes of December 5, 2008 were unanimously approved as written.

EDC Project Updates

Islington Street Improvement and Action Plan Update

Capital Improvement Planning for Project - The City Manager stated that at the January 12, 2009 City Council meeting the City Council will vote on a bond for capital projects in the current Capital Improvement Plan. Included in this bond is \$2.5 million in sidewalk improvements. Some of the sidewalks in the Islington Street corridor will be included in the five year sidewalk improvement plan. These sidewalks are in the neighborhoods adjacent to Islington Street and were requested by the public at input sessions.

Schedule for Final Plan Presentation – Ms. Carmer informed Commissioners that the consultants have produced a draft final action plan that is in table and conceptual form and organized by short-, mid-, and long term improvements. Also included in the consultant's deliverables is a draft façade improvement plan that was part of the project Scope of Work. Following the review by City staff of these new draft plans, it is proposed that there be a joint meeting in March of the EDC, City Council, Planning Board, HDC and Art-Speak.

A discussion ensued relative to having the consultant present the plan at the February EDC meeting so that members are informed for the proposed March joint meeting. Also, new members were asked if they wished to join Lisa DeStefano and Dr. Harvey as members of the EDC subcommittee on this project. Mr. Cyr said he is interested if his participation as a new member will not hamper the process.

A question arose regarding whether the plans include proposed zoning amendments. The answer is no as the project was designed to provide the conceptual ideas for the city's planning staff and consultant to propose zoning modifications necessary to implement the plan. It was also suggested that the public and stakeholders be made aware of the joint session of city boards.

Informational Presentation on live/work proposal in study area – Chairman Levenson said that one comment made at the Islington St. Corridor public meeting was the need for more flexible zoning for live/work space. Ms. DeStefano is working on a project adjacent to the Islington and Bartlett Streets intersection and provided the following information to the EDC on the project as an example of the type of development that meets one of the goals of the corridor improvement plan:

- Project is located on the corner of Cate and Bartlett Streets.
- Project is a rental workforce housing project with sixty units on five floors.
- The first floor is designed for sixteen artist live/work units ranging between 536-700 square feet.
- On the second through fifth floor there are thirty-four (34) two-bedroom units between 1,000-1,330 square feet and ten (10) one-bedroom units between 673-726 square feet proposed.
- On-site parking, laundry and access security are included in the proposal.
- Project conforms to the recommendations in the November 18, 2008 Mayor's Blue Ribbon Housing Committee Report.
- Units are designed for those who earn between 80%-120% of median family income (\$43,050-\$83,000 depending on family size).
- Project was presented to Art-Speak Board of Directors on January 6, 2009
- Project has been designed using green building elements.
- Project is located on a parcel zoned industrial and requires a variance. It is scheduled for A Board of Adjustment hearing on January 20, 2009.
- If the project receives a variance the developer will break ground in June 2009. This timeframe is key to take advantage of the favorably-priced bids and quotes received in this economic downturn.

The land owner and developer is Richard Cyr and in the interest of full disclosure, Ms. DeStefano informed the EDC that she has a personal relationship Mr. Richard Cyr. She stated that one reason that Mr. Cyr decided to proposed a workforce housing project on the parcel is due to the lack of moderately-priced units in the city as experienced by Mr. Cyr's adult children.

The Commission discussed the income guidelines for tenants of the proposed housing. Ms. DeStefano said that the general rule for rental rates for workforce housing is no more than 30% of gross income. Chairman Levenson asked what would happen if individuals' or families' incomes rose above those levels. Mr. Bohenko said that it is legally difficult to dictate rents as well as to require that the units will not change to owner-occupied. Suggestions such as not allowing subletting units were made to prevent this from happening. Ms. DeStefano said that the units were specifically designed with few amenities so as not to promote ownership.

Mr. Smith asked if the EDC should formally endorse the project to the BOA. Chairman Levenson cautioned the Commission about taking formal position before land use boards as it may "open the floodgates" for such requests. Mr. Smith said that workforce housing is a priority in the EDC Action plan and that if there is to be progress on workforce housing, the EDC should advocate for such. Mr. Blalock said he sat on the BOA for several years and that Chairman Levenson has a good point. Ms. Delaney sees that the EDC would be connected to the concept of workforce housing if it endorsed the project. Mr. Cyr agreed that the EDC should be cautious about transparency and the fact that an EDC member is involved in the development and with the property owner.

It was suggested that perhaps the best way to deal with the matter is to send a copy of the EDC Action Plan and Priorities to the City Council, Planning Board Historic District Commission (HDC) and Art-Speak with a cover letter highlighting that one of the EDC priorities is workforce housing. It was moved (Mr. Levenson) and seconded (Mr. Blalock) that the EDC send a letter with the EDC Action Plan and Priorities to the Boards listed above with a statement highlighting the workforce housing goal. The motion passed unanimously.

Exit 7 Gateway Capital Improvement Planning

The City Manager stated that the vote on Capital Improvement Plan bond funding at the January 12, 2009 City Council meeting will include \$300,000 in funds for phase 1 of the Market St Extension project. The funds will be applied to the Deer St. to Russell St portion of the gateway. The CIP will be reviewed by the Planning Board on January 26, 2009 and there will be a public hearing at the March 2, 2009 City Council meeting. Mr. Smith moved that the EDC write a letter to the City Council urging approval of the CIP. Motion was seconded by Mr. Eaton and passed unanimously.

New Business/upcoming events

2009 Action Plan discussion – The Commission reviewed the Short-term Plan and Priorities. It was suggested that the General Sullivan Bridge be added to the Long-Term section of the plan. Ms. Carmer will revise the plan and send out the entire document. Mr. Smith moved to accept the plan as revised. Motion was seconded by Mr. Gladhill and passed unanimously.

Geotourism Charter

Ms. Carmer presented a request to the EDC for a recommendation to the City Council to authorize the City Manager to apply to sign the National Geographic Center for Sustainable Destination Geotourism Charter. Geotourism is defined as tourism that sustains or enhances the geographical character of a place-its environment, culture, aesthetics, heritage, and the well-being of its residents. By adopting the Geotourism Charter, the city could chart a course for sustainable tourism efforts and also for promoting the city to visitor groups and individuals. Mr. Gladhill moved to make the recommendation described above. Motion was seconded by Blalock.

Ms. Carmer noted that on January 14th from 7:30 -9:00 AM the Chamber of Commerce Bank of America Breakfast Series will present Speaker Jonathan Tourtellot, Director of National Geographic Center for Sustainable Destinations and Geotourism to discuss the city's 6th in the nation and 26th in the world ranking in the *National Geographic Traveler* Geotourism Charter survey.

Public Comment Period

No one requested to speak.

Confirm Next Meeting Date

February 6, 2009.

With no further business, the meeting adjourned at 9 AM.

Respectfully submitted,
Nancy Carmer
Economic Development Program Manager