

CITY COUNCIL MEETING

MUNICIPAL COMPLEX
DATE: TUESDAY, JANUARY 3, 2012

PORTSMOUTH, NH
TIME: 7:00PM [or thereafter]

I. CALL TO ORDER

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

II. ROLL CALL

Present: Mayor Spear, Assistant Mayor Lister, Councilors Coviello, Kennedy, Novelline Clayburgh, Lown, Dwyer, Smith and Thorsen

III. INVOCATION BY REVEREND DAWN SHIPPEE, THE NORTH CHURCH

Reverend Shippee of The North Church conducted the Invocation. Members of the Portsmouth Police Department Honor Guard held a procession and posted the colors.

IV. PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE

Portsmouth Police Department Honor Guard led in the Pledge of Allegiance to the Flag.

STAR-SPANGLED BANNER

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 8, 2011 Municipal Election.

A. FIRE COMMISSION

Commissioner Michael Hughes

B. POLICE COMMISSION

Commissioner John Golomb

C. SCHOOL BOARD

Ann Walker, Patrick Ellis and Dexter Legg. City Clerk Barnaby announced that Mary Olea was unable to attend this evening's ceremony due to a prior commitment.

D. CITY COUNCIL

Councilors Anthony Coviello, Esther Kennedy, Nancy Novelline Clayburgh, Brad Lown, M. Christine Dwyer, Kenneth Smith and Jack Thorsen.

1. Assistant Mayor Robert Lister
2. Mayor Eric Spear

V. ADDRESS BY MAYOR ERIC SPEAR

Thank you very much. Welcome School Board members, Fire and Police Commissioners, City Councilors, Department Heads, family, and friends. Thank you City Clerk Kelli Barnaby, Rev Archon, Rev Shippee, and the Police Department Honor Guard for making this a special night for everyone.

Before I get into the meat of my speech, I'd like to acknowledge two outgoing councilors I've worked with over the past four years. First, I've had the good luck to sit next to Jerry Hejtmanek for four straight years. Unless you've been on the council, you probably don't realize how important your seatmate is. Good advice, needed encouragement, and most of all, the straight truth has been Jerry's gift to me, and I think it certainly has made me a better councilor.

Second, I'll miss Mayor Tom Ferrini. My working relationship with Tom began years ago when he was a freshman councilor and I was agitating to improve the city's commissions and boards. Over the years, as I moved into the council and Tom moved into the mayor's position, he has been an advocate for civil debate. The issues and policies we have to address and formulate are not simple or easy. They are often contentious, emotional, and complex. Tom has shown how the council can engage in a civil debate without questioning anyone's motives or resorting to personal attacks. I hope to continue that model going forward.

Portsmouth has been very fortunate. The rest of the country and most of the world remains mired in recession and uncertainty, and yet we move forward with confidence. Yes, we've made substantial cutbacks. In fact, we've recently reduced city staff by nine percent, closed a fire station, and lost police and teachers. However, through prudent fiscal management by our city manager and conservative budgeting policies set forth by the city council, we can address our coming challenges from a position of strength.

During the downturn, the public continued to make investments in school buildings, water plants, roads, sewer lines, and neighborhoods. We have made a public statement that we are excited about the future and we are prepared for its opportunities. Likewise, even during this recession we've seen dramatic private investment in Portsmouth. Whether it's a homeowner building an addition or a developer spending tens of millions of dollars on a new project, they both are making a statement about the future. They are excited to be in Portsmouth. I strongly support these public and private investments. But let me now whisper a word of caution. I've heard a lot of concern about the direction of the recent projects in the downtown.

I've heard concerns about style, size, traffic, parking, and accessibility. We, the council, the city, our planners, architects, and developers, need to address these concerns head on if we are going to have continued public support as we go forward.

We know what the public wants. Under the leadership of councilor Smith back when he was chairman of the Planning Board, Portsmouth residents described their vision on page 3 of the Master Plan. The very first sentence reads "Portsmouth should be a liveable, walkable city." I'd like to distill this down further and say that we want Portsmouth to be a Welcoming Place. Let me describe my idea of a Welcoming Place:

A Welcoming Place has human scaled architecture. When I'm walking along a sidewalk and I look up and around a new building, I want the sense that the building is approachable and inviting. The number of doors, the types of establishments, and the presence of fountains, benches, tables, and sculpture all help make our new developments friendly to passers by. Human scaled architecture also balances building height, setbacks, and street width with the surrounding built environment. Each new building should feel at home with its neighbors. A Welcoming Place has pedestrian friendly streets. These streets are convenient, comfortable, and safe for walkers, bikers, and cars. Too often we've given priority to cars when we design traffic signals, street widths, and parking spaces. Rather than something that is used to travel through, we need to reclaim our streets as destinations.

A Welcoming Place has accessible parking. This is achieved in three ways. First, we need to increase the parking supply by building another garage. While the details regarding location and size might take time to iron out, the need is demonstrable. Second, pricing curbside parking to meet demand increases accessibility for our retail businesses. Demand pricing without time limits creates available spaces where they are needed most, and allows people to stay and visit, dine, and shop as long as they want. Finally, as our population ages, we need to ensure that we have enough accessible parking for those who truly need it.

Let me leave the downtown and say that a Welcoming Place has attractive and functional infrastructure in all of its neighborhoods. The transformation of Atlantic Heights in the past few years has been remarkable. Following on a federally funded public investment in streets and sidewalks, homeowners are now making their own improvements. Other parts of the city can benefit in a similar way, and while we can't depend on federal funding, we need to continue to make capital improvements in all our neighborhoods.

I'm not reciting anything new tonight. Most of these ideas are detailed in the Master Plan and have been discussed before. So, this isn't my vision, but rather it's your vision. When I think about our volunteer boards -- the historic district commission, the planning board, the economic development commission, the sustainability committee, and the parking and traffic committee -- I see that all of them have a hand in making our vision a reality. We have the talent and the resources and the passion to proactively chart our own course and make Portsmouth a Welcoming Place.

I want to thank my wife Jeannie and my three kids Acadia, Colleen, and Rebecca who saw very little of me this past fall while I was campaigning. I want to thank everyone coming out tonight for this inauguration.

Thank you, God bless you, and have a happy New Year.

VI. REPORTS AND COMMUNICATIONS FROM CITY OFFICIALS

A. MAYOR SPEAR

1. Acceptance of Rules and Orders of the City Council

Councilor Dwyer moved to table this item until a time certain on January 10, 2012. Seconded by Councilor Novelline Clayburgh.

Councilor Dwyer said that there have been discussions to change some of the City Council Rules and Orders and feels it would be best to schedule a special meeting for further discussions.

Councilor Kennedy said it is important that the meeting is attended by all City Councilors.

Councilor Novelline Clayburgh said she would like this taken care of in one meeting.

City Clerk Barnaby advised the City Council that she and her staff would be unavailable on January 10, 2012 due to the Presidential Primary Election.

Councilor Novelline Clayburgh suggested meeting earlier at the Council's regular meeting on January 17, 2012. Councilor Dwyer agreed to the change of date.

Motion passed to table the Acceptance of the Rules and Orders of the City Council until the January 17, 2012 City Council meeting.

2. Committee Assignments for City Councilors

Mayor Spear announced that the City Council Committee Assignments will take place after the Rules and Orders of the Council have been adopted.

3. Appointment of Voluntary Code of Conduct Committee

- Assistant Mayor Lister, Chair
- Councilor Novelline Clayburgh
- Councilor Smith
- John O'Leary
- Joanne Grasso

Mayor Spear announced that he has appointed the above referenced individuals to serve on the Voluntary Code of Conduct Committee.

Informational Items

1. Meetings for January
 - January 17, 2012 – Regular City Council Meeting – *Tuesday*
 - January 28, 2012 – City Council Retreat – *Saturday at the Library in the Levenson Room*

VII. BENEDICTION BY FATHER ARCHON, SAINT NICHOLAS GREEK CHURCH

Father Archon performed the Benediction.

VIII. ADJOURNMENT

At 7:45 p.m., Assistant Mayor Lister moved to adjourn. Seconded by Councilor Novelline Clayburgh and voted.



Kelli L. Barnaby, CMC/CNHMC
City Clerk