

**The Board of Fire Commissioners  
Portsmouth Fire Department**

Fire Station 2  
George Pierce Training Room  
February 11, 2025

Portsmouth, NH  
1800 hours

**I. Call to Order:**

Commissioner Gamester called the meeting to order at 1800 hours.

**II. Pledge of Allegiance with Attendance:**

Commissioner Gamester led the pledge of allegiance.

Present were Commissioners: Richard Gamester and Michael Hughes; Fire Chief William McQuillen, Assistant Fire Chief Jason Gionet, Deputy Fire Chief Patrick Howe, Administrative Manager Tracy Freeman, Lieutenant Brian Wade, Firefighters: Kaycee Reagan, Jonathan Gray, Nathaniel Wiggin, Adam LaMonica, Steven Morse and Edward Sweeney. Members of the public present were Esther Kennedy and Petra Houda.

**III. Approval of Minutes of Previous Meeting:**

*Motion, to approve the minutes of January 10, 2025, was made by Commissioner Hughes. Motion was seconded by Chairman Gamester and passed unanimously.*

*Commissioner Hughes made the motion to suspend the rules and move to Item V. Public Hearings. Motion was seconded by Chairman Gamester and passed unanimously.*

**IV. Public Comment Session:**

Petra Huda asked the Chief about the software line item in the department's budget, \$35K. Chief McQuillen answered that it is the department's portion of the new records management CAD system at the Police Department.

**V. Public Hearings:**

Chief McQuillen presented the department's FY2026 proposed budget request of \$12,870,012 which represents a \$362,485 or 2.9% increase over FY25, which maintains service levels, and staffing at 15 personnel per shift with five at each station, covers increases in operation and contractual costs, however, does limit succession planning. The Chief also identified the various impacts affecting the proposed budget, the department's goals, calls for service trends, which have been increasing, and ambulance collections, which have increased 57% since FY14.

The Chief also provided an overview of what the FY2026 proposed budget would be at the original request of 3.5% and at the Council's comparison of 0%. At 0%,

it would reduce service levels and leave no succession planning, and the contractual increases would reduce shift coverage lines and ultimately leading to a “brown out” of station(s) to make up the difference. The Department's proposed FY2026 Budget at 2.9%, covers increases in operating and contractual costs recognizing the 2% COLA for Fire Fighters and Officers, Workers Compensation increase of 8% over FY25 (\$44,253), Health Insurance Increase of 4.17% over FY25 (\$37,231), Dental increase of 5% over FY25 (\$3,934) and Health Insurance Stipend Reimbursement increase of 18.13% over FY25 (\$34,909) and slight increase in leave coverage accounts of 2.68% over FY25 (\$43,000) recognizing Firefighters and Officers new contract rates and leave trends.

After a question-and-answer session, Chairman Gamester closed the Public Hearing at 1840 hours and returned to Item IV. Public Comment Session.

**VI. Presentation of Written Communications:**

Chief McQuillen read thank you letter received from Exeter Fire Department for our department’s mutual aid response to the forest fire from November 18 – 20, 2024.

**VII. Recognition of Groups or Individuals:**

Chief McQuillen provided a brief description of what the Paramedic program entails and the requirements of a Paramedic. Chief McQuillen recognized NEEMSI Paramedic Graduates Firefighters: Kaycee Reagan, Nathaniel Wiggin and Zachary Strozewski and congratulated them on their hard work, dedication and achievement.

**VIII. Reports:**

**A. Fire Chief’s Reports:**

*Commissioner Hughes motioned to discuss Chief’s reports 25-016 through 25-019. Motion was seconded by Chairman Gamester.*

Fire Chief McQuillen reviewed reports with the Commission.

Report (016), 2025 Response Report for January 2025. The report shows the department responding to a total of 557 calls for the month: 239 Fire Calls with EMS Services and 146 Fire and Related Service Calls and 318 Ambulance Calls. Chief spoke briefly about some of the activities for the month, noting a MVA with 50 gallons of diesel spilt, a building fire at 2200 Lafayette Road, mutual aid to Dover for a 1<sup>st</sup> alarm fire, and a building fire at 220 Cass St. Chief also noted the City of Portsmouth feeling the effects of an earthquake and asked that residents call 911 in the event of an emergency. The safety message focused on heating fires which tend to peak during the winter months. Report (017), Fire and EMS Call Summary Reports, shows the department responded to 239 fire calls for the month of January. EMS activity was 318 with the top three responses being for injury to head/scalp, weakness and alcohol abuse and effects. There were 4 calls for suicidal or self-harm ideation or thoughts, 1 drug

overdose/abuse and 71 non-transports. Report (018), FY25 Budget, Chief reviewed the budget noting savings within the salary lines due to the difference in pay rates from retirements of senior firefighters to new hires along with several military deployments over the past year. We are tracking about 1% to the good and is where we projected to be at this point in the year. Report (007), Overtime Analysis, provided a breakdown of how overtime was used in the month of January along with a summary of what was charged to OT-Recall for the month.

*Motion, to accept Chief's Reports 25-016 through 25-019, was made by Commissioner Hughes. Motion was seconded by Chairman Gamester and passed unanimously.*

**B. Staff Reports:**

Assistant Chief Gionet reported on facilities and operations happening within the department. The building security project has wrapped up, annual ladder testing completed and all passed, Truck 2 was found to have cracks in the rear springs and will be repaired in the coming days. Probationary Firefighters Pols and Boucher have completed their two weeks of orientation and have been assigned to their shifts. The department has been utilizing the WHEB building for training this month and Captain Kenneway continues EMS training at the SIM Lab at the hospital for department personnel.

Deputy Chief Howe reported on Fire Prevention activity for the month with 32 permits issued and 63 inspections done. FPO Putney and Wheeler and Deputy Howe attended the New Hampshire Fire Prevention Society's annual meeting, FPOs Putney and Wheeler did an interview with WMUR on Carbon Monoxide alarms and FPOs Putney sat on oral boards for Concord's Asst. Fire Marshal position.

**IX. Old Business:** None.

**IX. New Business:**

*Motion, to approve the proposed FY2026 budget as presented at 2.9% increase, and forward to City Manager and City Council, was made by Commissioner Hughes. Motion was seconded by Chairman Gamester and passed unanimously*

**X. Adjournment:**

*Motion, to adjourn at 1900 hours, was made by Commissioner Hughes. Motion was seconded by Chairman Gamester and passed unanimously.*