

**DRAFT**  
**MEETING MINUTES OF THE**  
**PORTSMOUTH ECONOMIC**  
**DEVELOPMENT COMMISSION**  
April 5, 2024      7:30 AM- 9:00 AM

**Members Present:** Chair Tom Watson, Vice Chair Sarah Lachance, Bob Marchewka, Andrew Ward, Phil Cohen, Jen Scumaci, Anne Weidman, Everett Eaton, Anna Howard, Ben VanCamp  
**Absent:** City Councilor Vince Lombardi, Assistant Mayor Joanna Kelley, Jacob Lahoux  
**City Staff:** City Manager Karen Conard, Assistant City Manager Sean Clancy

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*Chair Watson* called the meeting to order at 7:31 am.

Motion to accept the minutes of the March 1st meeting with no changes made by *Commissioner Cohen*, seconded by *Commissioner Marchewka* passed unanimously on a roll-call vote.

Economic Development Office Report:

1. Outdoor Dining update - Through 4/4/24, 15 applications:
  - Application period is rolling with no end date based on opportunity for new restaurants to apply as they open.
  - The Goat restaurant applied – the City ordinance denies dining in the street where they are. They have been contacted.
  - Stroll applied for 2 locations – second one is on private property.
  - General staff observations are that there will be a learning curve in regards to the level of detail required for plans submitted by applicants. The staff is being proactive, supportive, and understanding.
  
2. CSX RR update – (Government Relations) – We are working on two issues with CSX:
  - Easements for the Foundry Place construction projects and
  - Air Quality in the Islington Creek neighborhood. CSX has been very helpful in upgrading the locomotives, reducing idling, measuring Air quality, and setting up an email address for residents to contact when they have a concern. **(see attachment 1)**
  - CSX continues to upgrade their efforts & assets here in our City limits. They have replaced wooden trestles, and they are working more closely with customers to better forecast equipment needs resulting in a reduction in the number of railcars needed to be stored here.
  - Regarding future plans for CSX in Portsmouth, they advised that there are no customers in the city limits, however they do plan to grow with additional customers in our region. Their interest is to increase volumes and leverage their investments here to increase service reliability and productivity across this NE network.
  
3. Offshore Wind / Renewable Energy/Large Battery storage facility at Schiller Station (Granite Shore Power article.) -- Staying abreast of developments. **(see attachment 2)**

4. Business Support Work group has a Demo scheduled with CRM vendor later today.
5. Pierce Island Public Art RFP posted to City website Thursday April 4<sup>th</sup>.

Economic Resiliency Working Group presentation- *Commissioner Weidman*

- Electrical grid / capacity / planning (City/Eversource/Developers)
- Micro-transportation current capabilities and potential to increase future options.
- **(see attachment 3)**

Business Support working Group Update – *Vice Chair Lachance*

- Issue One – City Inspection Process requires more research.
- Issue Two – Moving forward with CRM demo and further conversation on how to better activate this tool and associated processes.

Chamber Update - Ben VanCamp

- Chamber events are very well attended and critical legislation (housing & banking) is being monitored for impact on the business community as well as community as a whole
- Ben is attending City Housing Committee meetings and seeking to facilitate conversations between employers and the “city” regarding employee housing construction
- The Chamber continues work with Catapult (young professional affinity group) on expansion opportunities
- The Chamber has taken on new responsibility to market “Art Around Town” to support our galleries and artists (1<sup>st</sup> Friday of each month 5-8pm)

City manager Update:

- Parking Zone Changes – Downtown Zones A and B will revert to one zone – *Zone A* with current Zone A parking rates staying in effect while increasing resident discount levels.
- Islington Street Construction is scheduled to begin on April 9<sup>th</sup>
- City Council is working through public hearing on Zoning changes specifically Office and Research zoning being converted to Gateway zoning in an effort to facilitate additional housing construction.

Chairman’s Report - *Chair Watson*

- *Commissioner Ward* has volunteered to lead the Business Support Working group.
- *Commissioner Eaton* has been named EDC representative to Market Square Master Plan Advisory Group.

Motion to adjourn made by *Commissioner Marchewka*, seconded by *Commissioner Cohen* motion passed unanimously on a roll-call vote.

As always, a recording of the entire meeting is available for review on our City Website.

Submitted by,  
*Sean Clancy*  
Assistant City Manager for Economic & Community Development

## **Attachment 1:**

### NOTICE

CSX Railroad (CSX) has established the following dedicated email address for the general public to report any non-emergency issue concerning CSX equipment, property or operations, in and around the Portsmouth, NH area. [PortsmouthNH@csx.com](mailto:PortsmouthNH@csx.com)

**For all emergency situations involving CSX property or equipment, please call the CSX Operations Center at 800-955-9208 or the CSX Public Safety Coordination Center at 800-232-0144.**

## **Attachment 2:**

**Last Coal Plants in New England to Voluntarily Close, Transitioning to Renewable Energy Parks. Agreement Between Granite Shore Power and EPA Paves Way for Battery, Solar, and Other Clean Energy Facilities.**

(Bow, New Hampshire) -- Granite Shore Power ("GSP") today announced a historic agreement with U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) whereby the parties have set a firm date for the voluntary closure by GSP of operations at Merrimack Station, New England's last remaining coal-fired power plant, as well as Schiller Station. This agreement will facilitate the creation of first-of-their-kind "Renewable Energy Parks" in the state of New Hampshire.

GSP's decision to set a firm closure date for coal-fired operations at both Merrimack and Schiller is part of the company's long-standing repowering plan. The transformation of these power plants into new, clean energy facilities will mark the end of coal-fired generation in New England and facilitate exciting new economic growth at each location.

"From our earliest days as owners and operators, we have been crystal clear; while our power occasionally is still on during New England's warmest days and coldest nights, we were firmly committed to transitioning our facilities away from coal and into a newer, cleaner energy future. By pursuing and ultimately entering into this voluntary agreement with the U.S. EPA, we are keeping that commitment," said Jim Andrews, CEO of Granite Shore Power.

As part of the redevelopment plan, Schiller Station is advancing a battery energy storage system, taking energy from the grid during low demand and putting it back on the grid during peak periods. Schiller is on the Seacoast and will be integral in supporting reliability daily during peak hours and storage for the wind power that is now being built off the coast of Martha's Vineyard and in the Gulf of Maine.

"The New Hampshire Seacoast is an area of high-energy demand and through the repowering of Schiller Station, we will provide carbon neutral power to support the businesses and families of New Hampshire. Our facilities are ideally situated near the infrastructure necessary to transition the region to the next generation of energy resources," stated Andrews.

Merrimack Station has been an important, yet limited, part of New Hampshire's energy infrastructure for many years. It will continue to be a vital resource when energy demands are

at their highest while GSP redevelops nearly 400 acres of land into a clean energy center for generations to come.

Through the enactment of the Inflation Reduction Act (IRA) in Washington D.C. and the continued shift toward a more electrified economy in New England, developing on-demand generation resources has become more critical than ever to ensure electric reliability for New Englanders. With the continued support of state, federal and local leaders, the redevelopment of both Merrimack and Schiller will enhance the interconnection utilization at the facilities and advance the region's overall generation mix.

"This Agreement is a significant accomplishment in driving clean energy forward, and it took a rejection of rhetoric, a focus on facts and a commitment to shared objectives. We thank U.S. EPA for their leadership and partnership over the past six years and look forward to continuing to work collaboratively to deliver reliable, clean energy for New England," Andrews concluded.

**Attachment 3:**

