

CITY COUNCIL E-MAILS

Received: January 16, 2024 (after 5:00 p.m.) – February 5, 2024 (before 5:00 p.m.)

February 5, 2024 Council Meeting

Submitted on Tue, 01/16/2024 - 18:46

Full Name

Kerry Vautrot

Email

kerry.vautrot@gmail.com

Subject

1/16 Agenda Item: Proposed Solar Panel Ordinance Amendment

Address

10 Middle Street

Message

Dear Councilors,

It has long been recognized that historic preservation and sustainability are intrinsically linked and can successfully coexist. Portsmouth Advocates is the historic preservation advocacy arm of the Portsmouth Historical Society and we are writing tonight to note that there is ample guidance for how to integrate renewables and energy efficiency improvements while maintaining the historic integrity of the built environment. The National Park Service (NPS) is the technical authority on historic preservation in the US. In their publication, Secretary of the Interior's Standards for Rehabilitation: Guidelines for Sustainability, the NPS provides clear direction for how to successfully install photovoltaic systems on historic buildings.

As the 2023 host for the National Conference, Keeping History Above Water, Portsmouth should strive to model how to successfully integrate innovative sustainability practices while preserving the historic character that serves as an economic engine for the City. The initially proposed amendment language that simply removes solar panels from the purview of HDC is too broad a "solution." There are many other ways to adjust the ordinance language to assist both applicants, the HDC members, and the City's as a whole in order to meet sustainability goals.

We respectfully request that the Council proceed with the Deputy City Attorney's recommendation to refer the proposed language to the HDC for their input before sending it to the Planning Board. The HDC is comprised of preservation professionals, architects, and other technical experts who volunteer untold hours to uphold the objectives of the Historic District as outlined in the ordinance. Their familiarity with resources and guidance documents, like the Guidelines for Sustainability referenced above, will help ensure Portsmouth can meet both non-exclusive goals: preserving our historic character and integrating sustainability practices. Providing the HDC an opportunity to review and comment on the language is not only a professional courtesy, but it shows that the Council values the expertise present on their land use boards.

Portsmouth Advocates looks forward to continuing to provide comment on this matter as it progresses.

Sincerely,

Emma Stratton, Executive Director, Portsmouth Historical Society

Kerry Vautrot, Portsmouth Advocates

Please indicate if you would like your comment to be part of the public record for the upcoming City Council meeting. Yes

Submitted on Wed, 01/24/2024 - 15:27

Full Name

Gerald Duffy

Email

gduffy44@gmail.com

Subject

Housing Task Force, Housing Action Plan

Address

428 Pleasant St., Unit 3

Message

Dear Mayor and Councilors:

When the Portsmouth Listens Housing Dialogue reports out in a few weeks, I'll bet the farm that one of the themes you'll hear is the sense of urgency many people feel is essential in addressing our housing crisis. But not wanting to jump the gun, I'll refer you to a couple of findings from a similar Portsmouth Listens housing dialogue that took place 7 years ago. Since then, the city has made no concerted effort to help create the volume of below-market-rate housing we need. This segment of housing will be a significant part of any portfolio of solutions you come with. Below I summarize the two key insights that, ironically, are almost buried in their 2016 report. They realized that to act expeditiously, we need:

- 1) Political will in the community, Council, and land use boards
- 2) A "task force" structure to accelerate action and get results as quickly as constraints allow

I hope the Council will harness its mandate from Portsmouth voters and adopt a bold and creative approach to address our housing crisis.

Below are the full, relevant, verbatim excerpts from their report. They nailed it.

"Decisions by administrative bodies are impacted by those who show up and what they have to say. Oftentimes, hearings are dominated by abutters looking out for the quality of life in their neighborhood. But is there also a community "quality of life" interest that is relevant? Are Portsmouth citizens willing to represent "diverse" housing as a community value on relevant housing projects? Do they have the political will to make necessary changes in Portsmouth ordinances? Diverse housing will not happen in Portsmouth without the "political will" of the community."

"Portsmouth has frequently and successfully used "Mayor Blue Ribbon Committees" to address a variety of critical issues in Portsmouth. The recent Mayor's Blue Ribbon Committee on Housing is a good example. However, achieving "diverse housing" in Portsmouth may require more. How about a "Diverse Housing Task Force" made up of City officials, citizens and developer/investors? The purpose of the Task Force would be to identify available land, developers, tax credits, financing, and support for specific "diverse housing" opportunities and projects. Example: Identify large parcels of land appropriate for the development of "diverse housing". Fund the acquisition of the property through donations, tax credits and housing finance authority financing. Preapprove the parcel for "diverse housing". Issue an RFP to developers or private public partnerships (PHA and private developer/investors) to build and/or acquire the project. . . ."

Warm regards,
Gerald Duffy

Please indicate if you would like your comment to be part of the public record for the upcoming City Council meeting. Yes

Submitted on Wed, 01/31/2024 - 14:16

Full Name

charlie griffin

Email

charlesgriffinesq@gmail.com

Subject

City Hall Receptionist

Address

210 Hillside Drive

Message

Mayor McEachern and Members of the Council,

I had occasion to go to City Hall today for the first time in over a year and was astonished to see that the City Hall Receptionist no longer exists. I was told that position was eliminated over a year ago.

While I personally am familiar with the layout of City Hall, I can well imagine that people who are not would feel completely lost upon entering the building. While there are directory signs, one has to hunt a bit to find them and then look some distance to find the elevator. The absence of a real person to greet you or give you directions upon entering the building seems to undercut the motto that we are "The City of the Open Door."

As I walked down the corridor leading to the City Clerk's Office, I noticed that the walls are completely barren of the artwork that used to hang there. It may be that this is only a temporary situation while the walls are repainted. However, I would point out that looking at grey walls along a long corridor while heading to a city department appears very stark and uninviting.

As you enter into a new budget season, I would ask you to consider restoring the receptionist position. As we know, first impressions are important and having the receptionist as one enters City Hall makes a difference between creating a welcoming and caring atmosphere as opposed to a cold and uncaring one which I believe has resulted from the elimination of that position.

As always, I thank you for your consideration.

Charlie Griffin

Please indicate if you would like your comment to be part of the public record for the upcoming City Council meeting. Yes

Submitted on Mon, 02/05/2024 - 10:08

Full Name

Jim Splaine

Email

jimsplaineportsmouth@gmail.com

Subject

LAST CALL FOR TIME CAPSULE INCLUSION!

Address

201 Oriental Gardens

Message

TIME CAPSULE -- LAST CALL

STILL TIME: If you have a "title" such as being a Portsmouth elected or appointed official, address a letter about your future hopes and dreams and predictions to your counterpart. Let him/her hear about what you work on today. Include your business card.

If you don't want to write a letter, at least include your business card with your name. Your descendants might find that interesting in a hundred years.

Get it to the City Manager's Office at City Hall by Tuesday, February 6th by 12:00 Noon at the latest, or Cup of Joe Cafe & Bar at 31 Market Square by Friday, February 9th.

The Portsmouth 2123 100-Year Time Capsule was designed with four large tubes, each five feet tall. We kept one tube open until now for additional items from the PortsmouthNH400th contributions. We've filled them in, but we still have some room for more -- amazing how much paper letters and messages can fit into the design we made.

OTHER IDEAS:

Write a letter to "My Family" in an envelope with your name, and tell your descendants about your life. Don't pass up the opportunity to give this gift to your great, great, great grandchildren.

Make a drawing of your child's hand or footprint, put it in an envelope.

KIDS: Include your latest report card, homework assignment, or a diary entry.

Include a family picture or two, and identify those in it.

If you own a business, give us your brochures or employee list.

If you have a restaurant, give us your menu. Hint: is there a volunteer to go around and gather some?

Got some Presidential campaign mailings? We can find room for more.

Think: Ask yourself, "Will someone a hundred years from now find this interesting?" If so, give it for inclusion. We hear someone put a property tax bill into the Time Capsule. That might get a laugh someday.

What If Portsmouth Residents In 1924 Had

Done A Time Capsule For Us To Open?

This is probably the closest we'll ever come to time travel

Please indicate if you would like your comment to be part of the public record for the upcoming City Council meeting.

Yes