

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

Fire Station 2
George Pierce Training Room
May 12, 2026

Portsmouth, NH
1800 hours

I. Call to Order:

Chairman 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, Michael Hughes, and Jennifer Matthes; Fire Chief William McQuillen, Assistant Fire Chief Jason Gionet, Administrative Manager Nancy Savini, Lt. Gordon and Firefighter Gray. Absent was Acting Deputy Fire Chief Putney.

III. Approval of Minutes of Previous Meeting:

Motion, to approve the minutes of April 14, 2026, was made by Commissioner Matthes. Motion was seconded by Commissioner Hughes and passed unanimously.

IV. Public Comment Session: None.

V. Reports:

A. Fire Chief's Reports:

Commissioner Gamester motioned to discuss Chief's reports 26-063 through 26-066. Motion was seconded by Commissioner Hughes.

Fire Chief McQuillen reviewed reports with the Commission.

Report (26-063), 2026 Response Report for April 2026. The report shows the department responding to a total of 535 calls for the month: 203 Fire Calls with EMS Services and 110 Fire and Related Services Calls and 332 Ambulance Calls. Chief noted total monthly calls were up for the month due to ambulance calls increase and not fire calls. Chief spoke briefly about some incidents of interest for the month, highlighting the following:

April 5 0418 hours-Truck 5 and C2 to 151 Atlantic Ave North Hampton for a building fire. Companies operated for 2 1/2 hours

April 6 1131 hours-E4 T5 E1 A4 Prv 1&2 to 272 Hanover Street, fire in kitchen controlled by sprinkler head. Companies tied up an hour

April 16 1445 hours-Haz Mat 1 to Dover for an investigation, tied up for 2 hours operating

April 21 2108 hours-E3 A3 T2 E1 C1 to Hampton St at Aviation Dr MVA, and vehicle fire. 1 fatality. NHFMO and PPD assisted with investigation E3 committed for 4 hours

April 21 2300 hours-E1 T2 A1 A2 A3 C1 C2 to 188 Lincoln Ave 1st alarm building fire assisted by Newington E4, Kittery E5, PSNY Ladder 81,Rye A2 at scene and Dover Exeter and call back crews covered. Fire contained to 1 story carriage house, with minor damage to nearby budlings, crews cleared in 3 hours.

The safety message focused on 4 national safety observances and industry-specific campaigns which are as follows:

1 Qualified Personnel: Emphasize that only trained and qualified individuals should perform electrical work.

- **Inspection Protocols:** Encourage regular inspections of tools, extension cords, and equipment for frayed wires or damage.
- **Personal Protective Equipment (PPE):** Remind workers to use insulated gloves, voltage-rated tools, and arc-flash gear as appropriate

2 Mental health is just as critical as physical safety, especially in high-stress and high-risk environments. Mental Health Awareness Month, recognized every May, encourages open dialogue, education, and support for mental well-being.

Mental Health in the Workplace

- **Stress Management:** Discuss practical techniques like mindfulness, deep breathing, and time management.
- **Breaking the Stigma:** Create a culture where it's okay to talk about mental health without fear of judgment.
- **Access to Resources:** Share contact information for Employee Assistance Programs (EAPs), hotlines, or local counselors.
- **Training Supervisors:** Equip leaders with tools to recognize signs of burnout, depression, or substance abuse.

3 National Safety Stand-Down to Prevent Falls in Construction (May 4–8, 2026)

Coinciding with Construction Safety Week is the National Safety Stand-Down, a nationwide event led by OSHA to prevent falls, the leading cause of fatalities in the construction industry.

Stand-Down Best Practices:

- **Pause the Work:** Set aside time during the workday to talk directly about fall prevention.
- **Focus Topics:** Guardrails, harnesses, anchorage points, scaffolding, and roof safety.
- **Demonstrations:** Show proper donning and inspection of fall arrest systems.
- **Employee Feedback:** Allow workers to voice concerns or share experiences with fall hazards.

4 Slips, Trips, and Falls

While falls from heights are a major concern in construction, slips and trips on the same level are common across all industries. According to the National Safety Council, these incidents are among the leading causes of workplace injuries.

Prevention Strategies:

- Housekeeping: Keep walkways clear of clutter, cords, and spills.
- Lighting: Ensure adequate lighting in all work and walking areas.
- Signage: Use “Wet Floor” signs and other hazard warnings effectively.
- Footwear: Promote the use of anti-slip shoes or boots

Report (26-064), Fire and EMS Call Summary Reports, shows the department responded to 203 fire calls for the month of April. EMS activity was 332 with the top three responses being for no apparent illness or injury, weakness, and fainting. There were 12 calls for anxiety attacks, 11 for abdominal pain, 10 for head injury and 38 non-transports. Report (26-065), FY26 Budget, Chief reviewed the budget noting we are nearing fiscal year end with a slight surplus once all training and equipment requests are submitted. Report (26-066), Overtime Analysis, provided a breakdown of how overtime was used in the month of April along with a summary of what was charged to OT-Recall for the month. Noting the Vacancy OT will start to trend downward since all but one of the vacant positions have been filled.

Motion, to accept Chief's Reports 26-063 through 26-066, was made by Commissioner Matthes. Motion was seconded by Commissioner Hughes and passed unanimously.

B. Staff Reports:

Assistant Chief Gionet reported on the facilities and operations happenings within the department (26-067) in the month of April, items were as follows:

Apparatus / Equipment / Facilities

1. New Engine has been placed back in service after computer updates.
2. Ambulance 2 is back from being repaired and in July a new ambulance will be ordered according to our specifications.
3. Station 2 Roof project close to being completed.
4. Station 2 Facility Improvements to include cabinets, painting, and ceiling repairs caused by leaking roof.
5. Dispatch temporary move to Station 2 for a 4-6 month period.

Personnel

1. Currently one position is open.
2. 2 New Firefighters started on April 27, 2026, and have completed their initial orientation.
3. Lieutenants' exam completed resulting in a promotional list of 3 candidates.

Training

1. Fire Training – PNSY Live fire training has been completed by 3 of the 4 shifts.
2. Hampton Fire is sponsoring a difficult airway class with several of our personnel attending.

Other

1. Will be starting the process of completing the NH Ground Ambulance Data Collection Study to be compliant with SB-245.

Chief McQuillen reported (26-068) on Fire Prevention activity for the month of April with 49 permits issued, 47 inspections done and 26 prevention related meetings. Other Notable Items are as follows:

- Fire Prevention Officer Scholtz successfully completed a 2 Day Incident Fire Safety Officer Certification Course.
- Ordinance change proposal submitted to council and Rules and Regulations planning is almost complete.
- Public Education event at Margeson with Fire Marshal's Office.
- Q1 Safety Committee met, follow up ideas were complied.

Motion, to accept Reports 26-067 and 26-068, was made by Commissioner Matthes. Motion was seconded by Commissioner Hughes and passed unanimously.

VI. Old Business:

Portsmouth Professional Firefighters IAFF Local 1313 requested an extension until the Commission's next regular scheduled meeting.

Motion, to accept with no objections, was made by Commissioner Matthes. Motion was seconded by Commissioner Hughes and passed unanimously

IX. New Business:

Report (26-069) Fire Department-Homeland Security Internship was discussed.

The Homeland Security Intern will support the Portsmouth Fire Department's emergency preparedness, planning, and operational activities. This internship provides hands-on experience in public safety operations, emergency management, data analysis, and community preparedness.

Motion, to approve Report 26-069, was made by Commissioner Matthes. Motion was seconded by Commissioner Hughes and passed unanimously.

X. Adjournment:

Motion, to adjourn at 1829 hours, was made by Commissioner Matthes. Motion was seconded by Commissioner Hughes and passed unanimously.

Jennifer Mosher-Matthes, Clerk