

## CITY COUNCIL MEETING

MUNICIPAL COMPLEX  
DATE: TUESDAY, FEBRUARY 17, 2026

PORTSMOUTH, NH  
TIME: 7:00PM

**Assistant Mayor Kelley moved to close the Non-Public Session and seal the minutes. Seconded by Councilor Cook and voted.**

### **3. CALL TO ORDER**

Mayor McEachern called the meeting to order at 7:13 p.m.

### **4. ROLL CALL**

**PRESENT:** Mayor McEachern, Assistant Mayor Kelley, Councilors Tabor, Cook, Blalock, Bagley, Moreau, Flynn, and Hopkins

### **5. INVOCATION**

Mayor McEachern requested to honor Walter Wakefield by remembering him as an avid antique book collector, a retired Portsmouth Firefighter, and resident that will be missed.

### **6. PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE**

**7. ACCEPTANCE OF MINUTES** – (There are no minutes on for acceptance this evening)

### **8. RECOGNITIONS AND VOLUNTEER COMMITTEE REPORTS**

#### **A. Recognition of Scholastic Writing Award Winners**

Mayor McEachern congratulated the three Portsmouth High School National Scholastic Writing Award Program Winners who won a total of nine Scholastic Writing Awards, two Gold keys, three Silver keys and four honorable mentions.

Senior Kay Rapaport won a Gold Key award for her Personal Essay & Memoir "Sculpting Bodies" and was one of just five students statewide selected to receive an American Voices Award. She also received an Honorable Mention for her poem, "Through the Fire."

Freshman Kenzie Rapaport won a Gold Key award for her short story, "Astro World" and three Silver Key awards: one in Speculative Fiction for her work "Speed Dial" and two in Poetry for her poems "Word of Mouth" and "Emails from the Navy." She also received Honorable Mention recognition for each of two poems, "Gravity Falls" and "Through the Window."

#### **B. Recognition of Portsmouth High School Boys Alpine Ski Team Third Straight State Championship**

Mayor McEachern congratulated the fifteen-member Portsmouth High School Boys' Clipper Alpine ski team who won five of their six regular-season races, with seven of them qualifying to compete in the championships last week.

The team includes Team Captains Will DeDeus and Connor Williams, Charlie Ruedig, Ryan Erwin, Henry Hyland, Ayler Peabody, Trip Gianniny and Jack Martin.

He recognized the team's third straight Division I State Championship stating that the Portsmouth High School boys alpine ski team bested an 18-team field on Tuesday, February 11 at Gilford Ski Resort. Portsmouth placed first in the giant slalom with 377 points and was second in the slalom with 367 for a combined team score of 744 points. Congratulations to the seven out of fifteen team members who qualified for the championships:

Coach Koz stated that Portsmouth is fortunate to have great leadership and commended all teams for its continued perseverance and grit.

**9. PUBLIC COMMENT SESSION (*This session shall not exceed 45 minutes*) – (*participation may be in person or via Zoom*)**

Roy Helsel – spoke to government development and taxation especially pertaining to the city's water/sewer infrastructure and inquired if the system can keep up and that steady development within the city is leading to backup and developers should be required to pay taxes.

Gerald Duffy – spoke to housing and requested that the City Council consider jump starting a housing action plan. Mr. Duffy spoke to Ruth Griffin place and the significance of the city offering more workforce housing opportunities, while additionally offering affordable housing for low-income households. He stated that by the City Council establishing a housing action plan they would be setting up the stage to support more affordable housing. Additionally, stating this would ensure that the City of Portsmouth is able to maintain their diverse population and be an example to other communities.

**10. PUBLIC HEARINGS AND VOTE ON ORDINANCES AND/OR RESOLUTIONS**

**First Reading of Ordinance:**

- A. First Reading of Ordinance Amending Chapter 1, ADMINISTRATIVE CODE, Article IV – COMMISSIONS AND AUTHORITIES, Section 1.415, be added to establish a permanent Sister City Committee

Councilor Blalock requested to amend the ordinance to add numbers 9, and 10.

Councilor Cook asked City Attorney Morrell if she would be required to recuse herself serving on the Japan American Society which recognizing the Peace Treaty stating that it has no financial impact on the board.

City Attorney Morrell confirmed she would not be required to recuse herself.

**Councilor Bagley moved to pass first reading and amend ordinance to add numbers 9, and 10 and schedule a public hearing and second reading at the March 16, 2026, City Council meeting. Seconded by Councilor Blalock and voted**

- B. First Reading of Ordinance Amending Chapter 10, Zoning Ordinance as follows: rezone parcel described on the City Tax Map 209, Lot 87 from Single Residence B (SRB) to Gateway Neighborhood Mixed Use Center (G2); and Article 4 Zoning Districts and Use Regulations, Section 10.440, Use 3.40 "Museum" to be changed from "S", Special Exception to "P", Permitted in Gateway Neighborhood Mixed Use Corridor (G1) and G2. The Zoning Maps to be amended are referenced in the City's Zoning Ordinance at Chapter 10, Article 4, Zoning and District Use Regulations, referenced in the 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, collectively the "Zoning Maps"

**Councilor Tabor moved to pass first reading and schedule a public hearing and second reading at the March 16, 2026, City Council meeting. Seconded by Assistant Mayor Kelley and voted**

Councilor Moreau spoke to the ordinance being sent back to the Planning Board for review and deliberations regarding Gateway Neighborhood and whether it should be considered a civic property over being Gateway and appreciates City Council's patience.

Councilor Cook spoke to a permitting museum-use within the Gateway Neighborhood

Councilor Moreau spoke to more accessible permitting process.

Mayor McEachern stated that the amendment would result in saving time and does not feel it would be a substantial change for zoning.

- C. 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

**Councilor Moreau moved to pass first reading and schedule a public hearing and second reading for the March 16, 2026 City Council meeting. Seconded by Councilor Flynn and voted**

Councilor Tabor stated he believes this amendment will lead to more housing opportunities.

Councilor Moreau spoke to slowly working towards eliminating some of the City's older zoning designations. Advising City Council that it is a slow crawl, but the community will eventually get there.

Mayor McEachern spoke to zoning restrictions lead to slower process for property rights.

- D. PUBLIC HEARING AND ADOPTION of Resolution Pursuant to RSA 72:35 for the Optional Veterans Tax Credit for Service-Connected Total Disability
- **PRESENTATION**
  - **CITY COUNCIL QUESTIONS**
  - **PUBLIC HEARING SPEAKERS**
  - **ADDITIONAL COUNCIL QUESTIONS AND DELIBERATIONS**

OPTION 1:

Amend the optional Tax Credit for Service-Connected Total Disability to \$4,750 as of April 1, 2026, on the taxes due on the residential property of any veteran who has been honorably discharged or an officer honorably separated from military service and; who has a total and permanent service-connected disability; OR is a double amputee or paraplegic because of the service-connected injury; OR is the surviving spouse of a qualified veteran and has not remarried.

OPTION 2:

Amend the optional Tax Credit for Service-Connected Total Disability to \$5,000 as of April 1, 2026, on the taxes due on the residential property of any veteran who has been honorably discharged or an officer honorably separated from military service and; who has a total and permanent service-connected disability; OR is a double amputee or paraplegic because of the service-connected injury; OR is the surviving spouse of a qualified veteran and has not remarried.

OPTION 3:

Do nothing. Beginning with April 1, 2026, tax year, qualified applicants choosing to receive the optional Tax Credit for Service-Connected Total Disability, will not be eligible to receive a tax credit under RSA's 72:28, 72:28-b, and 72:28-c, or an exemption under 72:36-a. The optional Tax Credit for Service-Connected Total Disability will remain at the current amount of \$4,000.00.

Assessing Director Roseann Maurice reviewed tax exemption and presented PowerPoint slides to Mayor McEachern and City Council members.

Director Maurice advised council of House Bill 99 which amending 72:35 in which language now states Total and Permanent Disability.

She additionally stated that in the years past residents were able to stack exemptions and they are no longer able to do that.

Councilor Bagley spoke to normally in support of higher amounts.

Councilor Moreau advised Councilor Bagley they are only discussing the Veterans Tax Exemption

Director Maurice spoke to a letter being sent out to residents.

Mayor McEachern acknowledged former Councilor Denton's time working on the

Mayor McEachern opened the public hearing. With no speakers, Mayor McEachern closed the public hearing.

**Motion to adopt the Veteran's Tax Exemption passed unanimously.**

- E. PUBLIC HEARING AND ADOPTION of Resolution Pursuant to RSA 72:39-b regarding the elderly exemption on assessed value for qualified taxpayers
- **PRESENTATION**
  - **CITY COUNCIL QUESTIONS**
  - **PUBLIC HEARING SPEAKERS**
  - **ADDITIONAL COUNCIL QUESTIONS AND DELIBERATIONS**

OPTION 1:

Proposed increase of Elderly Exemption by the Social Security cost-of-living increase

Single	\$57,089 (increase of \$1,555)
Married	\$74,843 (increase of \$2,039)
Asset Limit	\$500,000

OPTION 2:

Proposed increase of Elderly Exemption by the November to November consumer price index

Single	\$57,072 (increase of \$1,538)
Married	\$74,821 (increase of \$2,017)
Asset Limit	\$500,000

OPTION 3

Proposed increase of Elderly Exemption

Do Nothing

The elderly exemption shall remain unchanged except as amended hereby

Assessing Director Roseann Maurice reviewed tax exemption and presented PowerPoint slides to Mayor McEachern and City Council members. She spoke to the details of option 4.

**Motion to hold public hearing and adoption of the Elderly Tax Exemption at the March 16, 2026 passed unanimously.**

- F. PUBLIC HEARING AND ADOPTION of Resolution Pursuant to RSA 72:37-b regarding the disabled exemption based on assessed value for qualified taxpayers
- **PRESENTATION**
  - **CITY COUNCIL QUESTIONS**
  - **PUBLIC HEARING SPEAKERS**
  - **ADDITIONAL COUNCIL QUESTIONS AND DELIBERATIONS**

OPTION 1:

Proposed increase of Disabled Exemption by the Social Security cost-of-living increase

Single	\$57,089 (increase of \$1,555)
Married	\$74,843 (increase of \$2,039)
Asset Limit	\$500,000

OPTION 2:

Proposed increase of Disabled Exemption by the November to November consumer price index

Single	\$57,072 (increase of \$1,538)
Married	\$74,821 (increase of \$2,017)
Asset Limit	\$500,000

OPTION 3:

Proposed increase of Disabled Exemption

Do Nothing

The disabled exemption shall remain unchanged except as amended hereby

Assessing Director Roseann Maurice reviewed tax exemption and presented PowerPoint slides to Mayor McEachern and City Council members.

She discussed the current income and assets and reviewed option 4. Additionally, the City Council was provided with statistics on the denial process informing City Council that out of 30, 16 have been denied.

**Discussion followed among the City Council and staff regarding the Disabled Exemption**

Mayor McEachern opened the Public Hearing.

Tyler Garzo – expressed his concerns on exclusion and not everyone qualifies.

Mayor McEachern closed the Public Hearing seeing no other speakers.

**Motion to hold public hearing and adoption of the Disabled Tax Exemption at the March 16, 2026 passed with Councilor Bagley voting opposed.**

- G. 11. PUBLIC HEARING AND SECOND READING of Ordinance amendment to Chapter 10, ZONING ORDINANCE, be amended as follows: 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

- **PRESENTATION**
- **CITY COUNCIL QUESTIONS**
- **PUBLIC HEARING SPEAKERS**
- **ADDITIONAL COUNCIL QUESTIONS AND DELIBERATIONS**

Assistant Planning Director Peter Stith reviewed and presented PowerPoint slides to Mayor McEachern and City Council members. He stated that the mechanical systems was adopted in 2025.

Mayor McEachern expressed his appreciation to Assistant Planning Director Stith.

Mayor McEachern opened the public hearing. With no speakers, Mayor McEachern closed the public hearing.

**Councilor Cook moved to pass second reading and hold third and final reading at the March 2, 2026 City Council meeting. Seconded by Councilor Tabor and voted**

**Voted to suspend the rules to take up third and final reading.**

**Voted to pass third and final reading of ordinance**

H. PUBLIC HEARING AND SECOND READING of Ordinance amendment to Chapter 10, ZONING ORDINANCE, be amended as follows: Article I – Purpose and Applicability, Section 10.122 (1), Sustainability Objectives; 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

- **PRESENTATION**
- **CITY COUNCIL QUESTIONS**
- **PUBLIC HEARING SPEAKERS**
- **ADDITIONAL COUNCIL QUESTIONS AND DELIBERATIONS**

Assistant Planning Director Peter Stith reviewed and presented PowerPoint slides to Mayor McEachern and City Council members.

**Discussion followed among the City Council and staff regarding the amendment of ordinance.**

Mayor McEachern opened the Public Hearing.

Tyler Garzo – expressed this is nice work done by the Planning Department and City Council.

Mayor McEachern closed the Public Hearing seeing no other speakers.

I. 13. PUBLIC HEARING AND SECOND READING of Ordinance amendment to Chapter 10, ZONING ORDINANCE, be amended as follows: 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

- **PRESENTATION**
- **CITY COUNCIL QUESTIONS**
- **PUBLIC HEARING SPEAKERS**
- **ADDITIONAL COUNCIL QUESTIONS AND DELIBERATIONS**

Assistant Planning Director Peter Stith reviewed and presented PowerPoint slides to Mayor McEachern and City Council members.

**Discussion followed among the City Council and staff regarding the amendment of ordinance.**

Mayor McEachern opened the public hearing. With no speakers, Mayor McEachern closed the public hearing.

**Councilor Flynn moved to pass second reading and hold third and final reading at the March 2, 2026 City Council Meeting. Seconded by Councilor Moreau and voted**

**Voted to suspend the rules to take up third and final reading.**

**Voted to pass third and final reading of ordinance**

J. PUBLIC HEARING AND SECOND READING of Ordinance amendment to Chapter 10, ZONING ORDINANCE, Article 11 – Site Development Standards, Section 10.1112.311 – Off-Street Parking Requirements

- **PRESENTATION**
- **CITY COUNCIL QUESTIONS**
- **PUBLIC HEARING SPEAKERS**
- **ADDITIONAL COUNCIL QUESTIONS AND DELIBERATIONS**

Assistant Planning Director Peter Stith reviewed and presented PowerPoint slides to Mayor McEachern and City Council members.

**Discussion followed among the City Council and staff regarding the amendment of ordinance.**

Mayor McEachern opened the Public Hearing.

Tyler Garzo – understands the change but wishes for further action and spoke to the resident parking problem.

Mayor McEachern closed the Public Hearing seeing no other speakers.

**Further discussion followed among the City Council and staff regarding the amendment of ordinance.**

**Councilor Hopkins moved to pass second reading and schedule and hold third and final reading at the March 2, 2026 City Council meeting. Seconded by Councilor Cook and voted**

**Voted to suspend rules to bring up third and final reading.**

**Voted to pass third and final reading of ordinance with Councilor Bagley voting opposed.**

## **11. CITY MANAGER'S ITEMS WHICH REQUIRE ACTION**

A. Request for Community Revitalization Tax Relief Incentive Work

**Councilor Tabor moved to schedule a Work Session regarding 79-E Community Revitalization Tax Relief Incentive on March 16, 2026 at 6:00 p.m. Seconded by Councilor Bagley and voted**

B. Access Easement for Water Services for Property located at 4 Sagamore Road

**Councilor Flynn moved to ratify acceptance of the Access Easement for Water Services from 4 Sagamore Development, LLC as presented. Seconded by Councilor Cook and voted**

C. Request to schedule Public Hearing on Refunding Bond Authorization on March 16<sup>nd</sup>

**Assistant Mayor Kelley moved to schedule a Public Hearing on March 2, 2026 for a Current Refunding Bond Resolution of up to Eight Million Five Hundred Thousand Dollars (\$8,500,000) to refinance the remaining portion of the aforementioned callable bonds and all related costs. Seconded by Councilor Hopkins and voted**

Councilor Moreau asked for clarification regarding bonds and whether they would not increase in time to pay them back.

City Manager Conard confirmed that the bonds will not increase.

D. Request to Schedule a Public Hearing on Supplemental Appropriation for Outside Counsel on March 16<sup>th</sup>

**Councilor Bagley moved to schedule a Public Hearing at the March 16, 2026, City Council meeting regarding the Proposed Supplemental Appropriation from Unassigned Fund Balance of \$400.00 for Outside Counsel Legal Fees. Seconded by Assistant Mayor Kelley and voted**

Assistant Mayor Kelley asked if this is funding representation for city.

Councilor Tabor stated that this is a large request and asked if details could be included in next council packet of costs of attorneys.

City Attorney Morrell advised that this request is complicated but would be happy to provide where the city is in the process.

## **11. CONSENT AGENDA**

- A. Letter from Warren Widener, Seacoast Lacrosse Club, requesting permission to affix and display banners on the fences at the Recreation Athletic Field for the spring 2026 lacrosse season **(Anticipated action – move to refer to the City Manager with Authority to Act)**
- B. Letter from Heidi Carrington Heath, New Hampshire Outright, requesting permission to hold the Weekend of Love celebrating Pride and Fill-the-Hall on June 20, 2026 **(Anticipated action – move to refer to the City Manager with Authority to Act)**
- C. Letter for IAPP, requesting permission to hold the Navigate 2026: Digital Policy Leadership Summit on Wednesday, June 24, 2026 and Thursday, June 25, 2026 at several locations in downtown Portsmouth **(Anticipated action – move to refer to the City Manager with Authority to Act)**
- D. Letter from Rich Clyborne, Gundalow Company, requesting permission to conduct the Round Island Regatta on Saturday, August 8, 2026 **(Anticipated action – move to refer to the City Manager with Authority to Act)**
- E. Letter from Chris Maden, Portsmouth Maritime Folk Festival, requesting permission to hold the Portsmouth Maritime Folk Festival on Saturday, September 26, 2026 and Sunday, September 27, 2026 **(Anticipated action – move to refer to the City Manager with Authority to Act)**

**Councilor Blalock moved to adopt the Consent Agenda as presented. Seconded by Councilor Flynn and voted**

## **12. Presentations and Written Communications**

- A. Email Correspondence

**Councilor Hopkins moved to accept and place on file. Seconded by Councilor Cook and voted**

## **13. Mayor McEachern**

- A. Boards, Commissions, and Committees 2025 Attendance Records

**Councilor Moreau moved to accept and approve the 2025 Attendance Records as presented. Seconded by Councilor Tabor and voted**

- B. Appointments to be Voted:

- Appointment of Sarah Illingworth as an Alternate to the Arts & Cultural Commission
- Appointment of Mary Claire Rodriguez-Abbott to the Portsmouth Energy Advisory Committee
- Appointment of Heather Krans to the Public Art Review Committee
- Appointment of Christopher Clement, Sr. to the Trustees of the Trust Funds

**Councilor Blalock moved to appoint Sarah Illingworth as an Alternate to the Arts and Cultural Commission, Mary Clare Rodiriguez-Abbott to the Portsmouth Energy Advisory Committee, Heather Krans to the Public Art Review Committee and Christopher Clement, Sr. to the Trustees of the Trust Funds. Seconded by Councilor Hopkins and voted**

#### **14. City Council Members**

##### **A. Assistant Mayor Kelley**

- City Council Principles for Legislative Policies

**Assistant Mayor Kelley moved to approve the City Council Principles for Legislative Policies for Legislative Positions as presented, which authorize the City to take positions on legislation consistent with these principles. Seconded by Councilor Tabor and voted**

- Legislative Subcommittee's Procedures for Submission of Testimony

**Assistant Mayor Kelley moved to approve the Legislative Subcommittee's Procedures for Submission of Testimony as presented. Seconded by Councilor Moreau and voted**

##### **B. Councilor Cook**

- Housing Action Plan

Councilor Cook stated that it is important to have a plan in place that focuses on community talent and honored small businesses and restaurants while acknowledging the housing crisis and challenges Portsmouth currently faces.

Councilor Tabor stated this advocates and offers broad input including the housing committee and staff. Requests that an amendment be made to the original motion to include two hold public hearings before final adoption of Housing Action Plan.

Councilor Cook accepted amendment to the motion and requested that the Housing Committee take up scheduling the public hearings.

Discussion followed among the City Council and staff regarding the Housing Action Plan.

**Councilor Cook accepted the amendment and moved to develop a Housing Action Plan by July 2026, as specified by the Council's 2026-2027 Goals and to schedule two Public Hearings at future City Council meetings. Seconded by Assistant Mayor Kelley and voted**

### **C. Councilor Blalock**

- Requesting a Quarterly Committee to meet and review the work of the Behavioral Health Organizations in Portsmouth

**Discussion followed among the City Council and staff regarding the Quarterly Committee**

**Councilor Blalock moved to evaluate the current community health needs, identify service gaps, and develop coordinated, equitable, and sustainable recommendations aimed at improving mental health for all Portsmouth residents. Seconded by Councilor Moreau and voted**

### **15. Approval of Grants and Donations**

- A. Approval of Grant Agreement with the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) \$850,000.00

**Councilor Hopkins moved to accept up to \$850,000.00 from the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development and to authorize the City Manager to enter into a Grant Agreement, including any future schedule modifications, to support design and construction services for two trailhead facilities. Seconded by Councilor Cook and voted**

- B. Approval of Grant Agreement with the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) – to Protect the Water Quality of the Bellamy Reservoir - \$714,000.00

**Councilor Tabor moved to accept up to \$714,000.00 from the U.S. Environmental Protect Agency and to authorize the City Manager to enter into the Grant Agreement as presented. Second by Councilor Bagley and voted**

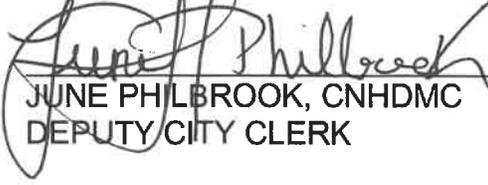
### **17. City Manager's Informational Items**

- A. Update on FlashVote Survey Regarding Public Art

- *City Manager Conard provided a brief update on the results of the FlashVote Survey regarding Public Art in which 400 responses were received detailing a strong emphasis on support of Public Art within the community. She additionally stated if anyone has any ideas for future community FlashVote Survey's to please reach out to Director of Communications and Community Engagement Monte Bohanan who would be happy to assist.*

**19. Adjournment**

**At 9:29 p.m. Assistant Mayor Kelley moved to adjourn the meeting. Seconded by Councilor Bagley and voted**

  
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JUNE PHILBROOK, CNHDMC  
DEPUTY CITY CLERK