

**PORTSMOUTH ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT COMMITTEE**

**Minutes of Meeting  
February 21, 2024**

<b>Call to Order</b>	A regular meeting of the Portsmouth Economic Development Committee (PEDC) was called to order by Chair Joe Forgione at 5:31 p.m. on February 21 <sup>st</sup> , 2024 in the Portsmouth Room at Portsmouth Town Hall.
<b>Roll Call</b>	Members Present: Keira Boxell, Emil T. Cipolla, Joe Forgione, Richard Hood, Stephen Johnson, Raymond H. Keller, Rich Talipsky (ex officio), Michael Mineau, and Theodore Pietz.  Members Absent: Brian Conwell, Daniel G. Corrigan, and Timothy Grissett.  Town Council Liaisons: Len Katzman and Kevin Aguiar were absent.  Public Attendees: None.
<b>Guest Speakers</b>	None.
<b>Approval of Minutes</b>	Joe Forgione announced that the approval of the meeting minutes for January 17 <sup>th</sup> , 2024 will be deferred to allow for minor cosmetic changes only.
<b>Correspondence</b>	A letter from the Portsmouth Business Association (PBA) requested that the PEDC review the Town of Portsmouth Sign Ordinance.
<b>Chair’s Report</b>	In the past month, met with Town Council (TC) liaison Len Katzman, Town Administrator Richard Rainer, and the Director of Business Development Rich Talipsky. The PEDC will work with the TC to set a date to present at a future regularly scheduled TC meeting, and it was discussed that the PEDC should intend to appear in front of the TC once or twice a year at minimum.  Newly onboarded youth representative Keira Boxell was introduced and she provided a quick introduction of her background and skillset.
<b>Business Director’s Report</b>	Morin Catering and Events hosted 57 weddings in the past year with \$890K of total income, and intends to host up to 96 weddings next year. Revenue numbers for Newport Polo is \$39K and Glen Stables \$20K.
<b>Old Business</b>	<b>Broadband</b> – Volume 1 of Rhode Island’s Broadband, Equity, Access and Deployment (BEAD) proposal must be approved by NTIA in order to accept challenges to government broadband coverage data, and approval of Volume I (and Volume II) by the National Telecommunications and Information Association (NTIA) is still pending. The BEAD program remains closely

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	<p>monitored, as at the most recent meeting of the RI Broadband Advisory Council November 14<sup>th</sup>, 2023 a picture was shown of numerous census tracts of Portsmouth marked as “underserved.”</p> <p>Two bills were filed in the Rhode Island General Assembly of interest, one for vegetation management and another seeking to exempt sales tax on all broadband machinery and equipment.</p> <p>The Aquidneck Island Broadband Consortium (AIBC) intends to finalize maps by the end of this month to effectively challenge incumbent claims of coverage and service.</p> <p><b>Information Systems Improvement</b> – A representative from the PEDC may need to appear at the Town Council (TC) budget hearings to request additional funding.</p> <p><b>Buy Local Program</b> – The Tradewing collaboration platform will undergo “beta testing” in the next month, and Rich Talipsky is looking for 6-8 folks from the PEDC and PBA to participate and provide feedback. The PEDC committed to providing four volunteers towards this effort (Keira Boxell and Theodore Pietz in addition to Joe Forgione and Richard Hood). Additional discussion occurred on how to capture the potential consumers passing through Portsmouth through various branding and marketing efforts.</p>
<p><b>New Business</b></p>	<p><b>Town Revenue Generation Study</b> – Michael Mineau received materials from previous analysis by the PEDC and stated his focus will be how to attract new business or encourage expansion of existing businesses in Portsmouth, and analyze the impacts of expansion of physical footprint and/or head count. Michael Mineau proposed the next step is reviewing all ideas and Stephen Johnson and Keira Boxwell volunteered to assist in this effort.</p> <p><b>Municipal Tax Rates Analysis</b> – Rich Talipsky reports that an in-house staff discussion of the upcoming budget (top to bottom review) will occur and a draft budget is expected to be released in two weeks. Joe Forgione reports that Daniel Corrigan would be interested in becoming involved in this effort and Raymond Keller also volunteered.</p> <p>Theodore Pietz sought direction and focus of the PEDC, as the topic of owner occupied properties can be construed to include the still developing legal framework surrounding short-term rentals (STRs). Theodore Pietz will work with Town Staff to receive materials to share with the PEDC.</p> <p><b>Process Improvement Discussion</b> – The PEDC discussed how to utilize Google Groups, calendar invitations, and Google Drive while remaining in compliance with the state of Rhode Island’s Open Meetings Act. The consensus of the PEDC is that any materials would not be publicly viewable until the materials were presented at an open meeting of the PEDC. A primary motivation of standardizing these new collaborative processes was for the individuals that join the PEDC in the future, so they can enjoy an uninterrupted</p>

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	<p>historical record. Theodore Pietz noted that in the age of machine learning (ML) and artificial intelligence (AI) the goal is to take steps to ensure that the analysis of the PEDC is incorporated in these models for widespread benefit to society.</p> <p><b>Next Regular Meeting</b> – The consensus of the PEDC was to take up as agenda items at the March meeting the letter from the PBA regarding the sign ordinance, continue with the Town Revenue Generation Study, and discuss the intended mission statement of the PEDC.</p>
<b>Open Discussion</b>	Emil Cipolla stated he believed that the agenda item regarding process improvements was geared towards the Town of Portsmouth processes and agreed that these efforts can be folded into the Revenue Generation effort.
<b>Next Meeting</b>	March 20, 2024 at 5:30 p.m. in the Portsmouth Room at the Town Hall.
<b>Adjournment</b>	Motion to adjourn by Richard Hood, seconded by Theodore Pietz. Approved by acclamation 7/0. Adjourned at 6:46 p.m.

APPROVED