

**Economic Development Authority of the City of Portsmouth
June 17, 2025
9:00 AM**

COMMISSIONERS PRESENT: Malcom Mitchell – Chairman
Neal Barber – Vice Chairman
Anthony Brown
Joe Harmon
Camille Cherry
Matthew James

ALSO PRESENT: Brian Donahue – Secretary
Charles J. Bauman III – Assistant Secretary
William Moody – City Council Liaison
Jeff Miller – Deputy City Attorney
Kelsey Swieringa – Assistant City Attorney

ABSENT: Theresa J. Saunders-Smith – Treasurer
Steven Carter – City Manager
Vernon Tillage – City Council Liaison
Kyera Pope – Finance
Lavonda Graham-Williams – City Attorney
Alisa Winston – PRHA

GUESTS: Mark Hugel – Councilman
Dr. William Dodson – Councilman
Steve Edwards – City Assessor

Welcome & Call to Order

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

Roll Call

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

Minutes

- The minutes from the May 20, 2025, Regular Meeting were presented and adopted.

ACTION: On a motion by Mr. Mitchell and seconded by Mr. Brown, the Commissioners approved the minutes from the May 20, 2025, Regular Meeting as presented.

Roll Call Vote: Mr. Barber - yes; Mr. Mitchell - yes; Mr. Brown - yes, Ms. Saunders-Smith - absent; Ms. Cherry - yes; Mr. James – yes; Mr. Harmon-yes. Approved 6-0 vote.

Presentation

- **Portsmouth@Work Briefing** – Sonja Briggs, Workforce Development Specialist, provided an overview of services available to Portsmouth residents to help them achieve their career goals. These services include education and training programs in fields such as CDL, merchant seaman, nursing, phlebotomy, and other medical careers. Ms. Briggs also highlighted FY25 community engagement efforts, hiring events, and the Connect Fest initiative.

Leo Akujuobi, Manager of Workforce Development, presented his strategic vision for Portsmouth@Work programming for FY26, focusing on innovation, empowerment, measurable outcomes, and new partnerships. The plan includes the development of a foundational Career Preparation and Development Program (CPDP) and increased program awareness through improved communication and wraparound services.

Old Business

- **EDA Property Updates:**
 - **1028 High St.** – Ms. Julie Chop, Real Estate Development Specialist, reported that procurement has selected a contractor for demolition services. A site visit and inspections for pricing are scheduled next. Demolition will begin following final approval of the cost by the EDA.
 - **1117 High St. and 1121 High St.** – A temporary, two-month lease has been signed with The Pirate King LLC for use of 1117 High Street to build movie sets. The building department has approved roof replacements plans for 1117 and 1121 High Street, as well as interior renovation for 1117 High Street. A bid package has been submitted to procurement and will be advertised.
 - **1220 High St.** – Mosely Architects has submitted a proposal to prepare construction documents for exterior renovations of 1220 High Street at a cost of \$33,485. Construction is projected to begin in April 2026.

ACTION: At 10:08 am Mr. Barber, seconded by Mr. James, moved to approve the construction document proposal in the amount of \$33,485.

Roll Call Vote: Mr. Barber - yes; Mr. Mitchell - yes; Mr. Brown - yes, Ms. Saunders-Smith - absent; Ms. Cherry - yes; Mr. James – yes; Mr. Harmon-yes. Approved 6-0 vote.

- **934 High St.** – The Due Diligence period of the Purchase and Sale Agreement has been extended to August 4, 2025 due to ongoing environmental testing. A ground penetrating radar test revealed no underground fuel storage tank. Further testing using a sub-slab soil vapor analysis has been recommended.
- **Small Business Loan Program** – The Purchasing Office has issued a notice of award for the RFP and is awaiting the awardee's signature. Once finalized, the award will be publicly announced and the contract process will be initiated.

- **EDA Retreat Action Items** – Mr. Donahue provided a recap of Action Items and Next Steps from the EDA Retreat. Staff is currently reviewing the RFP for a Real Estate Consultant for Waterfront Development. Mr. Bauman provided an update on the City of Norfolk’s flood wall project, noting that discussions are ongoing with the Norfolk Resiliency Program representatives to assess potential impacts on Portsmouth and to collect further data.
- **EDA/ City Council Joint Meeting** – A joint meeting between the EDA and City Council is scheduled to take place on August 25, 2025 at 5:30pm.

New Business

- **Smart Start Business Acceleration Grant Program** – A request was made to amend the Smart Start Acceleration Grant Program’s eligibility guidelines. Currently, businesses must be in operation for 3-7 years. The proposed change would extend eligibility to businesses in operation for 3-10 years.

ACTION: At 10:31am Ms. Cherry, seconded by Mr. Barber, moved to amend the Smart Start Acceleration Grant eligibility criteria to 3-10 years in business.

Roll Call Vote: Mr. Barber - yes; Mr. Mitchell - yes; Mr. Brown - yes, Ms. Saunders-Smith - absent; Ms. Cherry - yes; Mr. James – yes; Mr. Harmon-yes. Approved 6-0 vote.

- **Leadership Visit to Greenville, SC** – The commissioners were reminded of the upcoming leadership visit to Greenville, SC from August 19-21, 2025. The purpose is to tour the city’s downtown redevelopment and meet with city leaders and council members to gather ideas that could be implemented locally.

Closed Meeting – There was no closed meeting.

Introduction – Mr. Donahue introduced the Economic Department’s summer interns, Ms. Keona Adams and Ms. A’miyah Thomas, both rising seniors at Churchland High School.

Items Submitted by Commissioners – There were no items submitted by Commissioners.

Report Backs

- The Department of Economic Development will host a Defense Industry Roundtable event on June 25, 2025 focused on knowledge sharing, collaboration, and enhancing connections with Portsmouth based companies within the defense industry.

Adjourn

- The meeting adjourned at 10:43am.

Respectfully submitted,

Brian Donahue, Secretary

Malcom Mitchell, Chair