



EXECUTIVE
DEPARTMENT

CITY OF SOUTH PORTLAND

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James H. Gailey
City Manager

MINUTES

Economic Development Committee

Wednesday, March 2, 2016

6:00 PM

City Hall – Lower Level Conference Room

Attendees:

Martha Riehle – District 1
Ross Little – District 2
Greg Perry – District 3
Fawn Dunphy – Business
Bob O'Brien – Business

David Schneider – District 1
Stephen Bushey – District 3
William Collins – District 5
Craig Gorris – Business
Joshua Reny – Asst. City Manager

Absent:

Peter Stocks – District 4
Ed Palmer – Business

Justin Leblanc – Business

1. Committee Chair Ross Little called the meeting to order at 6:08 p.m.
2. Motion by Collins seconded by Perry to adopt the minutes of the meeting of December 10, 2015 as printed. All in favor.
3. Ross opened discussion on the roll out and marketing of the new Economic Development Plan.

The plan was presented to City Council at a special workshop held on February 17. The original workshop had been cancelled due to a snow storm. The plan was very well received. The Mayor had asked for an addendum to the report that struck a more positive tone about all the great things happening in the City. Subsequently, Ross Little wrote an introductory letter that hits all the high points and lays out the vision of where this plan will take the City. The intro letter has been posted on the website along with the report. The ED Plan is now tentatively scheduled to be formally adopted at the March 21 Council meeting. The Committee agreed that it would attend the meeting to voice support for the plan's adoption. The Committee will also request to meet with Council at an upcoming workshop meeting to discuss Implementation Strategies in more detail. Some of the strategies will require financial resources as well as Council involvement and support.

4. The Committee discussed its Plan of Work for 2016 and priorities.

Ross noted that Karl Seidman's contract with the City has come to an end, but we might consider keeping him on retainer as we begin implementing the ED Plan. It was agreed that there is not a need for additional services in the short term, but we may need some technical assistance on various projects as we get to them.

There was broad agreement that the first priority should be to address the issue of capacity to implement a more robust economic development program. Greg expressed support for setting up an economic development corporation in the next few months to build momentum from the new plan. David agreed and suggested that an appropriation be requested to fund the new corporation. Bill suggested the appropriation could be phased in over two fiscal years, with launch date of the new corporation half way into the next fiscal year (Jan. 1, 2017). The committee discussed the likelihood this effort will be funded and the variety of tasks that need to be accomplished. Marty offered that if resources are not provided to sufficiently implement the plan then the ability to fully implement the plan is quite inhibited. Step one must be a conversation regarding resources and support. Ross proposed that, contingent upon Council support and adoption of the ED Plan, a sub-committee is formed to spearhead implementation of an ED corporation.

Josh provided a quick overview of some of the larger tasks the Committee might focus on in 2016, in addition to what has already been discussed, including branding, marketing, business incubator, and awards program. The committee discussed the need to brand both the City and the new ED Corp. Craig offered to put Josh in touch with someone who may be good to facilitate that conversation. David and Greg supported the idea of inviting a college marketing class to work on this as a class project. Josh spoke about business attraction and marketing and expressed a preference for working with the Greater Portland Economic Development Corporation (GPEDC) to develop an annual marketing plan that reaches beyond Maine's borders. The marketing plan will be more robust, with greater reach if we work as a region to attract new businesses. The conversation then moved to a concept of a business incubator. Fawn spoke to the group about the space that is currently available in her building. The space would be a great location for the new EDC office and could be partitioned for multiple offices for startups. The committee expressed general interest in that type of space, which is in high demand. Ross brought up the Business Awards Program and suggested the Committee organize another event in the coming months. Josh noted that the last one was held in the fall and that was a good time of year and would give the group plenty of time to plan. The Committee agreed to begin work on this.

Josh updated the Committee on GPEDC's Foreign Direct Investment Grant and partnership with the Maine International Trade Center (MITC). GPEDC will be working with OCO Global, an international consultancy, to assist with lead generation and contact with business seeking trade partners and/or alliances in Northern New England. GPEDC and MITC will have a substantial presence at many upcoming trade shows and conferences. Josh will likely be attending a Bio Science trade show and partnering event in Europe next month.

The committee was updated on the work being done by the Comprehensive Plan Implementation Committee. Craig is also a member of that group. Many of the recommendations from that committee will have a positive effect on the redevelopment goals outlined in the ED Plan, especially in the Mill Creek neighborhood. Josh will keep the EDC updated as that process continues, and Ross will be speaking to that committee at an upcoming meeting.

The Committee discussed having a greater presence at local real estate and development conferences and trade shows. Josh will begin work on promotional materials and will order a pop up display so the City of South Portland can have its own booth, which would be staffed by the EDC members. Greg proposed that we consider having a presence at the Spring MEREDA Conference.

5. A handout of the proposed 2016 Committee meeting schedule was circulated to the group. The meetings would generally be on the second Wednesday of each month, with a couple exceptions. There was consensus on the meeting schedule, although a couple people may have conflicts on certain dates.
6. Other Business / Roundtable - None.
7. Adjournment

Next meeting will be held on April 13, 2016. The ED Plan is tentatively scheduled to go before the City Council on March 21, 2016.

Motion by Perry seconded by Bushey to adjourn the meeting at 8:06 p.m. All in favor.

Cordially,

Joshua Reny, Assistant City Manager