

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 TUESDAY, JANUARY 20, 2026

PRESENT: MAYOR McEACHERN, ASSISTANT MAYOR KELLEY, COUNCILORS COOK, TABOR, BLALOCK, BAGLEY, MOREAU, FLYNN AND HOPKINS

1. **Voted** to close the Non-Public Session and seal the minutes.
2. Proclamation – Stalking Awareness Month – Councilor Cook read the Proclamation calling on our citizens too come together to reaffirm our commitment to ending stalking and supporting survivors. Mayor McEachern presented the Proclamation to the Police Department Prosecution team.
3. 2025 Holiday Lights Contest Winners and Honorable Mentions – Mayor McEachern with the assistance of Assistant Mayor Kelley provided gifts to the winners and honorable mentions for their beautiful displays of Holiday Lights. Mayor McEachern thanked Colleen Ovecka, Chair of the Citywide Neighborhood Committee for her outstanding work on the committee.
4. Portsmouth High School Award-Winning Art Students – Mayor McEachern announced that Portsmouth High School students recently participated in the nation’s longest-running national Scholastic Arts Awards program (since 1923) and the most prestigious recognition program for creative teams. He said thirty-three students took home for forty awards: 6 Gold Key Works, 18 Silver Key Works, and 16 Honorable Mention Works. He said their award-winning artworks are posted in a slideshow on the city website with a link on the homepage. He encouraged everyone to view and join him in congratulating the talented artists of Portsmouth High School.
5. **Voted** to suspend the rules to bring forward Item XIII. 1. – Fiscal Year 2025 Audit Summary, CLA.
6. Fiscal Year 2025 Audit Summary, CLA – Matthew Hunt (via Zoom) and Phil Hwang, CPA provided the report to the City Council. Matt announced that the Annual Audit financial opinion the City’s statement is an unmodified opinion and no findings of deficiencies were found. He said that this is the best opinion you can receive.
7. Public Comment Session – There were two speakers. Peter Somssich (Sustainability Ordinance) and Margot Doering (via Zoom) (HDC new construction).
8. First Reading of Ordinance Amending Chapter 10, Zoning Ordinance, Article 5 – Dimensional and Intensity Standards, Section 10.515.14, Power Generators; Article 15, Definitions, Section 10.1530 – Terms of General Applicability, amending Building Coverage, Mechanical System, Power Generator and Structure – Voted to pass first reading and schedule public hearing and second reading for the February 17, 2026 City Council meeting.

9. First Reading of Ordinance Amending Chapter 10, Zoning Ordinance, Article I – Purpose and Applicability, Section 10.122 (1) Sustainability Objections; Article 4 – Zoning and Use Regulations, Section 10.440 – amending Table of Uses for Ground Mounted Solar Energy Systems; Article 8 – Supplemental Use Standards, Section 10.811 – amending Accessory Uses to Permitted Residential Uses; and Article 15 – Definitions, Section 10.1530 – Terms of General Applicability, amending Solar Energy Systems and Structure – Moved to pass first reading and schedule public hearing and second reading for the February 17, 2026 City Council meeting.

Voted to amend Section 10.122 (1) Sustainability Objections to “Objectives”.

Main Motion passed as amended.

10. First Reading of Ordinance Amending Chapter 10, Zoning Ordinance, Article 8 – Supplemental Use Standards, Section 10.814 – Accessory Dwelling Units, amending ordinance to comply with state law; and amendments to Article 4 – Zoning and Use Regulations, Section 10.440 – amending Table of Uses for Accessory Dwelling Units - **Voted** to pass first reading and schedule public hearing and second reading for the February 17, 2026 City Council meeting.
11. First Reading of Ordinance Amending Chapter 10, Zoning Ordinance, Article 11 – Site Development Standards, Section 10.1112.311 – Off-Street Parking – Dwelling Unit Floor Area – Required Parking Spaces – **Voted** to pass first reading and schedule public hearing and second reading for February 17, 2026 City Council meeting.
12. Optional Veterans Tax Credit for Service-Connected Total Disability – **Voted** to schedule a public hearing at the February 17, 2026 City Council meeting.
13. Request for Public Hearing Regarding Disabled Exemptions – **Voted** to schedule a public hearing at the February 17, 2026 City Council meeting.
14. Request for Public Hearing Regarding Elderly Exemptions – **Voted** to schedule a public hearing at the February 17, 2026 City Council meeting.
15. Access Easements for Water Services for Property Located at 0 Banfield Road – **Voted** to authorize the City Manager to accept and record an Access Easement for Water Services from Chinburg Development, LLC.
16. Drainage Easement at 333 Borthwick Avenue – **Voted** to authorize the City Manager to accept and record an Access Easement for Water Services from HCA Health Services of NH in a substantially similar form to the easement deed contained in the agenda packet.

17. Consent Agenda – **Voted** to adopt the Consent Agenda.

A. Eversource Petition and Pole License Requests:

- Installation of 1 pole on Thornton Street #63-0763
- Installation of 1 pole on Rockingham Avenue #63-0764
- Installation of 1 pole on Bartlett Street #63-0765
- Installation of 1 pole on Pierce Island Road #63-0766
- Installation of 1 pole on Court Street #63-0768

(Sample motion – move to refer to the City Manager with Authority to Act)

B. Letter from Michaela Kneuer, Big Brothers Big Sisters, requesting permission to hold the 18th Annual Stiletto Sprint on Saturday, September 19, 2026, from 1:00p.m. to 4:00 p.m. ***(Sample motion – move to refer to the City Manager with Authority to Act)***

C. Letter from Rich Clyborne, Gundalow Company, requesting permission to conduct the 2026 Riverfest event on Saturday, July 11, 2026, from 10:00 a.m. to 4:00 p.m. at the Puddle Dock area ***(Sample motion – move to refer to the City Manager with Authority to Act)***

18. Email Correspondence – **Voted** to accept and place on file.

19. Letter from Julien Icher, The Lafayette Trail, Inc., requesting permission to donate and install an official Lafayette Trail Revolutionary War sign at the Plains – **Voted** to refer to the City Manager with Authority to Act.

20. Letter from Attorney Derek Durbin requesting the City Council authorize the City Manager to execute an easement deed for 4 Sagamore Road in substantially similar form to the draft easement deed – **Voted** to refer to the Legal Department for report back.

21. Ethics Committee Drawing by Lot – Councilor Moreau's name was selected to serve on the Ethics Committee at a Drawing by Lot.

22. Board, Commission, and Committee Assignments for City Councilors – Mayor McEachern announced the City Council Assignments:

Mayor McEachern – Legislative Sub-Committee, Economic Development Commission (Ex-officio), Rockingham Planning Commission, and Veterans Organization

Assistant Mayor Kelley – African Burying Grounds Preservation Committee, Legislative Sub-Committee, and Trees & Public Greenery Committee

Councilor Cook – Arts & Cultural Commission, Chamber of Commerce, Historic District Commission, Legislative Sub-Committee, Municipal Building Blue Ribbon Committee, and Public Art Review Committee

Councilor Tabor – Fee Schedule Study Committee, Energy Advisory Committee, Municipal Building Blue Ribbon Committee, and Public Access Financial Advisory Committee

Councilor Blalock – City-wide Neighborhood Blue Ribbon Committee, Economic Development Commission, Recreation Board, Safe Water Advisory Group Blue Ribbon Committee, and Sister Cities Blue Ribbon Committee

Councilor Bagley – Audit Committee, Fee Schedule Study Committee, Municipal Building Blue Ribbon Committee, and Pease Development Authority

Councilor Moreau – Audit Committee, Fee Schedule Study Committee, Planning Board, and Rockingham Planning Commission

Councilor Flynn – Audit Committee, Economic Development Commission, Legislative Sub-Committee, and Sister Cities Blue Ribbon Committee

Councilor Hopkins – Parking & Traffic Safety Committee and Sustainability Committee

23. Approval of City Council Rules and Ordinances – **Voted** to amend City Council Rule 7 – Order of Business to remove roman numerals and to replace them with numbers.

24. Ratification of City Council Policies – **Voted** to ratify the City Council Policies as presented.

25. Ratification of Blue Ribbon Committees – **Voted** to ratify the following Blue Ribbon Committees – African Burying Grounds Preservation Committee, Citywide Neighborhood Committee, Housing Committee, Municipal Building Blue Ribbon Committee, Safe Water Advisory Group (SWAG), and Sister Cities Blue Ribbon Committee.

26. Reappointment of City Manager Conard to the Pease Development Authority – **Voted** to reappoint City Manager Conard to the Pease Development Authority.

27. Appointments to be Considered – The City Council considered the appointments as presented and will act upon them at the February 2, 2026 meeting.

- Reappointment of Jeffrey Cooper to the Arts & Cultural Commission
- Appointment of Demi Dubois to the Arts & Cultural Commission
- Reappointment of Eli Kaynor to the Arts & Cultural Commission
- Appointment of Hope Anderson Puzzo to the Arts & Cultural Commission
- Appointment of Margherita Giacobbi as an Alternate to the Arts & Cultural Commission
- Appointment of Joshua Cyr to the Economic Development Commission
- Appointment of Jason Goodrich as an Alternate to the Economic Development Commission
- Appointment of Amy Dutton to the Cemetery Commission
- Appointment of Jennifer Merriam to the Cemetery Commission
- Appointment of Susan Sterry to the Municipal Building Ribbon Committee

28. Resignation of Cassandra Lund from the Arts and Cultural Commission – **Voted** to accept with regret the resignation of Cassandra Lund from the Arts and Cultural Commission and send a letter to Cassandra thanking her for serving the city.

29. City Council Retreat Update – Mayor McEachern reported that the City Council had a successful retreat and set priorities that will be part of the budget and will align with what the City Council does.
30. Public Art Review Committee Recommendation for Temporary Art Display of PRIDE Mural – **Voted** to approve the recommendation of the PARC.
31. Request for first reading of Ordinance creating a permanent Sister City Committee – **Voted** to schedule and hold first reading of the draft Sister City Committee Ordinance at the February 2, 2026 City Council meeting.
32. Request a report back from the Planning & Sustainability Staff on how to remove new construction from Historic District Commission's purview – Moved to request a report back from the Planning & Sustainability staff on how to remove new construction from Historic District Commissions' purview. Moved a friendly amendment to request a report back from the Planning & Sustainability staff, Historic District Commission and the Planning Board on the impact and costs associated with review of new construction from the Historic District Commission, and any recommendation to improve review efficiency.

Assistant Mayor Kelley asked the Legal Department to provide a report back on whether this would be considered spot zoning.

Voted to suspend the rules to allow Historic District Commission Chair Reagan Ruedig to speak on this matter.

Main motion passed as amended.

33. Request to Schedule a Work Session to consider enacting RSA 79-E (Community Revitalization Tax Relief Incentive) into our Zoning Ordinance – Councilor Moreau requested to hold a Work Session with the staff to conduct a thorough review of RSA 79-E to direct and provide staff with a framework to move forward the Community Revitalization Tax Relief Incentive into our zoning ordinance and formal process.
34. Acceptance of Donation to the Senior Activity Center Luncheon Fund 13 from Karen Parnes - \$500.00 – **Voted** to approve and accept the donation as presented.
35. City Manager's Informational Items:
- *Update on 2123 Time Capsule – City Manager Conard reported that the 2123 Time Capsule is on display and will remain in the Portsmouth Room for a period of time. She said the capsule was part of the work during our 400th anniversary and was led by former Assistant Mayor Jim Splaine and former Mayor Bob Lister. She said contents of the capsule are items of*

significance and a plaque will be created in honor of the time capsule and the work of former Assistant Mayor Splaine and former Mayor Lister.

- *Master Plan Update – City Manager Conard reported our Master Plan consultant Utile completed the visioning-stage engagement that was followed by the Public Visioning Open House in September 2025. She advised the Council that an analysis of the engagement had been drafted into a vision, values, and goals plan. She informed the City Council that the Master Plan Advisory Group and a FlashVote survey was conducted with responses from 362 residents, and we are preparing to launch a public Draft Plan Framework Survey. City Manager Conard announced that an anticipated Draft Plan Open House will be coming in April.*
- *Pease Development Authority Board Meeting Update – City Manager Conard advised the City Council that the PDA and Division of Ports and Harbors will publish an Annual Report in March. She spoke regarding snow operations at Pease indicating that plowing begins when there is an eighth of an inch of snow that takes hours to complete. She said there is 2.8 million square feet of linear apron space and 1.7 million square feet of runway clearance. She said that the men and women do an amazing job, and it is a pleasure to learn more of what they do. She also reported that the Division of Ports and Harbors has received 50% of their total bulk salt. She informed the City Council that the PDA will not be meeting in February, and their March meeting will take place after our City Council meeting, therefore her next report will be in April.*

36. Adjournment – At 9:35 p.m., voted to adjourn the meeting.

Respectfully submitted:

Kelli L. Barnaby, MMC/CNHMC
City Clerk