

TO: KAREN S. CONARD, CITY MANAGER

FROM: KELLI L. BARNABY, CITY CLERK

RE: ACTIONS TAKEN AT THE PORTSMOUTH CITY COUNCIL MEETING HELD IN THE EILEEN DONDERO FOLEY COUNCIL CHAMBERS ON MONDAY, OCTOBER 6, 2025

PRESENT: MAYOR McEACHERN, ASSISTANT MAYOR KELLEY, COUNCILORS TABOR, COOK, DENTON, BAGLEY, MOREAU, AND LOMBARDI

ABSENT: COUNCILOR BLALOCK

1. **Voted** to close the Non-Public Session and seal the minutes.
2. Proclamation – Domestic Violence Awareness Month – Councilor Moreau read the Proclamation declaring October as Domestic Violence Awareness Month and called on citizens to come together to reaffirm our commitment to ending domestic violence and supporting survivors. Ryan Grogan and the Prosecution Team accepted the Proclamation with thanks and appreciation.
3. Proclamation – Children’s Environmental Health Day – Mayor McEachern read the Proclamation declaring Thursday, October 9, 2025, as Children’s Environmental Health Day in Portsmouth and urged all citizens to observe this day with awareness-raising and environmental health and stewardship activities to create a healthier environment for our children. Cynthia Nichols accepted the Proclamation with thanks and appreciation.
4. Proclamation – Fire Prevention Week in Portsmouth – Mayor McEachern read the Proclamation declaring October 5, 2025 through October 11, 2025 as Fire Prevention Week in Portsmouth and urged the entire Portsmouth community to use and dispose of lithium batteries carefully, safely and responsibly to avoid accidental fires and to support the many public safety activities and efforts of the Portsmouth Fire Department. Fire Chief McQuillen accepted the Proclamation with thanks and appreciation.
5. Artist Live/Work Report of the Arts & Cultural Commission – Eli Kaynor and Emma Stratton of the Arts & Cultural Commission (ACC) outlined the detailed report of the Commission. Eli and Emma reported the goal is to keep Portsmouth a destination for artists by addressing rising costs and the shortage of affordable live/work housing with both identified as key threats to the city’s cultural vitality. Local stakeholder engagement meetings were held with Preservation of Affordable Housing (POA), Portsmouth Housing Authority (PHA), and other cultural/community partners. They spoke to input received from local artists, housing advocates, and developers and they consulted with the Housing Committee. The Commission is requesting the City Council to fund a Feasibility Study for Artist Live/Work Housing at a cost of \$65,000.00 in the Capital Improvement Plan. Also, the ACC recommends updating zoning to allow developers to satisfy affordable housing requirements through partnerships with local nonprofits. Eli and Emma said Portsmouth has the opportunity to be a leader in the arts and culture space, demonstrating how a small city can foster innovation, inclusivity, and economic vitality through strategic support of its artists.

Voted to send the Artist Live/Work Report of the Arts & Cultural Commission (ACC) to the Planning Board for incorporation into the Master Planning Process, namely the recommendation that zoning regulations be updated to include Artist Live/Work space in partnership with non-profits as part of an affordable housing incentive in our zoning code.

6. Public Comment Session – There were 6 speakers: Jeffrey Cooper, Karen Rosania, Lennie Mullaney, Anna Nuttal (Artist Live/Work Report); Tyler Garzo – via Zoom (Congress Street and the creation of two lanes); and Emily Robichaud – via Zoom (Replacement of tennis/basketball courts at New Franklin School).
7. **Voted** to suspend the rules to bring forward Item XIII. C. – Economic Development Commission Memorandum regarding Social Districts.
8. Economic Development Commission Memorandum regarding Social Districts – Tom Watson, Economic Development Commission (EDC) Chair, reported that the EDC believes that the concept of a social district, with thoughtful regulations put in place by the City Council, could potentially benefit the business community in downtown Portsmouth, the West End, and other areas of the City. He indicated that the EDC believes that social districts should be explored as a tool that could be used to enhance economic vitality and benefit the business community in Portsmouth.
9. Public Hearing – Ballot Question #1 – “Shall we allow the operation of Social Districts within the City of Portsmouth?” – Held a public hearing. The City Council voted at the September 24, 2025, City Council meeting to place this question on the Municipal Election Ballot, therefore, no action is required this evening.
10. Public Hearing – Ballot Question #2 – “Shall we prohibit the operation of Keno Games within the City of Portsmouth?” – Held a public hearing. The City Council voted at the September 24, 2025, City Council meeting to place this question on the Municipal Election Ballot, therefore, no action is required this evening.
11. Public Hearing – Ballot Question #3 – “Shall we prohibit the operation of Games of Chance within the City of Portsmouth?” – Held a public hearing. The City Council voted at the September 24, 2025, City Council meeting to place this question on the Municipal Election Ballot, therefore, no action is required this evening.
12. Request for Public Hearing and Borrowing Authorization for a New Fire Apparatus – **Voted** to schedule a public hearing and the authorization of a borrowing authorization of up to \$2,500,000 for the purchase of a new Fire Apparatus at the October 20, 2025, City Council meeting.

13. Amendment to Extend Term for License with Coast Guard Vessel to Dock at Prescott Park – **Voted** that the City Manager be authorized to execute and accept this License Amendment in a form similar to the attachment in the Digital Packet and waive the dock fees except for electricity for a Coast Guard vessel to berth at the Prescott Park Dock.
14. Consent Agenda – **Voted** to adopt the Consent Agenda.
- A. Eversource Petition and Pole License Request:
- Installation of 85' of conduit and between pad mount 23/MH4T5 and pad mount 23/MH4T5-a to be located on Vaughan Mall
(Anticipated action – move to refer to the City Manager with Authority to Act)
- B. Letter from James Teetzel, Wilcox, requesting permission to hold events to honor all Veterans living in Portsmouth and surrounding Seacoast area on July 3, 2026 (alternate rain date of July 5, 2026) ***(Anticipated action – move to refer to the City Manager with Authority to Act)***
- C. Letter from Coureur Portsmouth, requesting permission to hold the Coureur Halloween Skate Jam on Saturday, November 1, 2025, from 12:00 p.m. – 3:00 p.m. at the Chris Rice Skateboard Park (alternate rain date November 2, 2025) ***(Anticipated action – move to refer to the City Manager with Authority to Act)***
- D. Letter from Laurie Mantegari, Scarecrows of the Port, requesting permission to place scarecrows in designated locations throughout Portsmouth ***(Anticipated action – move to refer to the City Manager with Authority to Act)***
15. Email Correspondence – **Voted** to accept and place on file.
16. Letter from The New Franklin School PTO regarding solutions for the tennis/basketball court repairs or the replacement of new court space – No action required. The project is part of the Capital Improvement Plan for design in 2026 and construction to take place in 2027.
17. Acceptance of Resignation – Herb Lloyd from the Portsmouth Energy Advisory Committee – **Voted** to accept with regret the resignation of Herb Lloyd from the Portsmouth Energy Advisory Committee.
18. Acceptance of Resignation – Jim Hewitt from the Safe Water Advisory Group effective immediately – **Voted** to accept with regret the resignation of Jim Hewitt from the Safe Water Advisory Group.
19. Appointment to be Considered – Reappointment of Patricia Bagley to the Trees & Public Greenery Committee – The City Council considered the reappointment of Patricia Bagley to the Trees & Public Greenery Committee with action to be taken at the October 20, 2025, City Council meeting.

20. Appointments to be Voted – **Voted** the reappointment of Sarah Lachance and Andrew Ward to the Economic Development Commission until October 1, 2027; appointment of Brigid “Briggs” Brady to the Cemetery Committee filling the unexpired term of Susan Sterry until May 1, 2026; and the appointment of Barbara Sadick as an alternate to the Parking & Traffic Safety Committee filling the unexpired term of David Allen until August 4, 2026.
- Reappointment of Sarah Lachance to the Economic Development Commission
 - Reappointment of Andrew Ward to the Economic Development Commission
 - Appointment of Brigid “Briggs” Brady to the Cemetery Committee
 - Appointment of Barbara Sadick as an alternate to the Parking & Traffic Safety Committee
21. Schedule Special City Council Meeting – Canvass of the Vote – **Voted** to schedule a Special City Council meeting for the Canvass of the Vote on Thursday, November 6, 2025, at 6:00 p.m. in the Eileen Dondero Foley City Council Chambers.
22. Request to Schedule First Reading of the Draft License and Encumbrance Permit Ordinance – **Voted** to schedule first reading of the draft License and Encumbrance Permit Ordinance at the October 20, 2025, City Council meeting.
23. Upcoming Visits by Students from our Sister Cities Santarcangelo and Nichinan – On behalf of Councilor Blalock, Councilor Denton reported that students and teachers arrived today from Santarcangelo, Italy and will be visiting until October 12th. On Thursday, October 9th there will be a dinner at the Portsmouth Public Library for our visiting friends, host families, Portsmouth High School staff, Mayor McEachern, and City Manager Conard. Councilor Denton announced that sixteen students from Nichinan will be arriving on Friday, October 10th and will be staying until Thursday, October 16th. He advised the City Council that there will be an assembly at Portsmouth High School on Tuesday, October 14th at 2:00 p.m. with Mayor McEachern and all city officials invited to attend.
24. Route 1 Bypass – Coakley Road and Cottage Street Improvement Project Grant - \$2,379,118.96 – **Voted** to authorize the City Manager to enter into a grant agreement and any future schedule modifications with the New Hampshire Department of Transportation to take advantage of State and Federal funding opportunities for improvements to the intersection of Route 1 Bypass, Coakley Road and Cottage Street.
25. Acceptance of Violence Against Women Act (VAWA) Grant - \$25,025.00 – **Voted** to approve and accept the Grant as presented.
26. Acceptance of Victims of Crime Act (VOCA) Grant - \$12,369.00 – **Voted** to approve and accept the Grant as presented.
27. Acceptance of Donation from FedPoint for the Portsmouth Police K-9 Unit - \$500.00 – **Voted** to accept the donation as presented.

28. Acceptance of Donation from Walmart for the Portsmouth Police Explorer Program - \$189.00 – **Voted** to accept the donation as presented.

29. Acceptance of Donation from Vanessa Smiley for the Portsmouth Police Explorer Program - \$100.00 – **Voted** to accept the donation as presented.

30. City Manager's Informational Items:

Update on Insurance Review – City Manager Conard reported the City has entered into a contract with Borislow Insurance to conduct a comprehensive review of all insurance coverages. She stated over the next month, Borislow will issue a Request for Proposals (RFP) to more than ten carriers, specifically targeting ancillary plans such as long-term disability, short-term disability, and life insurance.

Report Back Regarding RSA 79-E – City Manager Conard reported at the September 24, 2005, meeting, the City Council directed the Legal Department to prepare an ordinance implementing RSA 79-E to support the development of below-market rate housing in Portsmouth. She stated after reviewing the statute, staff has concluded that further Council direction is needed before ordinance language could be drafted. RSA 79-E now authorizes municipalities to adopt any of five distinct incentive programs, each of which can be applied in different geographic areas:

- *Community Revitalization Tax Relief Incentive* – revitalization of downtown and village centers
- *Coastal Resilience Incentive Zone* – investment in structures to improve resilience to flooding and sea level rise
- *Residential Property Revitalization Zone* – rehabilitation of existing residential structures
- *Housing Opportunity Zone* – incentives for the development of below-market rate housing
- *Office Conversion Zone* – conversion of vacant office buildings to alternative uses, including housing

Each of these programs provides different tools and requires the City to decide: (1) which of five provisions to adopt, if any; and (2) where in Portsmouth the incentives should apply. City Manager Conard stated staff recommends that the Council either:

- *Schedule a work session to discuss which zones and programs best align with Council priorities; or*
- *Refer the question to the Master Planning process, as contemplated by RSA 79-E, for integration into the City's broader land use strategy*

Voted that the City Council recommend to the Master Planning Advisory Group that they include RSA 79-E and the incentives it has for below market housing as part of the Master Plan and consideration for the future Council to have a work session around the Coastal Resilience piece of 79-E.

Further Options to Investigate the Viability of Two-Way Traffic on State Street – City Manager Conard advised the City Council that City staff recommends that any study of two-way traffic on State Street be first considered as a temporary construction mitigation measure only if it reduces time or costs. Further, if interest remains in pursuing State Street as a permanent two-way street, a more comprehensive study could be undertaken in a future year.

Voted to move the study of the State Street Two-Way Viability out one year and recommend staff incorporate this into the Congress Street Mitigation for construction.

31. Adjournment – At 9:25 p.m., **voted** to adjourn the meeting.

Respectfully submitted by:

Kelli L. Barnaby, MMC/CNHMC
City Clerk