

## CITY COUNCIL MEETING

MUNICIPAL COMPLEX  
DATE: MONDAY, JANUARY 5, 2004

PORTSMOUTH, NH  
TIME: 7:00PM

### **I. CALL TO ORDER**

Mayor Sirrell called the meeting to order at 7:00 p.m.

### **II. ROLL CALL**

Present: Mayor Sirrell, Assistant Mayor Hanson, Councilors Grasso, Ferrini, Marchand, Pantelakos, Hynes, Raynolds, and Whitehouse.

### **III. INVOCATION**

Father Pappas of St. Nicholas Church conducted the invocation. Members of the Portsmouth Fire and Police Departments Honor Guard held a procession.

### **IV. PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE**

The Police and Fire Honor Guards led in the Pledge of Allegiance to the Flag. Wendell Purrington sang the Star Spangled Banner.

### **OATH OF OFFICE**

City Clerk Barnaby administered the Oath of Office to the following officials who were elected at the November 4, 2003 Municipal Election.

- A. **FIRE COMMISSION**: Commissioner Michael K. Hughes
- B. **POLICE COMMISSION**: Commissioner John D. Kelley
- C. **SCHOOL BOARD**: Ann W. Walker, Nancy Novelline Clayburgh, John E. Lyons, Jr., Roseann Clark
- D. **CITY COUNCIL**: Councilors Joanne M. Grasso, Thomas G. Ferrini, Steve R. Marchand, Laura C. Pantelakos, John W. Hynes, Edward R. Raynolds and Harold Whitehouse, Jr.
  - 1. Assistant Mayor Alex Hanson
  - 2. Mayor Evelyn Sirrell

### **V. ADDRESS BY MAYOR EVELYN SIRRELL**

I would like to welcome everyone here tonight -- family, friends, neighbors, Councilors, School Board members, and Police and Fire Commissioners.

This is not the first time I have stood before you to proudly accept the office of Mayor of the City of Portsmouth. But it is just as thrilling as it was the first time I accepted this great honor bestowed upon me by the citizens of Portsmouth.

I am so very grateful to the residents for once again choosing me to be their Mayor and for the privilege of leading our wonderful City for the next two years.

But I continue to believe that the Mayor is only as effective as the City Council that she is part of, and only as effective as the City Manager who stands beside her. I am so fortunate to have all of these components in the new Council being sworn in tonight and in John Bohenko, one of the finest City Managers I have ever known. Together, with the wonderful teamwork and cooperation that our City is known for, we can achieve great things to preserve our quality of life here in Portsmouth for the citizens of today and the citizens of tomorrow.

Over the years, I have taken great pride in being an ever-faithful watchdog who works to preserve and safeguard our City for its residents. That will never change. I will always keep the best interests of all of the citizens of Portsmouth foremost in any decisions that I make. I am very proud to be called the People's Mayor. It is a title I cherish and will continue to work hard to live up to.

Tonight, as we look forward to the New Year and beyond, our City is in a very secure financial position despite the burden of the statewide property tax and other factors beyond our control. This is due to the efforts of the City Council, our City Manager and the hard work of the City Departments, themselves. And as I stand before you tonight, my Number One goal remains the same as it's been for the past six years I have served as your Mayor - We must see the repeal of the Statewide Property Tax.

Everyone is suffering under the Statewide Property Tax. The City's tax rate dropped but property values are increasing, especially with the recent revaluation. The news reports show this is happening across the state. We need to get rid of the statewide property tax altogether. We need the State to give local control of tax dollars back to Portsmouth and other communities while supporting education through targeted aid to needy communities. This can be done without the statewide property tax and instead using the other State income already earmarked for education.

Portsmouth will continue to lead the Coalition Communities in the fight against this horrible tax. We have made progress in the Legislature but the problem will not be solved until the statewide property tax is gone forever. In the meantime, here in Portsmouth we passed the most generous elderly exemption program in the state. Applications for elderly exemptions can be obtained at the Assessor's Office at City Hall.

As Mayor, I also will continue to do my utmost to hold the line on spending. I believe we did an excellent job holding the line in the last budget. The only departments requesting supplemental appropriations were Fire and Police, the two most important departments in our City. We need them ready at all times.

But it will be much more difficult to hold the budget down in the coming year, given the increases in fixed costs like health insurance and cost-of-living raises. At the same time, we

must provide certain services to the residents of Portsmouth, such as water, sewer; snow and trash removal; and road and other infrastructure maintenance and improvements. The costs to provide these necessary services also are going up.

That is another reason that I believe it is important to support our Capital Improvement Program. This is necessary to preserve and improve our infrastructure, including roads, sidewalks, sewer, and water systems. And much of the work is funded with state and federal grant money in conjunction with the City's smaller contribution. By making a City investment even during tight budget times, we reap much larger rewards by taking advantage of this available State and Federal grant money.

I also believe that in order to preserve our quality of life, we must continue to put a little money aside for our conservation lands to protect against over-development.

And once again, my goal is to see us finally move forward on the new library. The funding has already been approved and has been in the capital budget for many years. The people overwhelmingly voted for it in a non-binding referendum. After reviewing possible sites all around Portsmouth, the 11-member Library Committee voted for the JFK Armory site with only one negative vote. Anyone who attended the public hearing regarding the Library knows the citizens of Portsmouth overwhelmingly spoke in favor of the JFK site and the building of a new Library for our City.

And yet, there are some who continue to suggest alternative sites. These include the McIntyre Federal Building site, which won't be available for years. The time to move is now. The reality is that we don't have the money to take over or renovate the other sites that have been suggested. Let's finally move ahead, and build the Library the citizens of Portsmouth desire and deserve!

Those are my primary goals for the next two years. In addition, I would like to see our Neighborhood groups remain strong. And I look forward to our volunteer Boards and Commissions continuing their important work on behalf of our City.

We have a wonderful tradition here in Portsmouth of working together to solve problems that range in scope from providing relief to the homeless, to caring for our neighbors. This is all done in the spirit of cooperation. And I believe this tradition of caring and cooperation will do us well over the next two years

I would like to close by saying that, as always am so proud of the citizens of our wonderful City. We have accomplished great things and will continue to do so.

As your Mayor, and with the help of the City Council and our City Manager, I want to continue guiding our City in a direction that reflects our character and our spirit of togetherness and community.

With your help and input, we most certainly will succeed.

I love you all.

Thank you.

## VI. REPORTS AND COMMUNICATIONS FROM CITY OFFICIALS

### A. CITY MANAGER

1. Acceptance of Rules and Orders of the City Council

Assistant Mayor Hanson moved to accept and approve the Rules and Orders of the City Council as submitted. Seconded by Councilor Whitehouse and voted.

### B. MAYOR SIRRELL

1. Committee Assignments for City Councilors

Assistant Mayor Hanson moved to adopt the committee assignments as submitted by Mayor Sirrell. Seconded by Councilor Grasso and voted.

**Assistant Mayor Hanson** – Audit and Joint Budget Committee, Chamber of Commerce, New Library Building Committee, Parking Committee, Traffic and Safety Committee

**Councilor Grasso** – Audit and Joint Budget Committee, Historic District Commission, Joint Building Committee (Schools), New Library Building Committee

**Councilor Ferrini** – Joint Building Committee (Schools) and Planning Board

**Councilor Marchand** – Blue Ribbon Committee on Dogs, Feasibility Study for Middle School, Peirce Island Study Committee, Rockingham Planning Commission

**Councilor Pantelakos** – Blue Ribbon Committee on Dogs, Joint Building Committee (Schools), Legislative Delegation, Recreation Board

**Councilor Hynes** – Economic Development Commission, New Library Building Committee, Pease Development Authority Liaison, Veterans' Affairs Organization Liaison

**Councilor Reynolds** – Fee Schedule Committee, Joint Loss Management Committee, Peirce Island Study Committee, Recycling Project Oversight Committee, Vendors' Committee

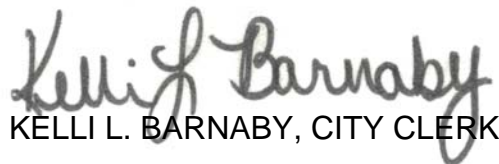
**Councilor Whitehouse** – Audit and Joint Budget Committee, Peirce Island Study Committee, Taxi Commission, Veterans' Affairs Organization Liaison

## VII. BENEDICTION BY FATHER PAPPAS, ST. NICHOLAS CHURCH

Father Pappas performed the benediction.

## VIII. ADJOURNMENT

At 7:40 p.m., moved to adjourn. Seconded and voted.

  
KELLI L. BARNABY, CITY CLERK