



EXECUTIVE
DEPARTMENT

CITY OF SOUTH PORTLAND

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James H. Gailey
City Manager

MINUTES

Economic Development Committee

Tuesday, April 19, 2016

6:00 PM

City Hall – Council Chambers

Attendees:

Ross Little – District 2
Greg Perry – District 3
Bob O'Brien – Business

Stephen Bushey – District 3
William Collins – District 5
Joshua Reny – Asst. City Manager

Absent:

Martha Riehle – District 1
Peter Stocks – District 4
Fawn Dunphy – Business
Ed Palmer – Business

David Schneider – District 1
Justin Leblanc – Business
Craig Gorris – Business

1. Committee Chair Ross Little called the meeting to order at 6:05 p.m.
2. Motion by Collins seconded by Bushey to adopt the minutes of the meeting of March 2, 2016 as printed. All in favor.
3. Ross opened discussion with a recap of what the committee had discussed at the March 2nd meeting. The Committee discussed whether to appoint a sub-committee to take on establishment of the ED Corp. Bill suggested it may need a budget as legal review will be needed. There was consensus that the full committee should be present for this conversation and that it should wait until the next meeting.

The discussion moved to the marketing and branding initiative. Josh suggested the committee take steps to create a brand and logo for the EDC and develop a website that would be a one-stop-shop for all business development, attraction and marketing, etc. The group discussed the merits of moving on this now or waiting until the ED Corp is fully established. Steve suggested we invite a marketing firm to the next meeting and discuss what we hope to accomplish and get some ideas to consider. The Committee agreed. Greg will reach out to Hall Internet Marketing and invite them to the May meeting. The group also discussed some of the other local companies that might be able to provide this service.

4. The Committee then discussed its Plan of Work and priorities for 2016. There was consensus that we begin planning another Business Awards Event for the fall. Several award categories were suggested. The nomination process should involve the Chamber of Commerce and Buy Local. Ross noted that it should try to be as inclusive as possible and an event to bring people together as much as a way to honor recipients. Bill noted that such an event could also be a vehicle for introducing the Committee's work with branding, up to that date. A subcommittee should be created to steward this event. The committee will ask for volunteers at the next meeting.

The Committee also expressed support for establishing a formal business visitation program and having a presence at one or more conferences or trade shows, MEREDA for example.

5. The Committee discussed having a Social Media presence and the best ways to connect with the business community. It was agreed that unless it's done regularly and well managed then there is risk of appearing amateur. Further discussion is needed. For the time being committee announcements can be posted via the City Facebook page. Social Media should be a component of the EDC's overall web presence and relate to Marketing and a Website.
6. The Committee discussed governance of the committee and when officers should be elected. There was consensus that a vice-chair position be created. Ross asked Steve Bushey to consider filling the role. It was decided any election should wait until the next meeting when there is better attendance. The committee expressed thanks for Ross filling the role of Chairman and noted the position was created in August 2015. Josh noted that EDC member terms are April through March, and therefore the Committee might consider election of officers at its meeting every April. There was no objection, but it was again decided that this item should be postponed to the next meeting.
7. Ross expressed his view that for the time being it is extremely helpful to have City staff attend EDC meetings. His view is that until the Committee has projects of its own, City staff continues to provide essential continuity, support, and advice. Ross pointed out that Josh sits on the boards of the Chamber of Commerce, Greater Portland Economic Development Corporation, and Comprehensive Plan Implementation Committee, among others. Steve noted that he had been a member of the committee since it began and the ED Director was always at the meetings. Bill stated that he wants staff to attend the meetings. Bob expressed his support to try, whenever possible, to have City staff attend Committee meetings.

A tentative schedule for future meetings was circulated in the Committee packet. Ross noted that Wednesdays are bad for Ed Palmer but Steve noted that Ed may become available once the Spring Semester at USM finishes. Ed is currently teaching there on Wednesday evenings.

8. The meeting wrapped up with a roundtable discussion and information exchange on new projects in and around South Portland and the greater Portland area. Josh spoke about some recent business developments. Greg filled the Committee in on some of the more notable projects and real estate transactions. There was a lengthy discussion around a few businesses that have recently closed.

9. Adjournment

Next meeting will be held on May 11, 2016. Motion by Perry seconded by Collins to adjourn the meeting at 7:36 p.m. All in favor.

Cordially,

Joshua Reny, Assistant City Manager