

Economic Development Authority of the City of Portsmouth

**September 15, 2026
9:00 AM**

COMMISSIONERS PRESENT:

Malcom Mitchell – Chairman
Neal Barber – Vice Chairman
Theresa Saunders-Smith – Treasurer
Camille Cherry
Heather Harkleroad
Joe Harmon
Ross Morgan

ALSO PRESENT:

Brian Donahue – Secretary
Charles Bauman – Assistant Secretary
Jeff Miller – Deputy City Attorney
Steven Carter – City Manager
Stephanie Council – Finance
LaKeitha Forest – Finance
Mark Hugel – City Council Liaison
William Moody – City Council
Steve Edwards
Dorothy Morgan

ABSENT:

Vernon Tillage – City Council
Kelsey Swieringa – Assistant City Attorney
Alisa Winston – PRHA

GUESTS:

Stephen Jenkins, Chief of Police
Kenny Bullock, Community Business Owner/Developer

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 August 18, 2026, Regular Meeting were presented and adopted.

ACTION: On a motion by Mr. Mitchell and seconded by Mr. Barber the Commissioners approved the minutes from August 18, 2026, Regular Meeting as presented.

Roll Call Vote: Mr. Mitchell- yes; Mr. Barber- yes; Mrs. Saunders-Smith- yes; Mrs. Cherry- yes; Ms. Harkleroad- yes; Mr. Harmon- yes; Mr. Morgan- yes. Approved 7-0 vote

Financials

- Stephanie Council, Interim Chief Financial Officer, presented the EDA's quarterly financial report for the fiscal year ending June 2026. Financial highlights included approximately \$5.2 million in cash and bank balances; accounts receivable of \$1.6 million; \$1.1 million in outstanding liabilities, and \$429,000 grants paid in FY26.

Old Business

- **Waterfront Development** – Mr. Donahue provided an update on the solicitation of a developer for the Crawford Bay Waterfront Development Project. Three development firms were shortlisted in June and invited to respond to a Request for Proposals (RFP). The firms included Hines Development, God Key | PHR, and Cape Fear Development. The RFP submission period closed on August 31, 2026. Proposals are undergoing evaluation, with developer interviews to be conducted by the Evaluation Committee. Staff anticipates bringing a recommendation for selection of a development partner to the EDA and City Council during the fall. The goal remains to select a developer and enter into an interim agreement by the end of calendar year 2026.
- **LINC District**
 - **Property Updates** – Julie Chop, Real Estate Development Specialist, provided an update on EDA activities in the LINC District.
 - **1117-1121 High St.** – Property renovations are nearing completion. Staff confirmed that Harvey Lindsay had been notified that 1117 High Street was ready to be listed for marketing purposes. Current progress includes:
 - The final building inspection was approved on August 28.
 - Staff conducted an initial walkthrough and identified several remaining work items to be completed.
 - New gooseneck lighting requested by the EDA was expected to arrive the following week.
 - Additional lighting improvements were being incorporated at 1121 High Street.
 - Columbia Gas was completing preliminary work before providing a schedule for extending a gas service line to the building.
 - Staff planned to obtain quotes for planters along the 1121 High Street frontage and present them at a future meeting.
 - **1220 High St.** – Staff reported that property renovation work began on August 10. The property has previously been listed with Harvey Lindsay for marketing.

Current renovation progress includes:

- Roof replacement was underway and has progressed substantially.
 - Work was proceeding on replacing the storefront along High Street.
- **817-833 High Street** – Staff reported that a consultant is preparing construction plans for demolition of the three EDA owned buildings at 817-825 High St. Utility companies were being contacted to disconnect services and staff members are obtaining the required utility termination letters in preparation for demolition. Construction plans were expected by the end of the week and would be reviewed before submission to the city for review. The demolition work was being advanced as part of the broader effort to improve the LINC District and prepare properties for redevelopment.
- **FY24 Business Investment Grant Program** – Phyllis Drake, Grant Administrator, presented a citywide map showing the distribution of awarded FY24 Business Investment Grants, as a follow-up from the August 18, 2026 meeting. The purpose was to demonstrate the geographic distribution of grant funding across Portsmouth and address concerns that funding might be concentrated in particular areas. Staff indicated that the distribution appeared reasonably consistent across the city and from year to year.

New Business

- **Midtown Public Safety Briefing** – Stephen Jenkins, Chief of Police, provided a detailed briefing on public safety concerns affecting the Midtown corridor, particularly the area surrounding Walmart, Wawa, Kroger, and nearby commercial properties along Frederick Boulevard. The discussion emphasized the relationship between public safety, business retention, redevelopment, and the City's ability to attract new investment. Items of discussion included: shoplifting and other larceny incidents; trespassing and disorderly conduct; panhandling and loitering; abandoned shopping carts and illegal dumping; encampments and recurring sanitation problems; and repeat offenders and challenges securing prosecution.

Chief Jenkins recommended a broader approach for enforcement involving: more consistent cleanup and property maintenance; improved coordination among police, code enforcement, zoning, and other City departments; greater responsibility on the part of retailers to recover shopping carts and prevent them from leaving their properties; outreach to people experiencing homelessness and addiction; coordination with behavioral health providers and service organizations; and continued enforcement when laws are violated.

Chief Jenkins noted that visible security, including private security or off-duty officers, could help deter some activity. He also encouraged consideration of business partnerships to address shared security concerns.

Chief Jenkins described several existing and planned public safety measures:

- Live video-streaming capabilities and surveillance cameras in the downtown area and Midtown corridor.

- Additional surveillance coverage connected to the City's real-time crime center.
- Existing Flock camera technology.
- Planned drone-first-responder capabilities, with implementation anticipated by the end of 2026.

The Police Chief also discussed police staffing challenges. He reported that the department was approximately 75–80 officers below its authorized staffing level. The city was working to recruit and retain personnel through competitive compensation and a residency incentive offering an additional \$300 stipend to qualifying personnel who live in Portsmouth.

- **Developer Briefing** – Kenneth Bullock, a local developer and business owner, discussed his development plans, business experience, and recommendations for strengthening Portsmouth's business environment. Mr. Bullock encouraged the city to create an environment in which residents could live, work, and spend money locally rather than relying on neighboring cities for employment, shopping, dining, and other services. He cited the growth of local development, housing demand, and business activity as evidence that Portsmouth was changing rapidly. He also referenced the success of his festivals and other local activities as opportunities to bring more people into the city.

Mr. Bullock encouraged the EDA to identify the specific businesses and services needed to support a growing residential population. Examples included practical retail and everyday services that residents currently travel elsewhere to access. He supported considering incentives and working with local businesses that may be positioned to expand.

- **Ribbon Cuttings** – Mr. Donahue announced the following upcoming events and business openings.
 - **Harbor Vista Phase 2 Groundbreaking:** September 23, 2026, at 10:00 a.m., at 700 Crawford Street.
 - **Inspire You Counseling Ribbon Cutting:** September 28, 2026, at 10:00 a.m., at Crawford Street.
 - **Phillips Workforce Opening:** September 28, 2026, at 11:00 a.m., at Port Center Commerce Park. The facility will provide workforce development and skilled trade training and serve the broader region.
 - **ZandyLu Brew and Bakery Ribbon Cutting:** October 26, 2026, at 1:00p.m., at 2622 Detroit Street in Port Norfolk.
 - **Ironclad Summit:** The Hampton Roads Alliance will host the inaugural maritime defense summit on October 27. Staff advised that the Economic Development Department is attending and sponsoring the event.
 - **American Society of Naval Engineers Fleet Maintenance and Modernization Symposium:** Staff reported plans to participate in a the maritime maintenance and modernization event September 22-24 and market Portsmouth to attendees.
 - **Symphony on the River:** Commissioner Harmon announced that a free Virginia Symphony concert is scheduled for September 18 at 7:30 p.m. at the

Portsmouth Pavilion. Approximately 2,900 preregistrations have been received.

- **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. Staff is also exploring a walking tour of Olde Towne with Mr. Speck to share Portsmouth's revitalization efforts and obtain feedback.

Closed Meeting

ACTION: At 10:18 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 unit 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- yes; Ms. Harkleroad- yes; Mr. Harmon- yes; Mr. Morgan- yes.
Approved 7-0 vote.

Open Meeting

ACTION: At 10:38 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- yes; Ms. Harkleroad- yes; Mr. Harmon- yes; Mr. Morgan- yes.
Approved 7-0 vote.

- **Port Host Community Revitalization Grant** – Submission of a Portsmouth Community Revitalization Fund grant application.

ACTION: At 10:40 a.m. Mr. Barber made a motion that and seconded by Mrs. Saunders-Smith for the EDA to recommend submission of a Portsmouth Community Revitalization Fund grant application for demolition at 817–833 High Street, subject to approval and adoption of a resolution by City Council.

Roll Call Vote: Mr. Mitchell- yes; Mr. Barber- yes; Mrs. Saunders-Smith- yes; Mrs. Cherry- yes; Ms. Harkleroad- yes; Mr. Harmon- yes; Mr. Morgan- yes.
Approved 7-0 vote.

Items Submitted by Commissioners

- Mrs. Saunders-Smith suggested the use of the EDA's commercial real estate broker Harvey Lindsay to market properties to specific businesses.
- Mrs. Saunders-Smith expressed interest in commissioning a more comprehensive market analysis to help identify the retail and service needs of current and future residents. The discussion identified several areas for further study, including:
 - Current and projected population growth over the next five to ten years.
 - Household income, employment patterns, and workforce needs.
 - Retail demand, restaurant demand, and unmet consumer services.
 - Parking requirements for residential, restaurant, and retail uses.
 - Professional services, financial services, insurance, and other businesses to support a growing population.
 - Potential opportunities to attract customers from surrounding communities.
 - Incentives that could encourage existing successful businesses to expand or new businesses to locate in Portsmouth.
 - How future development at Crawford Bay and within the LIINC District would affect the demand for commercial space.

Commissioners noted that previous studies, including a retail leakage analysis prepared in the prior year, could provide useful background. Staff agreed to recirculate existing information so commissioners could assess what gaps remained.

Report Backs

- Councilman Hugel commented on Portsmouth's participation in regional maritime and defense industry events, including the Ironclad Summit and the American Society of Naval Engineers (ASNE) event focused on fleet maintenance and modernization.
- The Commissioners discussed how the Main Street initiative relates to the LINC District and Olde Towne. The initiative has primarily focused on beautification, cleanup, streetscape improvements, events, walkability, and the phased requirements for Main Street designation. Economic development and business recruitment have been led more directly by the City's Economic Development team. The possibility of inviting Portsmouth Partnership to a future meeting to discuss its work and accomplishments was raised. Commissioners also discussed whether similar revitalization approaches might be appropriate for other commercial corridors, including Frederick Boulevard.

Adjourn

- The meeting adjourned at 11:03 a.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Brian Donahue, Secretary

Malcom Mitchell