

Minutes

Remote Housing and Economic Development Committee

May 3, 2022

NOTE: This meeting was held via Zoom and can be viewed at this link:

<https://www.portlandmaine.gov/129/Agendas-Minutes>

These Minutes provide a record of those in attendance, general discussion taking place, and motions made.

A remote meeting of the Housing and Economic Development Committee (HEDC) of the Portland City Council was held on Tuesday, May 3, 2022, at 5:30 p.m. via Zoom. Present from the Committee were Chair Councilor Pious Ali, and members Councilors Tae Chong and Roberto Rodriguez. Committee member Councilor Andrew Zarro could not be present. Present from the City staff were Interim Housing and Economic Development Department Director Mary Davis, Principal Adm. Officer Lori Paulette, and Housing Program Manager Victoria Volent.

Item #1: Review and vote on April 19, 2022, draft meeting Minutes.

On motion made by Councilor Chong, seconded by Councilor Rodriguez, the Committee voted unanimously (3-0) (Councilor Zarro absent) to accept the Minutes.

Item #2: Public Hearing on Portland Downtown Fiscal Year 2023 Budget and Work Plan for Committee discussion and vote to recommend forwarding to the City Council for Approval

Ms. Davis introduced this item noting that annually, since the inception of this municipal development district in 1992, action by the City Council is required to: authorize the Agreement between the City and Portland Downtown; accept the Development Plan; and, authorize the assessments to the properties in the District. The Portland Downtown (PD) FY2023 budget for the

assessment is \$1.2 Million, and it is estimated that a \$.66 assessment per \$1,000 of property value in the District will cover the PD budget.

Cary Tyson, Executive Director of PD, then briefly shared his screen and noted the FY2022 highlights (please refer to backup material on City website for more information), the proposed Development Plan for FY2023, and the budget.

Chair Councilor Ali asked about the “distant dinner” event, as well as translation services for its programs and services.

Mr. Tyson noted that the distant dinner, in a partnership with the International Downtown Association, was a remote dinner with Canada to encourage tourism for both areas. As far as translation, they have begun translating material, Annual Report for instance, and is working on signage in different languages in the District.

Councilor Chong asked about PD’s services during the pandemic due to no in person meetings, and Mr. Tyson noted that Merry Madness pivoted with QR codes for touchless service, a local gift swap with no interaction, as well as webinars for businesses with SCORE to assist with marketing through social media and updating of websites.

Councilor Rodriguez noted the increase in the budget and asked if it was primarily due to inflation and Mr. Tyson responded in the affirmative.

Chair Councilor Ali then opened the meeting for public comment.

George Rheault of Bayside noted good leadership at PD. He questioned the alleyway behind Mechanics Hall on Casco Street being cleaned up with, however, graffiti remaining higher up on the building, noting it would be good to see that cleaned up as well. Also, for Pandora’s lights he suggested that a private sponsor pay for this annual event, as it costs more than the Police Cadet Program.

Seeing no further public comment, Chair Councilor Ali closed the session.

Mr. Tyson noted that the alleyway work was done by a grant PD received.

On motion made by Councilor Rodriguez, seconded by Councilor Chong, the Committee voted 3-0 to forward this item to the City Council for approval.

Item #3: Presentation by Waterstone Properties re: Future Development Plans for Rock Row

Oliver Olsson, representing Rock Row, shared his screen and displayed the area it recently purchased 10 acres in Portland abutting the subject property in Westbrook. He then described the access to the airport and to downtown Portland, partnering relationships with area colleges, the Tax Increment Financing District with Westbrook, updates on infrastructure improvements, family-oriented events and arts events on site, large and small spaces for conferences/concert events (latter to be inside in the future) spaces, and the diversity of the campus from commercial, residential, retail, office, bioscience, health tech, food hall, and “heritage industries” of aquaculture, agriculture, and timber. He described the economic impact as \$1.6 Billion annually, with 4,000 job on site which would double over time.

Councilor Chong thanked Mr. Olsson for the presentation and noted the City-owned Portland Technology Park nearby on Rand Road. There are sites there that could possibly be used for any spillover from Rock Row.

Karen Prescott, also with Rock Row, said that she would contact Ms. Davis to learn more about that Park.

Chair Councilor Ali asked about target markets, and Mr. Olsson said that one goal is the innovation market, with Ms. Prescott adding also general office space, both large and small. Rock Row offers a variety of diverse space for all sectors.

Chair Councilor Ali noting no further discussion, thanked all for the update.

Item #5 Review of Affordable Housing TIF CEA and Housing Development Fund

Requests

Mary Davis introduced this item by noting this evening's presentation is meant as an introduction to the five funding requests received in response to the *Affordable Housing Development and Tax Increment Financing Application*. A financial analysis of each project will be presented to the Committee during their May 17 meeting.

Victoria Volent provided a broad overview of each project (45 Dougherty Street; Dougherty Court; Lambert Woods South; 95 Front Street Phase 3; Riverton Park Redevelopment & Renovation). Items presented include a description of each project, the funding request, a breakdown of bedroom units, affordability limits, indication of any market rate units, proposed amenities, and compliance with the Green New Deal and the Green Building Code.

The Committee indicated they are excited about the number of units and diverse housing opportunities proposed for consideration.

Item #6 Communication: 2022 Work Plan and Schedule

Councilor Ali indicated the Committee would discuss the 2022 Work Plan and schedule during their June 7th meeting.

Seeing no further comments/discussion, on motion made by Councilor Rodriquez, seconded by Councilor Chong, the Committee voted 3-0 to adjourn at 6:57 p.m.

Respectfully, Lori Paulette and Victoria Volent