

**Economic Development Authority of the City of Portsmouth
July 21, 2025
9:00 AM**

COMMISSIONERS PRESENT:

Malcom Mitchell – Chairman (9:29am)
Neal Barber – Vice Chairman
Theresa J. Saunders-Smith – Treasurer
Anthony Brown
Camille Cherry

ALSO PRESENT:

Brian Donahue – Secretary
Charles J. Bauman III – Assistant Secretary
Jeff Miller – Deputy City Attorney
Kelsey Swieringa – Assistant City Attorney
Vernon Tillage – City Council Liaison

ABSENT:

Matthew James – Commissioner
Joe Harmon – Commissioner
Alisa Winston – PRHA
Kyera Pope – Finance
William Moody – City Council Liaison
Lavonda Graham-Williams – City Attorney
Steven Carter – City Manager

GUESTS:

Mark Hugel – Councilman
Anna McRay – City of Portsmouth Emergency Management

Welcome & Call to Order

- The Vice-Chairman called the meeting to order at 9:03 a.m.

Roll Call

- Mr. Donahue called the roll. There was a quorum.

Minutes

- The minutes from the June 17, 2025, Regular Meeting were presented and adopted.

ACTION: On a motion by Mr. Brown and seconded by Mrs. Saunders-Smith, the Commissioners approved the minutes from the June 17, 2025, Regular Meeting as presented.

Roll Call Vote: Mr. Barber - yes; Mr. Mitchell - absent; Mr. Brown - yes, Ms. Saunders-Smith - yes; Ms. Cherry - yes; Mr. James – absent; Mr. Harmon-absent. Approved 4-0 vote.

- **Ready Portsmouth! Business Partner Preparedness Program Presentation** - Anna McRay, Deputy Coordinator for Emergency Management, presented the Portsmouth P3 Program, part of the Ready Portsmouth initiative. The program aims to improve business preparedness for emergencies, supporting faster community recovery. Three tiers are offered under the initiative:
 - Bronze - Plan review and staff engagement.
 - Silver - Participation in drills and public alerts.
 - Gold - Membership in the Business Emergency Operations Center.The focus of the program is on low/no-cost preparedness measures, especially for small businesses, with a workshop scheduled for August 15, 2025, featuring representatives from the National Weather Service.

Old Business

EDA Property Updates - Julie Chop, Real Estate Development Specialist presented the following updates on EDA owned Property.

- **1028 High St.** – A site meeting was held with a demolition contractor on July 8, 2025. A quote for demolition was received and further discussion was held in a closed session.
- **1117-1121 High St.** – The bid package for building renovations was submitted to the Purchasing office on June 10, 2025.
- **1220 High St.** – Contract documents for construction design documents are in the routing process and awaiting city approval.
- **934 High St.** – Environmental due diligence testing revealed no underground storage tanks on the property. Further environmental testing showed low-level soil contamination, not exceeding health risk limits. Closing on the purchase of the property is anticipated no later than August 24, 2025.
- **219 Pavilion Drive** – A contract amendment has been requested by the purchaser of the property to extend the contract feasibility period to December 17, 2025 to allow time to address infrastructure issues on the property.

ACTION: At 9:21am Mrs. Saunders-Smith, seconded by Mr. Brown moved to extend the feasibility period for the property at 219 Pavilion Drive to December 17, 2025.

Roll Call Vote: Mr. Barber - yes; Mr. Mitchell - absent; Mr. Brown - yes, Ms. Saunders-Smith - yes; Ms. Cherry - yes; Mr. James – absent; Mr. Harmon-absent. Approved 4-0 vote.

- **Small Business Loan Program** – The EDA’s RFP for the Small Business Loan Program has been awarded to Bridging Virginia. Contract negotiations are underway with final approval expected at an upcoming EDA meeting.
- **EDA Retreat Action Items:** Mr. Donahue presented updates on the following EDA Retreat Action Items.
 - **Waterfront Development** – A project committee has been appointed which includes Mayor Glover and Councilman Hugel, as well as the EDA Chair, Vice-Chair, City Manager and city staff. The project committee will oversee key aspects of the waterfront development

process. The RFP for Real Estate Consulting services received six proposals, three of which were selected for interviews on July 18, 2025. The selection of a vendor is expected before the EDA's August meeting. Staff has also been in discussions with the Parking Authority regarding parking impacts, HRT concerning public transit, and Tidewater Yacht Marina to ensure their awareness and participation in project planning. The City of Norfolk's Resiliency Department has also provided information on the Norfolk flood wall project for review.

- **LINC District** – The branding and placemaking plan for the Linc District is moving forward and is being managed by the City's Marketing and Communications Department with support from the Davis Agency. The City of Portsmouth has allocated \$200,000 towards the initiative. The EDA will be involved in the planning process.
 - The Planning Department is preparing a draft of zoning ordinance revisions, expected in August or September. High Street infrastructure improvements under the RAISE grant are also being monitored to ensure design work stays on schedule.
 - The Chairman Mitchell discussed a proposal to establish a Business Development Committee to focus on key EDA owned properties in the LINC District. A timeline outlining the necessary steps will be presented at the August meeting. The goal is to create a structured plan with clear target dates for progress.
 - Mr. Donahue provided an update on the recently completed Retail Leakage Analysis. The study examined retail demand in both downtown Portsmouth and citywide to determine which types of businesses could be successfully recruited. Results indicated strong demand for additional sit-down restaurants, home goods stores, and sporting goods retailers. The consulting firm will be invited to present the study's findings at the EDA's August meeting.
- **Entertainment District** – Mr. Donahue advised the EDA that staff is working to schedule a meeting with representatives from Rush Street Gaming to discuss EDA owned properties adjacent to Rivers Casino. A market analysis may be conducted to determine appropriate uses for the site. The goal is to identify opportunities that would complement the casino and attract additional visitors to the area.
- **EDA/City Council Joint Meeting** – Chairman Mitchell reminded members of the upcoming EDA/City Council Joint Meeting on August 25, 2025 at 5:30pm. Final revisions to the meeting presentation will be completed early August.

New Business

- **Business Investment Grant Update** – Ms. Bailey, Senior Business Development Specialist provide updates on the following EDA Business Investment Grant programs.
 - **Smart Start Business Development Grant** – In FY25 there were 41 applications received with 25 approved and 18 awarded, for a total of \$50,000 and \$36,000 disbursed to date.
 - **Smart Start Business Acceleration Grant** – In FY25 there were 15 applications received with 10 approved and 2 awarded, for a total of \$46,126.47 and \$8,952 disbursed to date.
 - **Real Property Investment Grant** – In FY25 there were 26 applications received and 22 approved and 22 awarded, for a total of \$352,668 and \$290,000 disbursed to date.

- **Real Property Investment Grant Program** – Chris Tillet, Manager of Business Development, presented ten new FY26 RPIG applications totaling \$228,354.00 for approval, involving mixed-use, industrial, and restaurant redevelopment projects, with total project costs over \$1 million. The applications were for the following properties.
 - 400 Broad St.
 - 2713 Detroit St.
 - 2715 Detroit St.
 - 684 Military Rd.
 - 1634 London.
 - 2808 Frederick Blvd.
 - 2810 Chicago Ave.
 - 2903 Deep Creek Blvd.
 - 3212 Victory Blvd., Suite B
 - 4072 Victory Blvd., Suite A

ACTION: At 10:02am Mr. Brown, seconded by Mrs. Saunders-Smith moved to approve the Real Property Investment Grants as presented.

Roll Call Vote: Mr. Barber - yes; Mr. Mitchell - yes; Mr. Brown - yes, Ms. Saunders-Smith - yes; Ms. Cherry - recused; Mr. James – absent; Mr. Harmon-absent. Approved 4-0 vote.

- **Mariner’s Museum Presentation** – Mrs. Cherry proposed a visit to the Mariners Museum for August 28, 2025 from 10:00am to 12:00pm. The purpose is to learn about mission focused decision making and guiding principles, with potential application to major EDA projects.
- **DOD Industry Roundtable Briefing** – Tanisha “Sunny” Golston, Business Development Specialist, gave an overview of the DOD Roundtable held on June 25, 2025. The event had 20 participants in attendance, including major local maritime firms. Topics of discussion included contracting opportunities, crime concerns, and workforce needs. Companies expressed interest in partnerships for skilled labor training. The discussions highlighted the need to connect existing training programs with job opportunities and improve awareness of resources. Workforce challenges include security clearance delays and limited readiness of high school graduates. The Economic Development Department advised that a pre-apprentice program is in development to help students meet entry requirements. Concerns were raised about measuring the success of workforce programs, with suggestions for earlier career exposure and increased paid internships. Graduation data showed only 30 of 800 recent high school graduates entered jobs directly, underscoring the need for targeted outreach.
- **Retail Industry Roundtable** – A Retail Roundtable is scheduled for August 18, 2025 at 12:00pm in partnership with the Retail Alliance presenting industry research and engaging local retailers. Virtual participation may be available for the event.
- **Sponsorship Acceptance** – Rivers Casino Portsmouth has offered a \$2,500 sponsorship to support the city’s upcoming leadership trip to Greenville, SC.

ACTION: At 10:39a.m. Mr. Brown, seconded by Ms. Cherry moved to accept the Sponsorship for the Greenville, SC trip in the amount of \$2,500 from River’s Casino.

Roll Call Vote: Mr. Barber - yes; Mr. Mitchell - yes; Mr. Brown - yes, Ms. Saunders-Smith - yes; Ms. Cherry - yes; Mr. James – absent; Mr. Harmon-absent. Approved 5-0 vote.

Closed Meeting

ACTION: At 10:40a.m. Mr. Barber, seconded by Mrs. Saunders-Smith moved to go into a closed meeting pursuant to Virginia Code Subsection 2.2-3711 A(6) for the purpose of discussing the investment of public funds where competition or bargaining is involved, where, if made public initially, the financial interest of the governmental unit would be adversely affected, specifically regarding a proposed demolition contract for 1028 High St., 1013, 1015, 1017 Queen St., and 400 Hatton St.

Roll Call Vote: Mr. Barber - yes; Mr. Mitchell - yes; Mr. Brown - yes, Ms. Saunders-Smith - yes; Ms. Cherry - yes; Mr. James – absent; Mr. Harmon-absent. Approved 5-0 vote.

Open Meeting

ACTION: At 10:54 am Mr. Barber, seconded by Mr. Brown, moved that each Commissioner certify that, to the best of his or her knowledge: (i) only public business matters lawfully exempted from open meeting requirements under the Virginia Freedom of Information Act, and (ii) only such public business matters as were identified in the motion by which the closed meeting was convened were heard, discussed or considered in the closed meeting just concluded.

Roll Call Vote: Mr. Barber - yes; Mr. Mitchell - yes; Mr. Brown - yes, Ms. Saunders-Smith - yes; Ms. Cherry - yes; Mr. James – absent; Mr. Harmon-absent. Approved 5-0 vote.

Items Submitted by Commissioners

- Commissioner Brown requested an update on the Craddock and Afton Square redevelopment. Mr. Donahue reported on the three EDA owned parcels in Craddock, including the former bank building at 53 Afton Parkway and two vacant lots. Due to poor condition, demolition of the bank building is recommended, with potential to consolidate parcels for a residential development of 10-15 units. There is interest in market-rate housing, drawing from the success of nearby developments.
- Commissioner Harmon will work with the Support Portsmouth Public Art organization to explore art installations and murals on EDA owned properties.
- A status check will be made on Fairlead's compliance with previously proposed site work at the North Pier site.
- Travel accommodation requests for the Greenville, SC trip will be reviewed with the City Clerk to address individual needs.
- The EDA's August 19, 2025 meeting will need to be rescheduled due to the coinciding Greenville, SC trip. Staff will explore rescheduling options and provide a new meeting date for consideration.

Report Backs

- None

EDA Meeting
July 21, 2025

Adjourn

- The meeting adjourned at 11:04am.

Respectfully submitted,

Brian Donahue, Secretary

Malcom Mitchell, Chair