

26-042

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

Fire Station 2  
George Pierce Training Room  
February 10, 2026

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, Michael Hughes, and Jennifer Matthes; Fire Chief William McQuillen, Assistant Fire Chief Jason Gionet, Acting Deputy Fire Chief Chad Putney, Administrative Manager Nancy Savini, and many Fire Department Personnel. Members of the public, Petra Huda, Esther Kennedy, and Christopher Golumb were also present.

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

*Motion, to approve the minutes of January 13, 2026, was made by Commissioner Hughes. Motion was seconded by Commissioner Matthes and passed unanimously.*

**IV. Public Comment Session: None.**

**V. Public Hearings:**

Chief McQuillen presented the department's proposed FY2027 budget request of \$12,900,125 which represents a \$263,230 or 2.08% increase over FY26, which maintains service levels, and staffing at 15 personnel per shift with five at each station, covers increases in operation and contractual costs, which includes succession planning with the proposed addition of a Deputy of Training and EMS support (Step 22E \$137,538), and the reallocation of savings within the budget.

The Chief also provided an overview of what the proposed FY2027 budget would be at a .99% increase at the Council's request to keep same level of service. It would mean no new position for succession planning. The Department's Proposed FY2027 Budget at .99%, maintains service levels, covers increases in operating and contractual costs recognizing a \$36,755 Step increase for Fire Fighters and Officers, Workers Compensation decrease of 30.80% over FY26 due to Insurance company realigning the firefighter codes, Health Insurance Increase of 11.50% or \$130,323 over FY26, and a \$35,000 increase in repair line to reflect what actual expenses have been averaged over the last three years.

*Motion, to approve the proposed FY2027 budget as presented at 2.08% increase, and forward to City Manager and City Council, was made by Chairman Gamester. Motion to approve the proposed FY2027 budget as presented at .99% increase, was made by Commissioner Matthes. Chairman Gamester's motion was seconded by Commissioner Hughes and passed. The proposed FY2027*

*budget as presented at a 2.08% increase and including the new position will be forward to City Council.*

*Chairman Gamester opened the Public Hearing at 1822 hours at which point Petra Huda, Esther Kennedy, and Christopher Golumb asked questions.*

Esther Kennedy discussed why a new \$900,000 boat was needed for water fire rescue, being there are not many water rescue calls and Coast Guard could respond, if a RN could be hired to give training in place of a new middle management position, and why the budget had not been uploaded prior to the meeting.

Petra Huda thanked the commission for including the revenue numbers in this year's budget presentation, asked if the new position was needed, if we are currently fully staffed, and if it is known how the new Ambulance Balanced Billing law would affect how much revenue we collected. Chief McQuillen answered that we do not currently know how the new law is going to affect our revenue. Asst. Chief Gionet answered we are fully staffed with 2 down and 2 currently in background check.

*After a question-and-answer session, Chairman Gamester closed the Public Hearing Comment Session at 1837 hours and returned to Item VI. Reports.*

## **VI. Reports:**

### **A. Fire Chief's Reports:**

*Commissioner Hughes motioned to discuss Chief's reports 26-027 through 26-030. Motion was seconded by Commissioner Matthes.*

Fire Chief McQuillen reviewed reports with the Commission.

Report (26-027), 2025 Response Report for January 2026. The report shows the department responding to a total of 602 calls for the month: 252 Fire Calls with EMS Services and 137 Fire and Related Service Calls and 350 Ambulance Calls. Chief spoke briefly about some of the activities for the month, noting the following Incidents of Interest:

- **January 16 1311** Truck 2 and Chief 1 to Novel Greenland Novel Iron Works for 1<sup>st</sup> alarm fire operated for 30 minutes before clearing.
- **January 18 0840** hours Truck 2 Engine 3 Chief 1 and Greenland Tanker to 360 Constitution for a large mulch fire, companies operated for 3 hours.
- **January 25 0450** hours Engine 1 and Ambulance 1 doing a shore search for a confirmed jumper from High Level Bridge Marine 1 not deployed due to temperatures and safety concerns. Crews searched for an hour and a half.
- **January 31 1819** hours Engine 1 and Truck 2 to York 2nd alarm. Engine 1 to fire and cleared after 2 hours Truck 2 covered for four hours

Anecdotally Broken sprinkler water pipe calls up/ car accidents down in month

The Portsmouth Fire Department and the National Fire Protection Agency remind you to stay safe this winter season, and remind you of the following:

- Half of all home heating fires occur in December, January and February.
- Heating equipment is involved in 1 in every 6 home fires and 1 in every 5 home fire deaths.
- Keep anything that can burn at least 3 feet from any heat source like fireplaces, wood stoves, radiators or space heaters.
- Keep portable generators outside, away from windows, and as far away from your home as possible.
- Install and test carbon monoxide alarms at least once a month.
- Plug only 1 heat-producing appliance (like a space heater) into an electrical outlet at a time.

Report (26-028), Fire and EMS Call Summary Reports, shows the department responded to 252 fire calls for the month of January. EMS activity was 350 with the top three responses being for Weakness, Influenza, and Abdominal Pain. There were 14 calls for Altered Mental Health, 11 for Fainting and 53 non-transports.

Report (26-029), FY26 Budget, Chief reviewed the budget noting we are tracking about 1% to the good and is where we projected to be at this point in the year. Report (26-030), 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 26-027 through 26-030, was made by Chairman Gamester. Motion was seconded by Chairman Matthes and passed unanimously.*

**B. Staff Reports:**

Assistant Chief Gionet (26-031) reported on facilities and operations happening within the department.

**Apparatus / Equipment / Facilities**

- New Fire Engine: The new engine has been lettered and radios have been installed. Equipment has begun to be mounted and training on the new piece will take place over the next 2 weeks prior to being placed in-service.
- Marine 1 Annual Maintenance: Marine 1 was brought to Marblehead last week for maintenance and should return in the coming days.
- Station 2 Roof Replacement: There are a few punch list items that need to be completed to finish the project. Given the recent weather conditions, this will most likely occur in the early spring, however the building is watertight.

**Personnel**

- Current open positions: Currently we have 4 open positions with 1 conditional

job offer going through the hiring process.

- Interview Process: 1 interview conducted today and they will be moving forward in the process with another interview next Wednesday. Candidate applications have begun to pick up once again.

**Training**

- Fire Training - Greenwood to provide in-service education on new engine
- Participated in an Active Shooter Drill at PNSY
- Participated in a tabletop hospital evacuation drill

*Chairman Gamester made the motion to suspend the rules and go out of order and move to item 26-036. Motion was seconded by Commissioner Matthes and passed unanimously.*

Chief McQuillen introduced new Acting Deputy Fire Chief Chad Putney (26-036). Commissioners and Fire Department personnel congratulated Chad on his promotion.

Acting Deputy Fire Chief Putney reported on Fire Prevention activity for the month (26-032) with 41 permits issued, 53 inspections done, and 26 Meetings.

Noting the following items:

- Fire Prevention Officer Wheeler was re-elected to the Executive Board of the New Hampshire Fire Prevention Society.
- Fire Prevention Officer Putney was re-elected as President.
- Lonza's Project Albacore (the big purple building) has partial occupancy in offices only.
- The old Redhook/Cisco Brewery building has been mothballed and is up for sale.
- Carbon Monoxide calls are down 30% from December but it is still a serious risk for the community.

**VII. Old Business:**

FY27 Budget Schedule including work sessions with City Council (26-033)

MOA between Local 4039 and City of Portsmouth (26-034) referencing a temporary amendment to Section V.4 of the current CBA to allow the realignment of steps for Lt Anderson and Lt. Dame.

*Chairman Gamester called for a vote. Commissioner Matthes motioned to accept MOA as written. Motion was seconded by Commissioner Hughes and passed unanimously. Form was signed by Chairman Gamester and Captain Duncan Regonini, Professional Fire Officers Association Local 403.*

**IX. New Business:**

Firefighter Allan Scholtz was promoted to Fire Prevention Officer on 1.29.26 (26-035). Allan was congratulated on his promotion.

*Chairman Gamester made a motion to return to Item 26-032. Motion was seconded by Commissioner Hughes and passed unanimously.*

2026 Board of Ethic Members List (26-037)

Annual Attendance Records (26-038)

2026-2027 City Council Goal Categories, Summaries, and Strategic Objectives (26-039)

From Molan Law Office, on behalf of Portsmouth Professional Fire Officers Association, notification letter for their desire to negotiate their current Collective Bargaining Agreement (26-040)

Consideration of disposal of vehicle #158 Engine #4 – a 2006 E-One pumper (26-041).

*Chairman Gamester made a motion to start the disposal process to get in front of City Council. Commissioner Matthes modified the motion to give Chief McQuillen authority to dispose of the Fire Engine. Motion was seconded by Commissioner Hughes and passed unanimously.*

**X. Adjournment:**

*Motion, to adjourn at 1902 hours, was made by Commissioner Matthes. Motion was seconded by Commissioner Hughes and passed unanimously.*

  
Jennifer Mosher-Matthes, Clerk