



EXECUTIVE
DEPARTMENT

CITY OF SOUTH PORTLAND

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James H. Gailey
City Manager

MINUTES

Economic Development Committee

Thursday, December 10, 2015

7:00 PM

City Hall – City Council Chambers

Attendees:

Martha Riehle – District 1
Stephen Bushey – District 3
Fawn Dunphy – Business
Bob O'Brien – Business
Karl Seidman – Consultant

Ross Little – District 2
Greg Perry – District 3
Craig Gorris – Business
Joshua Reny – Asst. City Manager

Absent:

David Schneider – District 1
William Collins – District 5
Ed Palmer – Business

Peter Stocks – District 4
Justin Leblanc – Business

1. Committee Chair Ross Little called the meeting to order at 7:04 p.m.

Craig asked the committee if future meetings could begin at 6:00 p.m. The committee discussed this request and agreed by consensus that future meetings will be scheduled for 6:00 p.m.

2. Motion by Perry seconded by Bushey to adopt the minutes of the meeting of November 3, 2015 as printed. All in favor.
3. Karl led a review of the draft Economic Development Plan

The first strategy outlined in the plan is Business Attraction and Retention.

Karl described the concept of a business retention program and explained how an annual business visitation program might work. He talked about marketing strategies and key messaging focused on the city's value proposition. The committee discussed the need to be marketing and have a presence at development conferences and trade shows to promote new development opportunities in South Portland. Karl explained the need for a next stage business center for those businesses that need professional space outside of a home, but still need some help before they stand alone. The city wouldn't

necessarily need to own this space. Oftentimes this is done through a partnership agreement with a property owner who has multiple units and space for trainings etc. SBDC may have regular appointments with these businesses to help them on their way. This space could also be co-located with a business incubator or co-working space.

The second strategy outlined in the plan is Entrepreneurial Development.

Karl described the role of a "Small Business Ambassador" who knows all of the resources available to the business community and entrepreneurs, and can be a primary point of contact and link people with those resources. This person also can guide start up businesses through the permitting process and plan local programs for people who are thinking about starting a business. The committee also discussed continuing the business awards program that began last year. Karl suggested there be categories of awards such as entrepreneur of the year, award for innovation, and an award for sustainability. The city may consider an annual business start up event, perhaps it could be timed to couple with Portland Start Up week. The committee discussed the possibility of forming business associations in each of the neighborhood centers, for example a Willard Square association or a Cash Corner association. These groups could interface with the city collectively on business needs, plan localized events, marketing, etc.

The third strategy outlined in the plan is Workforce Development.

Karl talked about the Portland Jobs Alliance model which works to address many barriers to employment including childcare, transportation, language skills, etc. There may be opportunities to work with this organization and/or others to assist South Portland residents. There should be a greater emphasis on connections between the business community and educational institutions. SPHS currently has a good internship program, but perhaps it could be expanded or the rate of participation increased. There may be opportunities to assist high school graduates with finding internships back in South Portland after completing their first year of college. CCWI, the local workforce investment board, is looking at possibility of sector-focused workforce initiatives in finance and logistics, which could benefit city residents.

The fourth strategy outlined in the plan is improving Underutilized Sites.

Karl talked about implementation of the 2015 Mill Creek Master Plan. Some of this work is currently underway, but large scale redevelopment of the district may require additional thought about land use code that would allow greater density and less off street parking. Karl brought up the concept of a preferred development agreement, which would provide incentives to developers proposing large scale redevelopment in line with the city's vision of the district. These types of agreements have seen success in Boston. Karl also suggested code be updated to prevent retail sprawl into industrial areas which would erode acreage dedicated to industrial uses.

In order to implement these strategies, the city would require greater organizational capacity in economic development.

Karl talked about the creation of an economic development corporation tasked with implementing the plan. This would require a financial commitment from the city. Karl stated that in small cities the size of South Portland, the existence of such a development arm is quite common and considered a best practice. This will be one of the key points of discussion during meeting with City Council because it would require annual funding commitment.

Karl also reviewed the draft action plan and timeline as shown in Figure 17 of the plan. The committee was asked to review the timeline and consider whether it is realistic. Any additional comments and feedback should be provided within the next week so not to delay draft of final plan.

4. The committee discussed a timeline to finalize the economic development plan. The presentation to City Council will likely be in late-January or early-February, therefore the plan should be complete by mid-January. Committee members should provide any comments on the draft plan by December 21st. That will allow adequate time for Karl to finish the plan.

5. Other Business / Roundtable

None.

6. Adjournment

Next meeting will be scheduled at a later date; pending confirmation of date committee will present Economic Development Plan to City Council.

Motion by Perry seconded by Bushey to adjourn the meeting at 8:57 p.m. All in favor.

Cordially,

Joshua Reny, Assistant City Manager