

CITY COUNCIL MEETING

MUNICIPAL COMPLEX
DATE: MONDAY, MAY 19, 2025

PORTSMOUTH, NH
TIME: 7:00PM

Councilor Tabor moved to close the Non-Public Session and seal the minutes of the meeting. Seconded by Councilor Lombardi and voted.

III. CALL TO ORDER

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

IV. ROLL CALL

PRESENT: Mayor McEachern, Assistant Mayor Kelley, Councilors Tabor, Cook, Denton, Blalock, Bagley, Moreau, and Lombardi

V. INVOCATION

Mayor McEachern asked everyone to join in a moment of silent prayer.

VI. PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE

Mayor McEachern led in the Pledge of Allegiance to the Flag.

VII. ACCEPTANCE OF MINUTES

(There are no minutes on this evening for acceptance)

VIII. RECOGNITIONS AND VOLUNTEER COMMITTEE REPORTS

Councilor Lombardi moved to suspend the rules to bring forward Item XVII. 3. – 2025 National Program of Excellence Award for Senior Services. Seconded by Councilor Moreau and voted.

XVII. CITY MANAGER'S INFORMATIONAL ITEMS

3. 2025 National Program of Excellence Award for Senior Services

City Manager Conard announced the National Council of Aging (NCOA) selected the Senior Activity Center's "Rock the Crock" program in collaboration with Gather and the Portsmouth Housing Authority to receive one of seven National Institute of Senior Centers Program of Excellence Awards.

IX. PUBLIC COMMENT SESSION

Irish Mike said City employees especially City Council members should be held at a higher standard. He stated if a Councilor does not meet the highest standards in the city they should be removed from office.

Roy Helse said that the taxes between a homeowner and a commercial property were not raised equally.

Kate Hayden said the potential of only a 2.9% increase in the school budget will cause a loss in teachers and we need to value education.

X. PUBLIC HEARINGS AND VOTE ON ORDINANCES AND/OR RESOLUTIONS

- A. First Reading of Ordinance Amendment to Chapter 10, ZONING ORDINANCE, CITY OF PORTSMOUTH ZONING MAP, to be amended to rezone parcels described on the City's Tax Map 125, Lot 16; Tax Map 138, Lot 16; Tax Map 138, Lot 62; and a portion of Tax Map 138, Lot 63 from Character District 5 (CD5) to Character District 4-W (CD4-W); to rezone a portion of Tax Map 138, Lot 63 from Character District 5 (CD5) to Character District L1 (CD4-L1); to change the boundary of the North End Incentive Overlay District (NEIOD) and to amend the boundary of the Downtown Overlay District (DOD) to align with the amended North End Incentive Overlay District (NEIOD); and to amend the building heights in the North End Incentive Overlay District (NEIOD) from 2-4 stories (50 feet) to 2-3 stories (40 feet) for parcels described on the City's Tax Map 125 Lot 16, Tax Map 138 Lot 62 and Tax Map 125 Lot 14

The Zoning Maps to be amended and reissued to incorporate these amendments pursuant to City's Zoning Ordinance at Chapter 10, Article 4, Zoning and District Use Regulations, Section 10.421, District Location and Boundaries, Section 10.421.10 and Chapter 10, Article 5A, Character Based Zoning, Section 10.5A21.10, Content of Regulation Plan, Map 10.5A21A (Character Districts and Civic Districts) and Map 10.5A21B (Building Height Standards) Zoning Maps that depict the existing conditions and these amendments will be available at second reading

Councilor Moreau moved to pass first reading and hold a public hearing and second reading at the June 9, 2025, City Council meeting. Seconded by Councilor Blalock.

Councilor Moreau moved to amend the building height map to adjust along Rock Street right-of-way to reflect the city subdivision approved by the Planning Board on May 15, 2025, and to correct the North End Incentive Overlay District proposed boundary. Seconded by Councilor Blalock and voted.

Mayor McEachern said that these are the zoning changes that were left off during COVID and they are before us at this time.

Main motion passed as amended.

Public Hearing on FY26 Budget:

- B. PUBLIC HEARING on the Proposed FY26 (July 1, 2025 through June 30, 2026) Budget

- **PRESENTATION**
- **CITY COUNCIL QUESTIONS**
- **PUBLIC HEARING SPEAKERS** (*Continuation of the Budget Public Hearing will be held on June 9, 2025*)
- **ADDITIONAL COUNCIL QUESTIONS AND DELIBERATIONS**

Mayor McEachern read the legal notice, declared the public hearing open and called for speakers.

Councilor Tabor asked if we are staying within the collective bargaining costs with the teachers and library contracts. Deputy City Manager of Finance/Administration Director Lunney said that the contracts would be covered with contingencies. He spoke about other costs associated with the School Department budget and stated that they are asking for more than the recommended percentage.

Discussion followed regarding special education costs and how they affect the school budget.

Esther Kennedy spoke to the amount of money the Council has added to the budget over the last three ½ years. She expressed her concern regarding out of district costs for special education. She also spoke regarding providing mutual aid to other communities and said that we should be collecting funds for the services we provide. She said due to the projected increase in property taxes owners will need to shift their costs to renters.

Petra Huda spoke to the presentation and not providing numbers and comparisons have made it difficult to follow. She said that data from the CAFR shows that the Council will request twelve million more than what was spent in 2024. She spoke regarding efficiencies needed in departments and consolidating areas.

Nancy Novelline Clayburgh, School Board Chair, spoke to the school budget and the increases relating to High School. She addressed the need to increase the number of paraprofessionals required for special education and that the School Board feels that efficiencies will result.

Brian French, School Board Vice Chair, spoke to the principles of the School Board. He stated people want to live in the community because of the education we provide. He said that the budget is reasonable and serves the students. He stated anything lower than a 4% increase will lead to a reduction in service.

Manny Garganta spoke regarding forgiving building fees for the Sherburne School. He said the city should be collecting the fees from the Portsmouth Housing Authority as we do with other projects.

Roy Helsel spoke regarding the city spending tax money without charging other communities for the services we provide.

Councilor Denton moved to continue the Budget Public Hearing until Monday, June 9, 2025. Seconded by Councilor Lombardi.

Leigh Hudson, School Board member (via Zoom), spoke on the needs of special education. He said the School Department will need to increase class sizes if they do not receive appropriate funding. He spoke to larger class sizes becoming more difficult and challenging for students and teachers. He said part of the issue relating to special education funding is due to the city being above the national average for students with special needs.

Motion passed.

XI. CITY MANAGER'S ITEMS WHICH REQUIRE ACTION

A. CITY MANAGER CONARD

1. Repurposing of Bond Proceeds for School Security Upgrades

Councilor Bagley moved to schedule a public hearing and vote on June 9, 2025, to authorize the repurposing of the bond proceeds as described in the City Council packet dated May 19, 2025. Seconded by Councilor Moreau and voted.

2. Request for Approval of Tentative Agreement between the City of Portsmouth and the Association of Portsmouth Teachers

City Manager Conard reviewed the highlights and said this is a three-year contract.

Councilor Blalock moved to approve the Tentative Agreement with the Association of Portsmouth Teachers. Seconded by Councilor Denton.

Councilor Bagley thanked management and the School Board for a great contract.

Councilor Blalock said he is pleased to support the contract and the schools.

Councilor Cook thanked the school for working hard to get to an agreement. She said we need to understand it becomes part of the overall budget and carries over to the next budget year.

Mayor McEachern said in the city we value education and teachers. He spoke to the concessions made by the teachers for the contract. He said if the budget continues to rise, we need to talk about educational costs. He stated that this is an investment and education is important.

Motion passed.

3. Request for Approval of a Tentative Agreement between the City of Portsmouth and the Portsmouth Public Library Employees Local 1386 of the AFSCME Council 93

City Manager Conard reviewed the highlights for the three-year agreement.

Councilor Cook moved to approve the Tentative Agreement with the Portsmouth Public Library Employees Local 1386 the AFSCME Council 93 as presented. Seconded by Assistant Mayor Kelley and voted.

XII. CONSENT AGENDA

- A. Request from Coureur Portsmouth to hold the Coureur Annual Go Skate Day Jam on Saturday, June 21, 2025 from 12:00 p.m. to 4:00 p.m. at the Portsmouth Skatepark (*Rain Date will be on Sunday, June 22, 2025*)

Councilor Lombardi moved to adopt the Consent Agenda. Seconded by Councilor Moreau and voted.

XIII. PRESENTATIONS AND WRITTEN COMMUNICATIONS

- A. Letter from Robin Rousseau requesting that the City Council consider creating zoning regulations regarding 5G cellular towers

Councilor Moreau moved to refer to the Planning Board and Planning Department for report back. Seconded by Councilor Cook.

Councilor Bagley offered a friendly amendment to accept the letter and place on file.

Councilor's Moreau and Councilor Cook accepted the friendly amendment and motion passed.

- B. Letter from Craig Welch, Executive Director, Portsmouth Housing Authority & PHA Housing Development Ltd., requesting the waiver of permit fees for their project at the Christ Church Workforce Housing and HAVEN at 1035 Lafayette Road

Councilor Tabor moved to waive the permit fees as stated. Seconded by Assistant Mayor Kelley.

Councilor Bagley said he is displeased that the amount of the fee waiver was not listed and no one from the Housing Authority is here to speak in support of this matter.

Assistant Mayor Kelley said the city has historically waived fees for a number of non-profits and the recent waiver was for the North Church.

Councilor Cook said this is an important project that will be permanent shelter for women that have been battered.

Mayor McEachern said he does not remember ever voting against non-profits and would support the motion.

Motion passed. Councilor Bagley voted opposed.

- C. Email Correspondence

Councilor Tabor moved to accept and place on file. Seconded by Councilor Blalock and voted.

XIV. MAYOR McEACHERN

1. Appointment to be Considered:
 - Reappointment of Celeste Brooks to the Cemetery Committee

The City Council considered the reappointment of Celeste Brooks to the Cemetery Committee and will take action at the June 9, 2025, City Council meeting.

XV. CITY COUNCIL MEMBERS

A. MAYOR McEACHERN AND ASSISTANT MAYOR KELLEY

1. Request for first reading for Free 30 Minute Resident Parking in Downtown Metered Parking Areas

Assistant Mayor Kelley moved to amend Chapter 7, Article III, Traffic Ordinance, Section 7.326, Limited Parking – Fifteen Minutes, to amend the ordinance to convert twenty-five 15 minute parking spaces to Free 30 Minute Resident Parking Spaces in Downtown Metered Parking Areas, and to schedule first reading at the June 9, 2025, City Council meeting with a report back from the Economic Development Commission and the Parking & Traffic Safety Committee. Seconded by Councilor Denton.

Assistant Mayor Kelley said this came about organically as well as the resident parking program. She said one issue raised was to look at 15-minute spots. She said we will try to get this enacted by summer and the Council will look at shifting from spots to distinct locations in the city.

Councilor Lombardi said that this is a great idea but asked how it would work with Park Mobile.

Parking Director Fletcher explained the process and said if people stay passed the 15-minutes they would receive a ticket.

Councilor Lombardi said he would like the system to alert people when time is up and that enforcement be lenient until people become familiar with the system.

Parking Director Fletcher said we are looking at wayfinding to work with a predicted mapping of the city.

Councilor Blalock said we are trying to give residents parking and attract visitors. He stated he would like to look at providing free parking at some other locations.

Councilor Cook commended Mayor McEachern and Assistant Mayor Kelley for bringing this forward. She spoke to those that rely on businesses for quick take out and the impact this would have on those establishments.

Parking Director Fletcher said most people that use the takeout spots are locals, and we could seek information from businesses after this is put in place and evaluate the process.

Councilor Denton asked the advantage of having the turnover of these spaces.

Parking Director Fletcher said the turnover would be around 30 minutes.

Councilor Bagley said he would like to give one to three hours of free parking downtown.

Parking Director Fletcher explained the process enforcement follows and said until the State allows plate recognition it would cost the city money.

Mayor McEachern asked if we know the impact on the first hour of parking by residents.

Parking Director Fletcher said we would need to go back and calculate that. He said our current technology does not allow for this.

Assistant Mayor Kelley asked how many spaces have been requested by business to have 15-minute spots.

Parking Director Fletcher said he does not know but he would not support creating more. He said it is not the highest or best use, but we could look at moving around spaces.

City Manager Conard advised the City Council that a map would be provided at first reading outlining all the 15-minute parking spots located in the downtown area.

Motion passed.

B. COUNCILOR BAGLEY

1. Action Item Needing Approval by City Council:
 - Hanover Street Valet License – The 100 Club

Councilor Blalock moved to approve annual renewal of valet license for The 100 Club. Seconded by Councilor Moreau and voted. Councilor Bagley recused from voting on this matter.

- Brewster Street Loading Zone Hours

Councilor Bagley moved to approve the change in loading zone hours from 7:00 a.m. to 3:00 p.m. Monday through Friday, and 6:00 a.m. to 11:00 a.m., Monday through Saturday. Seconded by Councilor Blalock and voted.

2. Parking & Traffic Safety Committee Action Sheet and Minutes of May 1, 2025, meeting

Councilor Bagley moved to approve and accept the action sheet and minutes of May 1, 2025, Parking & Traffic Safety Committee meeting. Seconded by Councilor Cook and voted.

XVI. APPROVAL OF GRANTS/DONATIONS

- A. Acceptance of Donation for the Police Department from Geno's Chowder and Sandwich Shop - \$250.00

Councilor Cook moved to approve and accept the donation as presented. Seconded by Councilor Tabor and voted.

- B. Acceptance of Donation for the Police Department from Mrs. Gail Frongillo - \$30.00

Councilor Lombardi moved to approve and accept the donation as presented. Seconded by Assistant Mayor Kelley and voted.

XVII. CITY MANAGER'S INFORMATIONAL ITEMS

1. Master Plan Update

City Manager Conard announced the City has executed a contract with the planning and design firm Utile for the Master Plan Update. She reported that Utile has hired an outreach coordinator and local accessibility expert Anne Weidman to support the overall outreach process, expanding the reach of the Plan throughout the community. She advised the City Council that a Master Plan Steering Committee is currently being assembled to support the development of the Master Plan. She stated that the Steering Committee will be comprised of members of the City Council, Planning Board, Housing Blue Ribbon Committee, Economic Development Commission, Arts & Cultural Commission, Recreation Board, and community members. She also announced that a large community meeting and public visioning open house is planned for September. In addition, a new page on the City website has been dedicated to the Master Plan effort.

2. Bond Rating Update

City Manager Conard announced for the 13th consecutive time the City has received its AAA Bond Rating.

XVIII. MISCELLANEOUS BUSINESS INCLUDING BUSINESS REMAINING UNFINISHED AT PREVIOUS MEETING

XIX. ADJOURNMENT

At 9:20 p.m., Assistant Mayor Kelley moved to adjourn the meeting. Seconded by Councilor Moreau and voted.



KELLI L. BARNABY, MMC/CNHMC
CITY CLERK