

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

Fire Station 2
George Pierce Training Room
January 13, 2026

Portsmouth, NH
1800 hours

I. Call to Order:

Commissioner Matthes called the meeting to order at 1800 hours.

II. Pledge of Allegiance with Attendance:

Commissioner Matthes led the pledge of allegiance.

Present were Commissioners: Richard Gamester (via Teams), Michael Hughes and Jennifer Mathes; Fire Chief William McQuillen, Assistant Fire Chief Jason Gonet, Administrative Manager Nancy Savini, Lieutenant John Goodwin and many Fire Department personnel.

III. Approval of Minutes of Previous Meeting:

Motion, to approve the minutes of December 9, 2025, was made by Commissioner Matthes. Motion was seconded by Commissioner Hughes and passed unanimously.

IV. Public Comment Session: None.

V. Presentation of Written Communication:

Fire Chief McQuillen presented Thank You letters from Marsha & John Robinson (26-002) and Kathy & Max McCormick (26-003).

Motion, to put on file, was made by Commissioner Matthes. Motion was seconded by Commissioner Hughes and passed unanimously.

VI. Recognition of Groups or Individuals:

Chief McQuillen recognized and congratulated Fire fighters Brandon J Gregori (26-004) and Thomas A Choquette (26-004) for recently passing the course and becoming Paramedics.

VII. Reports:

A. Fire Chief's Reports:

Commissioner Hughes motioned to discuss Chief's reports 26-005 through 26-011. Motion was seconded by Commissioner Matthes.

Fire Chief McQuillen reviewed reports with the Commission.

November 2025 Response Report (26-005). The report shows the department responding to a total of 530 calls for the month: 216 Fire Calls with EMS Services and 121 Fire and Related Service Calls and 314 Ambulance Calls. Chief spoke briefly about some of the activities for the month, noting the following incidents of interest:

*Nov 6 - 0914 E1 E3 T2 A1 A2 A3 2 Harbor Place fire alarm activation, caused by a fire in walls caused by construction workers. Fire Extinguished and companies cleared.

*Nov 6 - 1105 E1 E3 T2 A1 A2 A3 C2 to High Street Hilton Garden Inn for a fire alarm activation on arrival found a fire in stairwell electrical in nature. Fire extinguished and smoke removed.

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- *Nov 8 - 1656 T2 and C2 to Juniper Road North Hampton building fire. A2 and A3 sent later on for EMS. Companies operated for an hour.
- *Nov 18 - 0254 T2 and C1 to Stage Road Hampton for 2nd alarm building fire. Operated for 1 1/2 hours.
- *Nov 23 - 02242 R7 E1 A1 A3 to I95 North at mile marker 9.1 MVA extricated and transported two patients to PRH.

The safety message focused on the following:

Holiday Cooking Fire Safety

- Keep anything that can catch fire away from your stovetop
- Always unplug countertop alliances when not in use
- Double-check that everything is off when you finish cooking
- Prevent fires by keeping your oven and stovetop clean of grease and dust
- Never leave the kitchen while cooking
- Never cook while sleepy, drinking alcohol, or taking medication that makes you drowsy
- Never disable a smoke alarm while cooking. Open doors or windows for ventilation if you anticipate smoke will be generated by high heat cooking
- Never use a cooking stove to heat your home

Report (26-006), Fire and EMS Call Summary Reports, shows the department responded to 216 fire calls for the month of November 2025. EMS activity was 314 with the top three responses being for abdominal pain, injury, and weakness. There were 10 calls for fainting, 9 for anxiety, 9 for stroke and 41 non-transports.

December 2025 Response Report (26-007). The report shows the department responding to a total of 586 calls for the month (6,618 YTD): 232 (2,714 YTD) Fire Calls with EMS Services and 113 (1,450 YTD) Fire and Related Service Calls and 354 (3,904 YTD) Ambulance Calls.

Chief spoke briefly about some of the activities for the month, noting the following incidents of interest:

- *December 4 - 1112 hours Truck 2 1840 Woodbury Ave rubbish truck with dumpster stuck in overhead power line, Truck 2 stood by until power company resolved situation.
- *December 10 - 1014 hours Engine 3 & C2 to Newington Piscataqua Lane for fire in building, helped evacuate smoke and cleared.
- *December 14 - 1606 hours E3 E1 T2 A1 A2 A3 to Dodge Ave, furnace fire. Extinguished and companies removed smoke.

*December 22 - 1648 hours Truck 2 Ambulance 2 22454 Lafayette Road for a person collapsed. CPR sav with no-deficit discharge.

The safety message focused on the following:

Christmas Tree Safety

- To choose the freshest tree, needles should be green, flexible, and hard to pull off
- Water fresh trees daily
- Keep trees away from heat sources. Maintain a 3-ft clearance from heat sources such as fireplaces, wood stoves, radiators, and space heaters
- Replace damaged cords and never use candles near the tree
- Turn off lights before going to bed or leaving home

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- Dispose of the tree promptly after the holidays or when it becomes dry
- Artificial trees tend to be safer than natural ones

The Fire Department always enjoys seeing the efforts of those participating in the Citywide Neighborhood Committee Holiday Lights Contest [portsnh.co/HolidayLights2025] and suggests the following tips:

Holiday Lighting Safety

- Inspect lights for frayed wires, loose connections, or broken bulbs
- Avoid overloading outlets or daisy-chaining multiple power strips
- Be sure that lights used outdoors are rated for outdoor use
- Fasten outdoor lights with clips, not nails or staples

Report (26-008), Fire and EMS Call Summary Reports, shows the department responded to 232 fire calls for the month of December 2025. EMS activity was 354 with the top three responses being for weakness, injury, and abdominal pain. There were 11 calls for flu, 9 for nausea, 9 for sepsis and 49 non-transports.

Report (26-009), FY26 Budget, Chief reviewed the budget noting we are projecting a positive bottom line for fiscal year end. Overtime Analysis for November 2025 (26-010) and December 2025 (26-011) provided a breakdown of how overtime was used in the months of November 2025 and December 2025 along with a summary of what was charged to OT-Recall for the month.

Motion, to accept Chief's Reports 26-005 through 26-011, was made by Commissioner Matthes. Motion was seconded by Commissioner Hughes and passed unanimously.

B. Staff Reports:

Assistant Chief Gionet reported on facilities and operations happening within the department (26-012), noting the following:

Apparatus /Equipment/ Facilities:

1. Fire Apparatus Repairs: All apparatus in service, routine maintenance
2. New Fire Engine: Currently in Brunswick, finishing off punch list work, we anticipate taking delivery in the next week or two.
3. Station 2 Roof Replacement: There have been several delays due to weather over the last 2 months. They anticipate finishing late this week or early next week.
4. Station 2 Back Flow Preventer: Required a full replacement of the back flow preventor upon failing inspection.

Personnel:

1. Current open positions: 3 current vacancies
2. 2 New Personnel: Probationary Firefighters Leonard and Panneton started on January 5, 2026. They will be receiving their shift assignments this week and will begin on their respective shifts next week.
3. Interview Process: 2 candidates interviewed today with one moving forward in the process.

Training:

1. Fire training - Department Blue Card Command Training
2. EMS Recertification: Personnel are working on their EMS recertifications, ACLS and PALS refresher to take place on January 29th.

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Assistant Chief Gionet reported on Fire Prevention (26-013 & 26-014), noting revenue collected for the year was \$7,835.70 which is slightly higher than last year.

In November 2025, there were 29 permits issued and 49 inspections done. In December 2025, there were 31 permits issued and 28 inspections done.

He also noted the following items in November 2025 & December 2025:

- FPO Wheeler spoke to visually impaired group about fire safety.
- FPO Wheeler Spoke at Lakes Region Community College about careers in fire prevention/investigation.
- FPO Putney Attended the downtown restaurant and bar association meeting with PD.
- FPO Putney took several online fire investigation recertification classes.
- 2 spillover Fire Prevention Month visits - 75 kids
- Assistant Fire Marshal Interviews in Concord, sat on oral board.
- Lt Dame FP orientation
- Commissioning of Project Albacore Fire Pump (34 Harvest Way, Lonza purple building)
- Owner/Contractor site visits 11
- Pre permit site visits 7
- 1-hour online training fire alarm systems, dedicated function 3 hours EMS online training
- Worked on NERIS transition to close up loose ends
- Worked on cleaning up hydrant info, no results yet from Jamie

VIII. Old Business: None.

IX. New Business:

Commissioner Hughes made the motion to draw name from a hat for the Commission representative to serve on the City's Ethics Committee (26-015). Motion was seconded by Commissioner Matthes and passed unanimously.

Chief McQuillen had Firefighter Brian Wade put the three names into a hat and had Firefighter Joseph Marra select name from the hat. Commissioner Gamester's name was drawn. Commissioner Matthes will serve on the City's Ethics Committee this year.

Commissioner Matthes made the following nominations for Board of Fire Commission Officers for 2026 (26-016): Commissioner Gamester as Chairman, Commissioner Hughes as Vice-Chair and herself as Clerk. Nominations closed after no further discussion and Commissioner Gamester accepting the nomination.

Commissioner Matthes made the motion, Portsmouth Board of Fire Commission Officers for 2026 to leave as is to be: Commissioner Gamester to serve as Chair, Commissioner Hughes to serve as Vice-Chair and Commissioner Matthes to serve as Clerk. Motion was seconded by Commissioner Gamester. On a Vote of 3-0, the motion passed unanimously.

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Commissioner Hughes made the motion, to close nominations.

Motion was seconded by Commissioner Gamester and passed unanimously.

Chief McQuillen spoke briefly of the Fee Schedule & Emergency Services Rates for the calendar year 2026 (26-017).

Motion, to accept the recommended 2025 Portsmouth Fire Department Fee Schedule and Emergency Service rates as outlined in the memo from the City Manager, was made by Commissioner Hughes. Motion was seconded by Commissioner Matthes and passed unanimously.

Chief McQuillen spoke briefly about the donation received in December from Paul Gormley and Kimi Iguchi (26-018). The donation request will be sent to City Council for acceptance in February.

Motion, to accept the donation of \$1,000 from Paul Gormley and Kimi Iguchi with gratitude and move forward to city council, was made by Commissioner Gamester. Motion was seconded by Commissioner Hughes and passed unanimously.

The 2026 Schedule of City Council Meetings & Work Sessions was presented to Commission (26-019)

Retirement Lieutenant John W. Goodwin (26-020). John spoke briefly It was an honor and a lifelong dream and very grateful for everyone's support helping his family through a very difficult time.

Motion, to accept Lt Goodwin's letter of retirement, was made by Commissioner Matthes Thanking him for his service and wishing him good luck. Motion was seconded by Commissioner Hughes and passed unanimously.

January 14, 2026, Work Session with City Council (26-021)

MOA with IAFF Local 4039 (26-022)

Motion, to accept MOA and move forward, was made by Commissioner Hughes. Motion was seconded by Commissioner Gamester and passed unanimously.

Notice of Intent to Retire: Firefighter James G. O'Brien (26-023)

Capital Budget and Rolling Stock Update (26-024)

X. Adjournment:

Motion, to adjourn at 1854 hours, was made by Commissioner Matthes. Motion was seconded by Commissioner Hughes and passed unanimously.

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Jennifer Mosher-Matthes, Clerk