

CITY COUNCIL MEETING

MUNICIPAL COMPLEX
DATE: MONDAY, JANUARY 6, 2025

PORTSMOUTH, NH
TIME: 7:00PM

Councilor Moreau moved to continue the Non-Public Session after the close of the City Council meeting. Seconded by Assistant Mayor Kelley 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, Blalock, Bagley, Moreau and Lombardi

ABSENT: Councilor Denton

V. INVOCATION

Mayor McEachern asked everyone to join in a moment of silence.

VI. PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE

Luke and Grayson Beyer, winners of the Most Creative Holiday Lights Winner led in the Pledge of Allegiance to the Flag.

PROCLAMATION

1. Stalking Awareness Month

Councilor Cook read the Proclamation on behalf of Mayor McEachern declaring January as Stalking Awareness Month with a call on our citizens to come together to reaffirm our commitment to ending stalking and supporting survivors.

Mayor McEachern presented the Proclamation to Ryan Grogan of the Victim Advocate Program and Steve Gahan, the Police Prosecutor, accepted the Proclamation with thanks and appreciation.

VII. ACCEPTANCE OF MINUTES – OCTOBER 21, 2024 AND NOVEMBER 18, 2024

Councilor Lombardi moved to accept and approve the minutes of the October 21, 2024 and November 18, 2024 City Council meetings. Seconded by Councilor Tabor and voted.

VIII. RECOGNITIONS AND VOLUNTEER COMMITTEE REPORTS

1. Holiday Lights Contest Winners and Honorable Mentions

Mayor McEachern announced the winners of the Holiday Lights Contest and provided them with gift bags. He also expressed his thanks and appreciation to Colleen Ovecka, Co-Chair of the Citywide Neighborhood Committee for her work with the contest.

- Creative First Place: 580 FW Hartford Drive – the Beyer family
- Creative Honorable Mention: 87 Edmonds Avenue – the Noucas family
- Kids' Choice First Place: 625 Lincoln Avenue – Craig Steigerwalt
- Kids' Choice Honorable Mention: 545 FW Hartford Drive – the Buttermore family
- Traditional First Place: 32 Manning Street – Brent Guillot
- Traditional Honorable Mention: 114 Cabot Street – Donna Figler

2. Recognition of David Desfosses, Project Manager for Engineering and Operations

Mayor McEachern recognized Dave for his outstanding work with the city and his contributions to the community. He thanked Dave for being the City's "Ambassador of the Open Door."

Dave thanked Mayor McEachern, City Council, City Manager Conard and the Public Works Department for recognizing him and his work, it is appreciated.

IX. PUBLIC COMMENT SESSION

Roy Helsel asked why property owners taxes increased but commercial properties did not. He said his property increased 70% and he would like to know why there is such a disparity in the taxes.

Buzz Scherr spoke regarding the importance of the need for a new Police Facility. He would like the City Council to set a date certain for when the Blue Ribbon Committee process will begin. He said the Blue Ribbon Committee needs to operate without hesitation to get the job done.

Jim Hewitt said he has received no communication from the city on the request for reimbursement of his attorney fees. He said the City Council refusal to answer the question is cruel and it is an administrative decision. He stated he spent \$28,000.00 to keep his good name and the city found him not guilty of the charges against him.

Sue Polidura said the city should pay Mr. Hewitt the money he paid to have him represented by an attorney for charges against him. She said she would like to see the city put together a committee to work on the 250th Celebration of signing the Declaration of Independence.

Esther Kennedy asked the City Council to think about the residents of the city with the increase of taxes. She also spoke regarding infrastructure concerns and improvements needed in the city.

Julie Gallot spoke regarding the Blue Ribbon Committee on Municipal Buildings and asked that the Committee look at the elementary schools as well in the process of reviewing the Police Facility.

Jeff Thomson, Kittery, Maine, spoke regarding Governor Benning Wentworth's tomb. He said that there is a parking space right near the tomb and suggested that the parking space be eliminated with a historical marker put in its place to signify Governor Wentworth's burial location. Mr. Thomson said that he would pay for the installation and the marker if the city was not willing to put one in place.

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

(There are no items under this section of the agenda this evening).

XI. CITY MANAGER'S ITEMS WHICH REQUIRE ACTION

A. CITY MANAGER CONARD

1. Planning Board Recommendation on Osprey Landing Open Space

Councilor Moreau moved to approve the acceptance, execution and recording of the terms of a restrictive covenant agreement as outlined in the agenda packet. Seconded by Councilor Blalock and voted.

2. Ratification of Water Line Agreement with CSX Railroad Crossing on Market Street Extension

City Manager Conard spoke regarding the water line improvements done on Market Street Extension.

Assistant Mayor Kelley moved to ratify the City Manager's execution of the Facility Encroachment Agreement with CSX Transportation, Inc., contained in the agenda packet. Seconded by Councilor Bagley and voted.

XII. CONSENT AGENDA

- A. Letter from Maria Stephanou, Director, requesting permission to hold the annual Seacoast Walk to End Alzheimer's on Sunday, October 26, 2025 (***Anticipated action – moved to refer to the City Manager with Authority to Act***)

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

XIII. PRESENTATIONS AND WRITTEN COMMUNICATIONS

A. Email Correspondence

Councilor Moreau moved to accept and place on file. Seconded by Councilor Bagley and voted.

B. Letter from Cortney Sawyer, McNabb Properties regarding Outdoor Dining & Chair Fee Policy

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

Mayor McEachern said the policy will be reviewed.

Councilor Cook said the Governance Committee will be looking at encumbrances and a way to clean up the ordinance.

Motion passed.

C. Letter from Justin Chenette, Sweetser, requesting reimbursement of \$1,500.00 for providing mental health services to Portsmouth residents

Councilor Lombardi moved to refer to the Welfare and Legal Departments. Seconded by Councilor Blalock.

City Attorney Morrell said she will report back and work with the Welfare Department on this matter.

XIV. MAYOR McEACHERN

1. Municipal Building Blue Ribbon Committee Appointments

- Cameron Horack
- Mary Lou McElwain
- Renee Plummer
- John O'Leary
- Peter G. Weeks
- Rick Chellman, Planning Board Chair
- Kate Coyle, Police Commissioner Chair
- Mark Newport, Police Chief
- Karen Conard, City Manager
- John Tabor, City Councilor
- Kate Cook, City Councilor

Councilor Moreau moved the appointments to the Municipal Building Blue Ribbon Committee as presented. Seconded by Councilor Blalock.

Mayor McEachern said there is no Chair, but the first act would be to elect a Chair for the Committee. He said the term for the Committee would be through the rest of this year and he would like to have information back before we adopt the Capital Improvement Plan.

Councilor Blalock thanked Mayor McEachern for appointing the Committee and looks forward to the work that will be accomplished.

Mayor McEachern stated that the meetings will be public.

Councilor Bagley said it might make sense to review the elementary schools.

Motion passed.

2. Appointments to be Considered

- Reappointment of Jeff Stern to the Board of Library Trustees
- Appointment of Bill Bowen to the Planning Board
- Reappointment of Anthony Coviello to the Planning Board
- Appointment of Ryann Wolf to the Planning Board
- Appointment of Frank Perier as an Alternate to the Planning Board
- Appointment of Frederick Calcinari to the Sustainability Committee
- Appointment of Rhianne Tallarico to the Sustainability Committee
- Reappointment of Thomas Watson to the Trustee of the Trust Funds

The City Council considered the appointments outlined above that will be voted upon at the January 21, 2025, City Council meeting.

3. Resignation – Jessica Dickey from the Arts & Cultural Commission

Councilor Blalock moved to accept the resignation effective immediately with regret and to send a letter of thanks for her service to the City. Seconded by Councilor Bagley and voted.

4. Establishment of City Manager Evaluation Committee

Councilor Tabor moved to form the City Manager Evaluation Committee composing of Assistant Mayor Kelley, Councilor Blalock, and Councilor Bagley. Seconded by Councilor Moreau and voted.

XV. CITY COUNCIL MEMBERS

A. COUNCILOR COOK

Councilor Cook moved to adopt the Policy, and the Handbook as presented. Seconded by Assistant Mayor Kelley and voted.

B. COUNCILOR BAGLEY

1. Parking & Traffic Safety Committee Action Sheet and Minutes of the December 5, 2024 meeting

Councilor Bagley moved to approve and accept the action sheet and minutes of the December 5, 2024 Parking & Traffic Safety Committee meeting. Seconded by Councilor Lombardi and voted.

XVI. APPROVAL OF GRANTS/DONATIONS

- A. Acceptance of Donation to the Fire Department from Paul Gormley & Kimi Iguchi

Assistant Mayor Kelley moved to approve and accept the \$1,000.00 donation to the Fire Department to be used at their discretion. Seconded by Councilor Cook and voted.

- B. Acceptance of Grant to the Senior Activity Center

Councilor Blalock moved to approve and accept the grant as presented. Seconded by Councilor Bagley and voted.

- C. Acceptance of FEMA Public Assistance Disaster Grant from the Fire and Public Works Departments - \$9,703.48

Councilor Moreau moved to approve and accept the \$9,703.48 FEMA Public Assistance Disaster Grant for the Fire and Public Works Departments. Seconded by Councilor Blalock and voted.

XVII. CITY MANAGER'S INFORMATIONAL ITEMS

1. City of Portsmouth Designated "SolSmart Bronze" for Solar Energy Leadership

City Manager Conard reported that the city was awarded a Bronze designation from the National SolSmart program for encouraging the growth of clean, affordable solar energy at the local level. She stated that the SolSmart designation aligns with the City's goal of enabling and promoting the

installation of local renewable energy systems in the recently adopted Climate Action Plan and advances the implementation of actions that will increase the supply of renewable energy into the electric grid and energy market serving the City of Portsmouth.

2. Municipal Complex Boiler Building Chimney Status Update

City Manager Conard advised the City Council that a recent inspection of the City Hall Complex Boiler Building chimney showed significant safety concerns related to its condition. She indicated that the inspection showed signs of brick spalling, mortar failure and cracking which could lead to pieces of the chimney falling into the parking area adjacent to the Boiler Building. City Manager Conard advised that the chimney is no longer in use and provides no current or foreseeable function to the City Hall heating system and restoration of the chimney is not recommended. She reported that the staff have barricaded the area around the chimney's base and have reached out to contractors to explore its demolition.

XVIII. MISCELLANEOUS BUSINESS INCLUDING BUSINESS REMAINING UNFINISHED AT PREVIOUS MEETING

(There are no items under this section of the agenda this evening)

XIX. ADJOURNMENT

At 8:10 p.m., Assistant Mayor Kelley moved to adjourn the meeting to continue the Non-Public Session in Conference Room A. Seconded by Councilor Cook and voted.

At 8:50 p.m., Councilor Moreau moved to close the Non-Public Session and seal the minutes. Seconded by Councilor Bagley and voted.



KELLI L. BARNABY, MMC/CNHMC
CITY CLERK