

**PORTLAND ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT COMMISSION (EDC)
REGULAR MEETING MINUTES
PORTLAND LIBRARY – MARY FLOOD ROOM
20 FREESTONE AVENUE
APRIL 9, 2024**

I. CALL MEETING TO ORDER

Michael Nadolski called the meeting to order at 7:05 p.m.

II. ROLL CALL

Members Present: Angela Hammond (joined meeting at 7:23 p.m.), Michael Nadolski, Robert Petzold, Karen Renner, Sarah Weeden

Members Absent:

Staff Present: Dan Bourret (Town Planner)

III. ACCEPT AGENDA

Sarah Weeden made a motion to accept the agenda, seconded by Robert Petzold, all were in favor, motion carried.

IV. APPROVAL OF MINUTES: Regular Meeting 3/12/2024

Add the following to the minutes: The commission voted to support the application submitted by Dan Bertram. Sarah Weeden made a motion to approve the amended March 12, 2024 minutes, seconded by Karen Renner, Robert Petzold abstained, all others were in favor, motion carried.

V. BUSINESS OF THE QUARTER AWARD:

Gotta's Farm Market will be celebrating their 125th anniversary this year. This will be celebrated at the April 18th event. Dan will send an invitation to the commission members along with details.

Dan will distribute the nominations for the next quarter.

VI. SEASONAL EVENTS: Main Street Garden Project 2024

Michael complimented the Garden Club on their work last summer. Margaret Stewart from the Portland River Valley Garden Club reported on the upcoming Main Street event as follows:

- Applications were sent out to businesses that do not reside on Main Street extending the event beyond the Village District.

- Communication will be done by email this year.
- An ad will be included in the *Rivereast*.
- Judging will take place a week earlier, around June 23rd.
- Some categories have been changed, i.e., Inground Gardens, Window Boxes, Pots,
- Professionals can help but will be in a separate category.
- Signs from last year will be used for the container gardens. Larger signs will be needed for inground displays. Dan will coordinate this with Tom Robinson.
- More publicity is needed.
- A special meeting is needed for voting, possibly changing the date of the June EDC meeting. This will be confirmed by the May EDC meeting.

VII. BUSINESS SUPPORT/IMPROVEMENT PROGRAMS

Several applications were received for the small business grants. The due date was March 31st.

VIII. UPDATES: BRAINERD PLACE, BROWNSTONE AVENUE BROWNFIELD, AND BUSINESS DEVELOPMENT PROJECTS

- Building of the spa will start in May. Activities that have been scheduled for the site will be moved elsewhere.
- An application for an 8 BR building was received on Isinglass.
- The Brownstone Ave. remediation has been completed. The \$500,000 grant is contingent upon someone latching on to the RFP. A revitalization grant study will be done of the riverfront and two targeted areas of the overlay zone. More remediation will be done. This is not a short-term project.
- Brainerd Place: The text amendment application was withdrawn. Everything remains the same until Bertram resubmits. There was disagreement at the P&Z meeting regarding the scope and what could be presented at that meeting. Dan said details will be worked out prior to a new hearing. Michael said there needs to be a format for Bertram to present his plans before the P&Z, i.e., a presentation with questions. Dan needs to be sure that it will be fine and above board. The next meeting will probably be done via zoom due to the cost of holding it at the high school.

IX. OTHER BUSINESS INPUT/FEEDBACK

A discussion ensued regarding commercial rent and some vacancies on Main Street. Sarah told of her experience with inspections that result in costing the tenant a lot of money.

One comment was that why should the town approve more apartments in Brainerd when we haven't seen Bertram deliver anything yet. Michael said they want to turn a profit on the development. It is no longer commercial-viable. The world has changed. There is not enough demand for commercial space in Portland. Some young people don't want to live in Portland. Robert Petzold foresees once you get 600 people in there, then other shops will pop up, maybe a dry cleaner, or a barber shop. Things will start to migrate up 66 and Main St. Back in 2007,

there was going to be a Stop & Shop, and then the economy changed. Now he asks if the Stop and Shop would have looked better than what we will have now.

X. PUBLIC COMMENT

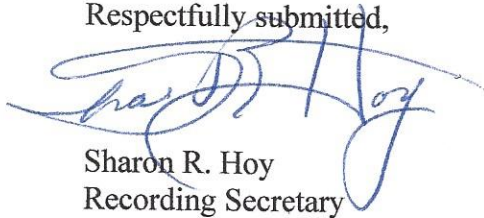
Ben Srb talked about the need for commercial space in order to have the project be mixed use. Building A was supposed to look like a 1900 type architecture and would have been very good looking. It was to be approved for food distribution. Ben believes at some point, we will still get a supermarket. There has to be a certain amount of commercial space. He talked about what changing the regs means. He said the rent for the commercial property is unreasonable. That is the rationale that is driving the need to go for more residential. It is a different market but don't be short-sided.

Ben thinks this isn't Dan's final request. He will come back for more residential. The town needs to realize where we are. He urged the commission to ask questions. Bertram needs to do what he's supposed to do. Michael reminded Ben that EDC is an advisory committee not P&Z. EDC isn't the body for approvals. He agrees with Ben and his passion. Ben is right as to why are the rents are where they are. Ben wants this site to look great, but we need to get it right. We must be careful. Get all your info before you jump behind anyone. There could be a request to modify the existing makeup of the residential.

XI. ADJOURN

Karen Renner made a motion to adjourn the meeting, seconded Sarah Weeden, all were in favor, and the meeting was adjourned at 8:23 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read "Sharon R. Hoy", written over a printed name and title.

Sharon R. Hoy
Recording Secretary