



CITY OF PORTSMOUTH, NEW HAMPSHIRE

Municipal Building Blue Ribbon Committee

Tuesday, June 24, 2025 at 2:00 p.m.

Conference Room A, City Hall

1 Junkins Avenue, Portsmouth, NH

Meeting Minutes

Committee Members Present: Councilor John Tabor (Co-Chair), Councilor Kate Cook (Co-Chair), City Manager Karen Conard, Planning Board Chair Rick Chellman, Police Chief Mark Newport, Cameron Horack, Mary Lou McElwain, John O'Leary, Peter G. Weeks, Renee Plummer

Committee Members Not Present: Police Commission Chair Kate Coyle

Members of the Public: Richard Brady & John Scruggs of Matrix Group Consulting (via Zoom), Deputy Chief Maloney, Karen Senecal

Staff Present: Department of Public Works Director Peter Rice, Facilities Manager Joe Almeida, Executive Assistant Jackie Burnett (minute taker)

I. Roll Call

Roll Call was conducted and quorum confirmed at 2:02 PM.

II. Approval of June 11, 2025 Minutes

Amendments:

- City Manager Conard and Police Chief Mark Newport to be added to the committee member list.
- Mary Lou McElwain requested a correction to clarify that a referenced facility plan was from 2016, not 2017.
- Cameron Horack recommended updating the vote count to reflect a 10-0 result.
Peter Weeks moved to approve the amended minutes; seconded by Cameron Horack.
Motion passed unanimously (10-0-1)

III. Matrix Study and Facility Recommendations (Q&A and Discussion)

Overview of Matrix Study & Presentation

Councilor John Tabor opened by emphasizing the importance of understanding current and future staffing and space needs. Referenced the prior space study by ADG Consulting (approximately 50,857 sq. ft., excluding the firing range), contrasting with the Matrix Group's recommendation (40,000 sq. ft., including a firing range).

Peter Rice noted the Matrix report is based on a new standalone structure and not a reuse of existing space. Final recommendations will be made by collaboration with the newly hired architectural and engineering firm.

City Manager Karen Conard announced that architectural firm JSA is under contract; ADG is a subcontractor, allowing continuity with prior studies. Engagement and input from this committee, along with stakeholder focus groups, will be a key part of JSA's process.

Richard Brady and John Scruggs PowerPoint Presentation

- Reviewed Matrix's scope – assessing both current and projected staffing and facility needs.
 - Confirmed PD facility is in poor condition with layout deficiencies.
 - Staffing projection of 110 personnel by 2035, derived from current workload, population growth (12.3% by 2035), and minimum staffing coverage needs.
 - Reviewed methodology: facility walk-through, blueprint reviews, prior space-needs analysis, and demographic trends.
- a. Peter Weeks asked whether the staffing projections were based on the number of current employed officers or the number budgeted. Mr. Brady confirmed the analysis was based on the current staffing level of 64 officers but emphasized that the projections reflect operational need, not just existing staffing. For example, while the department currently has 64 sworn officers, the analysis indicates that at least 70 are needed to maintain effective day-to-day operations. Mr. Scruggs added that the staffing model accounts for factors such as time off and shift coverage, and is based around minimum staffing requirements.

- b. Cameron Horack requested a summary or bullet point version of the Matrix's findings for comparison with ADG's study. Chief Newport highlighted that Matrix's study was more customized, which ADG's was generalized.
- c. Renee Plummer, Planning Board Chair Rich Chellman, Mary Lou McElwain and Councilor Kate Cook raised questions regarding the distinction between usable and recommended space, opportunities for improved space efficiency, and the potential for reusing portions of the existing facility.
 - Facility Manager Joe Almeida clarified that although the current police department occupies approximately 49,000 sq. ft., only about 30,000 sq. ft. is considered usable due to factors such as elevator shafts and mechanical systems.
 - Mr. Brady addressed common inefficiencies and emphasized that modern police facilities benefit from multi-functional spaces and improved adjacencies to enhance space utilization.
 - Mr. Chellman further inquired about additional efficiencies identified when compared to the ADG study. Mr. Brady responded that while advancements in technology can increase space requirements in some areas, efficiencies can be achieved through thoughtful design – such as optimizing adjacencies and incorporating multi-purpose rooms.
 - Councilor Tabor asked about the need for community rooms and server space in a modern police facility. John Scruggs explained that community rooms are generally designed for flexible use, serving functions such as training and community events/meetings. He added that while server rooms will still be necessary, their footprint is expected to be smaller due to the increasing reliance on cloud-based IT infrastructure.
- d. Mrs. McElwain appreciated the depth and clarity of the Matrix report but noted that it includes a 10-year projection, compared to ADG's 20-year forecast. She also referenced page 108 of the report, which highlights the challenges of working within an existing structure.
- e. John O'Leary appreciated the report, praising the police department's service under difficult conditions and the City Council's support. He noted that, unlike the library project where new construction allowed for optimal space, the current project faces constraints that will affect space planning.
- f. Councilor Cook requested a comparison chart of existing space vs. recommendations, which DPW Director Peter Rice deferred to the new architects (JSA).
- g. Mrs. McElwain asked about the police zones. Chief Newport explained that the city is divided into four zones: Zone 1 (South Side), Zone 2 (North Side/Pease/Woodbury Ave.), Zone 3 (Lafayette Rd.), and Zone 4 (Downtown). Mr. Chellman noted that a district map is available on page 141 of the report.
- h. Director Rice confirmed that Matrix's scope of work concludes with the final report, but the city can engage them for third-party review if needed. Mr. Weeks asked about

extending Matrix's services. Director Rice confirmed additional services are possible with additional funding.

IV. New Business

New Architectural Firm (JSA)

- a. Peter Weeks and Mary Lou McElwain inquired about project timelines and how previous assessments, such as the 2014 ISES Building Condition Report, would be incorporated into the current planning process.
 - Director Rice confirmed that all existing documentation, including past assessments, will be provided to JSA to inform their work. He also noted that the city has invested approximately \$800,000 to \$1 million in building improvements over the past 8 to 10 years; however, those investments do not affect the scope of the current project.
- b. Director Rice and City Manager Conard explained that project funding will be phased and aligned with key milestones (basis of design, final design, etc.). A bond authorization has already been secured. Design services are generally expected to cost between 8-10% of the total project budget.
- c. Councilors Cook and Tabor emphasized the need for the committee to report back to the City Council and Police Commission regarding both the architectural firm selection and final Matrix study.
- d. Cameron Horack raised the question of whether a November 2025 proposal to the City Council is realistic; City Manager Conard suggested that the timeline will extend into 2026.
- e. The committee discussed the Capital Improvement Plan (CIP) and budget timelines to better understand when funding could be secured. Mr. Horack expressed a desire for current department staff to see the results of their efforts but acknowledged that the overall project timeline may not allow for that outcome.

V. Public Comment: There were no public comments offered by attendees.

VI. Future Meetings & Adjournment

Next Meeting: Wednesday, July 23rd, 2025 @ 3:30pm (one meeting in July)

July 23 Agenda Suggestions:

- Initial engagement and kickoff with JSA (schedules permitting).
- Discussion of project scope and JSA's and city responsibilities/. Mr. Weeks requested a copy of what the project scope.
- Continued review of space recommendations and reuse potential.

A motion to adjourn the meeting was made by Councilor Cook; seconded by Cameron Horack. Motion passed unanimously (10-0-1).

Meeting adjourned.