

MEETING MINUTES
PORTSMOUTH ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT COMMISSION

February 6, 2009

City Hall Conference Room A

7:30 a.m.

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

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

Approval of Draft Meeting Minutes of January 9, 2009

Following a motion by Ken Smith and a second by Suzanne Delaney, the draft meeting minutes of January 9, 2009 were unanimously approved as written.

Summary of infrastructure Capital Improvement Projects

Public Works Director Steve Parkinson distributed a handout summarizing infrastructure projects included in the 2010-2015 Capital Improvement Plan. He described and answered questions on the citywide transit system infrastructure improvements, the comprehensive wayfinding system, replacement of the Route 1A/Sagamore Bridge Replacement, Ceres St. improvements, citywide transportation circulation study and proposed changes in the Islington St. corridor (specifically the Spinney Rd intersection modifications and the McDonough St. sidewalks). In addition, Mr. Parkinson circulated a handout on citywide projects slated for construction during 2009. Included in the list is phase 1 of the Market St. Extension Improvements which the EDC participated in the design phase. Also included is the Madbury Water Treatment Plant Upgrades project that has been identified and submitted as a “shovel ready” project eligible for the new federal stimulus package.

Mr. Bohenko said there will be a public hearing at the March 2, 2009 City Council meeting and a vote by March 16th. The Commission discussed drafting a letter of support to the City Council in accordance with the EDC Action plan. Ms. DeStefano moved and Mr. Eaton seconded a motion to draft the letter. The motion carried unanimously.

Islington St. Improvement Action Plan

Ms. Carmer provided a review of the goals and objectives of the Islington St. Improvement Action Plan and introduced Emma Kelly of Richardson & Associates who gave a powerpoint presentation of the revised plan. She highlighted the proposed improvements that will occur in the near-term, mid-term and long-term. Because the city requested an actionable plan that takes into consideration the current economic climate, many elements of the plan were moved from the mid- to the long term phase of the project. Near-term improvements include the Spinney Rd intersection modifications and the Mc Donough St. sidewalks described by Steve Parkinson earlier in the meeting as well as sewer improvements at the Bartlett St. intersection. Also included in the near term are a parking analysis and planning for the Bridge St. Lot gateway and consideration of Tax Increment Financing funding for the gateway and for the Brew Yard area. The city staff will also be working on zoning ordinance amendments that will impact the corridor such as the building height limits.

The Commission was pleased with the plan as presented. Follow-up comments and questions centered on

the need to discuss bike transit in the corridor (on State St.), the concept of the North Mill Pond Bypass and the traffic counts and other factors contributing to the conclusion that Islington Street should remain two-way versus one-way.

Ms. Carmer said that there will be a joint meeting of the land use boards and City Council to familiarize the members with the revised plan before the final public presentation of the plan. An invitation will go out to the HDC, Planning Board, City Council and Art-Speak within a week.

Presentation: Quarterly Reports on Tourism for the period October 1 through December 31, 2008 by Nicki Noble, Tourism Manager

Ms. Noble provided a summary of activity for the period October 1 through December 31, 2008 using the new EDC matrix guide. Included in the report was the news of a \$69,000 grant from the State Joint Promotional program, Chamber visitor statistics, hotel occupancy, website hits, and the top referral websites. She also provided demographic data on visitation from international countries (#1 US, #2 China, #3 Spain) and from the US (#1 MA, #2 CA, #3 NH). A summary of Portsmouth publicity in the media and marketing efforts was included in the report.

EDC Project Updates

Geotourism Charter - Ms. Carmer stated that, per the EDC's recommendation, the City Council voted in January to authorize the City Manager to apply to the National Geographic Center for Sustainable Destination for the Geotourism Charter.

Prospective corporate office relocation, Timberland Inc., - The City Manager stated that the city has been in discussion with the developers of PortWalk and Timberland Corporation representatives about relocating the firm's corporate office downtown. A letter from the Mayor was sent to the company to express the City's enthusiasm about the prospective relocation of 600 employees to the city and its willingness to work with the company as it deliberates the decision.

New Business/upcoming events

FY 10 EDC Budget – In the interest of time this item was postponed to the March 6th EDC meeting.

2008 Market Activity and Growth Report – Mr.Bohenko distributed a report from the City Assessor. Discussion on it was deferred to the March EDC meeting due to time constraints.

Public Comment Period

No one requested to speak.

Confirm Next Meeting Date

March 6, 2009.

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

Respectfully submitted,
Nancy Carmer
Economic Development Program Manager