Economic Development Authority of the City of Portsmouth

October 20, 2026
9:00 AM

COMMISSIONERS PRESENT:	Malcom Mitchell – Chairman Neal Barber – Vice Chairman Theresa Saunders-Smith – Treasurer Heather Harkleroad Joe Harmon Ross Morgan
ALSO PRESENT:	Brian Donahue – Secretary Charles Bauman – Asst. Secretary Jeff Miller – Deputy City Attorney Kelsey Swieringa – Asst. City Attorney Mark Hugel – City Council Liaison Alisa Winston – PRHA
ABSENT:	Camille Cherry – Commissioner Vernon Tillage – City Council Liaison Steven Carter – City Manager Stephanie Council – Finance
GUESTS:	Liz Pasqualini, Portsmouth Partnership Tim Foley, Lightwell Development William Dodson, City Councilman

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Welcome & Call to Order

- The Chairman called the meeting to order at 9:01 a.m.

Roll Call

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

Minutes

- The minutes from the September 15, 2026, Regular Meeting were presented and adopted.

  ACTION: On a motion by Mr. Barber and seconded by Mrs. Saunders-Smith the Commissioners approved the minutes from September 15, 2026, Regular Meeting as presented.

  Roll Call Vote: Mr. Mitchell- yes; Mr. Barber- yes; Mrs. Saunders-Smith- yes; Mrs. Cherry- absent; Ms. Harkleroad- yes; Mr. Harmon- yes; Mr. Morgan- yes. Approved

Financials

- No Financial Report.

Old Business

- **Waterfront Development** – Mr. Donahue provided an update on the solicitation of a developer for the Crawford Bay Waterfront Development Project. The Project Committee is reviewing proposals received at the end of August in response to a Request for Proposals. The review includes interviews and assessments of both technical and financial aspects. The process remains on schedule. Developer identification is targeted for November, with selection by the end of the calendar year. The intended next step is to select a development partner, authorize an Exclusive Negotiating Agreement, and begin negotiations. Staff will provide a more detailed update during the EDA's November meeting.

- **LINC District**
  - **Property Updates** – Staff provided an update on EDA activities in the LINC District.

    - **1117-1121 High St**. – Current progress includes:
      - Renovation work is about 95% complete. Exterior lighting has been installed, and a previously boarded-up window at 1121 High St. has been replaced. Remaining work includes a concrete gutter pan along Elm Avenue, installation of the fire alarm and security system is scheduled for the week, and a Columbia Gas service-line extension for the heating system at 1117 High St. is also underway during the week.
      - The properties have been listed with Harvey Lindsay Commercial Real Estate. Ryan King of Harvey Lindsay is expected at the November 17 meeting to present a marketing plan for 1117–1121 High Street, 1220 High Street, 934 High Street, and other LINC District properties. Staff is expected to return in November with planter-box materials for board consideration.

    - **1220 High St.** – Staff reported that roofing work is complete; storefront installation and the patio and seating area are underway. Some minor schedule delays will be addressed in November. Staff also reported that electrical equipment has been stolen from the property and will need to be replaced; a new door and hardware will be needed to secure the electrical room; and that a related change order will be brought back after the work is complete. Staff is also considering additional security measures, including a mobile camera through the police department. Staff has contacted the insurance provider about a possible claim and has spoken with the Police Department.

      Staff presented the following two items for consideration and approval by the EDA:

      – McCallum Testing Laboratories services for required third-party special inspections of fill, foundations, concrete and masonry, and storefront

structural work at a $4,825 cost; and

- GC Commercial proposal to replace stolen electrical equipment in the amount of $24,398.71.

ACTION: On a motion by Mr. Barber and seconded by Mrs. Saunders-Smith the Commissioners approved $4,825 for McCallum Testing Laboratories required third-party special inspections of fill, foundations, concrete and masonry, and storefront structural work; and $24,398.71 for GC Commercial to replace the stolen electrical equipment.

Roll Call Vote: Mr. Mitchell- yes; Mr. Barber- yes; Mrs. Saunders-Smith- yes; Mrs. Cherry- absent; Ms. Harkleroad- yes; Mr. Harmon- yes; Mr. Morgan- yes. Approved 6-0 vote

- **817-833 High Street** – Staff reported that a consultant is preparing construction plans for demolition of three EDA owned buildings at 817-825 High St. Once received, staff will solicit bids for the demolition. Staff is also working with utility providers to disconnect utility services. Additionally, the EDA is seeking a $250,000 Port Host Community Revitalization Fund grant in support of the demolition. Staff expect an award decision in the first quarter of 2027. Construction will begin after the Commonwealth provides a grant agreement.

New Business

- **Developer Briefing** – Tim Foley of Lightwell Development, presented information on his firm's Portsmouth portfolio. The former Professional Building at 545 High Street is fully leased. The adjacent former YMCA is also fully occupied at market rents. Across its Portsmouth portfolio, Lightwell is fully leased except for a commercial storefront at 309 High Street, where Foley said the company is holding out for the right tenant. Lightwell has submitted building plans for 316 High Street, the former Roger Browns building, for 30 residential units and a smaller second-generation restaurant space. At 330 County, a mid-century-modern building is under renovation, with completion expected in February and about 25 units planned. At 309 High Street, a former thrift store and warehouse was converted into 11 loft-style units. Foley said the units, including nine one-bedrooms and the remaining two-bedrooms all leased within a week. The project includes light wells and skylights, parking, outdoor amenity space, and access to the YMCA gym. Mr. Foley also addressed questions from the Commissioners about what types of businesses would be desired in the downtown area.

- **Main Street Program Briefing** – Liz Pasqualini from Portsmouth Partnership previewed Bloom Coworking's planned expansion. The design includes enclosed offices, nooks, and a medium-sized conference room to complement the existing very small and very large rooms, while echoing the building's original character. Construction is underway during Bloom's capital campaign. Bloom currently serves 214 entrepreneurs, and the expansion would add 42 offices. About 20% of the people in the space are connected to healthcare, so Bloom has developed programming for that sector alongside other offerings.

The Davis Agency is helping develop a distinct identity for High Street, where people use both "Old Town" and "High Street." The proposed concept, "High Street Happens," frames the district as evolving rather than static. The brand is being developed with the City's marketing team to align with the Portsmouth brand.

- **Swanson Homes Redevelopment** – Alisa Winston, Executive Director, with the Portsmouth Redevelopment and Housing Authority, invited community input on the next chapter of Swanson Home which was recently demolished. A first engagement session had taken place the prior Wednesday, with another scheduled for the following day. Commissioner Harmon, Councilman Hugel, and Councilman Dodson attended the first session, which Mrs. Winston described as interactive and successful. Housing has been the most common suggested use received so far, but Mrs. Winston said all options are open while feedback is collected. Ideas raised included mixed-use housing with daycare or shared work/technology space, parks, transportation connections, tiny houses, homeownership, commercial uses, and mixed-income housing with both ownership and rental options. Residents were invited to attend the engagement session or submit input through an online survey at swanson@prha.org. Mrs. Winston offered to return to a future meeting with the findings of the input sessions and survey.

- **Portsmouth Development Forum** – Mr. Donahue advised that the Portsmouth Development Forum is planned for October 22nd, 11 a.m.–2 p.m. The event is a first for the Economic Development Department, aimed at a regional, statewide, and national development-industry audience. About 55 developers, general contractors, civil engineers, architects, lenders, and lawyers plan to attend. The program is intended to present real estate development opportunities, highlight key sites and the City's "Big 3" projects, and introduce the Planning, Permitting & Inspections, and Engineering Departments. The stated goal is to show that Portsmouth is development-ready and business-friendly.

- **Ribbon Cuttings** – Mr. Donahue announced the following upcoming events and business openings.
  - **That Art Store**: 510 Middle St. – October 16, 2026, at 12:00pm
  - **ZandyLu Brew and Bakery Ribbon Cutting**: 2622 Detriot St. – October 26, 2026, at 1:00p.m.
  - **Phillips Workforce:** 820 Port Centre Pkwy. – October 28 @ 11:00am
  - **Building a Walkable Community**: Nationally recognized city planner Jeff Speck will provide a presentation on creating walkable and sustainable communities on October 29, 2026, from 5:30 to 8:00 p.m. at the Commodore Theater.

Closed Meeting

ACTION: At 10:19 a.m. Mr. Barber, seconded by Mrs. Saunders-Smith moved to go into a closed meeting pursuant to Virginia Code Subsection 2.2-3711 A.3 for the purpose of discussing or considering the investment of public funds where competition or bargaining is involved, where, if made public initially, the financial interests of the governmental until would be adversely affected, specifically regarding a Port Host Communities Revitalization Fund application.

Roll Call Vote: Mr. Mitchell- yes; Mr. Barber- yes; Mrs. Saunders-Smith- yes; Mrs. Cherry- absent; Ms. Harkleroad- yes; Mr. Harmon- yes; Mr. Morgan- yes. Approved 6-0 vote

Open Meeting

ACTION: At 11:36 a.m. Mr. Barber, seconded by Mrs. Saunders-Smith, 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. Mitchell- yes; Mr. Barber- yes; Mrs. Saunders-Smith- yes; Mrs. Cherry- absent; Ms. Harkleroad- yes; Mr. Harmon- yes; Mr. Morgan- yes. Approved 6-0 vote.

- **FY26 Real Property Investment Grant Extension – 503 County St.** – Phyllis Drake, Grant Administrator, presented the Commissioners with a grant extension request of 90-days for 503 County Street.

ACTION: On a motion by Mr. Barber and seconded by Mr. Morgan the EDA voted to approve the requested Real Property Investment Grant extension for 503 County St.

90

Roll Call Vote: Mr. Mitchell- yes; Mr. Barber- yes; Mrs. Saunders-Smith- yes; Mrs. Cherry- absent; Ms. Harkleroad- yes; Mr. Harmon- yes; Mr. Morgan- yes. Approved 6-0 vote.

- **FY27 Real Property Investment Grants –** Ms. Drake presented the Commissioners with the following grant applications for consideration.
  - 900-906 High St.
  - 460 Middle St.
  - 4000 Victory Blvd.
  - 475 Water St., C103B

ACTION 1: On a motion by Mr. Barber and seconded by Mrs. Saunders-Smith the EDA voted to approve Real Property Investment Grants at 4000 Victory Blvd., 475 Water St. C103B, 4353 Portsmouth Blvd.

Roll Call Vote: Mr. Mitchell- yes; Mr. Barber- yes; Mrs. Saunders-Smith- yes; Mrs. Cherry- absent; Ms. Harkleroad- yes; Mr. Harmon- yes; Mr. Morgan- yes. Approved 6-0 vote.

ACTION 2: On a motion by Mr. Barber and seconded by Mr. Harmon the EDA voted to defer the application for 460 Middle Street until the EDA's November meeting, passing the deferral 6–0. The requested follow-up is clarification of ownership and applicant status.

Roll Call Vote: Mr. Mitchell- yes; Mr. Barber- yes; Mrs. Saunders-Smith- yes; Mrs. Cherry- absent; Ms. Harkleroad- yes; Mr. Harmon- yes; Mr. Morgan- yes. Approved 6-0 vote.

ACTION 3: On a motion by Mr. Barber and seconded by Mrs. Saunders-Smith the EDA voted to deny the FY27 Real Property Investment Grant application for 900–906 High Street. The denial was based on the property owner's outstanding code violations. The applicant may reapply once the violations are resolved. The denial passed with five votes in favor and Mr. Morgan abstaining.

Roll Call Vote: Mr. Mitchell- yes; Mr. Barber- yes; Mrs. Saunders-Smith- yes; Mrs. Cherry- absent; Ms. Harkleroad- yes; Mr. Harmon- yes; Mr. Morgan- abstain. Approved 5-0 vote.Items Submitted by Commissioners

- Mrs. Saunders-Smith continued a discussion from the EDA's previous meeting about the best uses for properties the EDA owns.

- Mrs. Saunders-Smith urged the EDA to continue due diligence on an upscale food mart, identify a possible site, and consider practical constraints such as parking. The Commissioners said increased density puts the area in a better position than when the idea was considered a couple of years earlier. Staff said the Economic Development Department has been actively seeking an operator, but such operators have been hard to find in the Hampton Roads region. Small-scale neighborhood markets are more common in the Richmond region. Attracting an operator from Central Virginia to Hampton Roads could be one possibility.

Report Backs

- There were no report backs.

Adjourn

- The meeting adjourned at 11:36 a.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Brian Donahue, Secretary

Malcom Mitchell, Chairman