

26-053

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

Fire Station 2
George Pierce Training Room
March 10, 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, Jennifer Matthes and Michael Hughes (via Teams connection on which contact was lost and unable to reconnect due to computer glitch); Fire Chief William McQuillen, Assistant Fire Chief Jason Gionet, Acting Deputy Fire Chief Chad Putney, Administrative Manager Nancy Savini, many fire department personnel and members of James Boucher's family for his pinning ceremony.

III. Oath of Office

Chief McQuillen took a moment to recognize Firefighter James Boucher who has successfully completed his 1-year probationary period (26-050). Chief did the honor of swearing him in and presenting the badge. His mother and niece did the honoring of placing the pins on his jacket.

Motion, to suspend rules at 18:07 to take a break to allow the Boucher Family to take pictures, was made by Commissioner Matthes. Motion was seconded by Commissioner Gamester and passed unanimously.

Motion, to resume back into session at 18:22, was made by Commissioner Gamester. Motion was seconded by Commissioner Matthes and passed unanimously.

IV. Approval of Minutes of Previous Meeting:

Motion, to approve the minutes of February 10, 2026 (26-042), was made by Commissioner Matthes. Motion was seconded by Commissioner Gamester and passed unanimously.

V. Presentation of Written Communication:

Chief McQuillen read Middle Hill Condominium's Thank You (26-043) for the Portsmouth Fire Department's response to the recent call regarding gas odors.

Motion, to accept Thank You and place on file (26-043), was made by Commissioner Matthes. Motion was seconded by Commissioner Gamester and passed unanimously.

VI. Public Comment Session: None.

VII. Reports:

A. Fire Chief's Reports:

Commissioner Gamester motioned to discuss Chief's reports (26-044 through 26-047). Motion was seconded by Commissioner Matthes.

Fire Chief McQuillen reviewed reports with the Commission.

Report (26-044), 2026 Response Report for February 2026. The report shows the department responding to a total of 524 calls for the month: 225 Fire Calls with EMS Services and 136 Fire and Related Service Calls and 299 Ambulance Calls.

Chief spoke briefly about some incidents of interest:

February 24 0529 hours E1 E3 T2 A3 and PSNY A81 1 Highliner Ave, Ammonia leak. Companies responded to an alarm activation found a small ammonia leak in production area, building evacuated crews stopped leak and ventilated. Operated for an hour

February 24 0841 E1 E3 T2 A1 A2 A3 to 803 McGee Drive NH National Guard Armory, Plow sheared off valve to 10000lb underground tank of gas. Companies stopped leak and awaited gas company, cleared in thirty minutes

February 26 0829 hours Truck 2 and C5 mutual aid to Rye 50 Red Mill Ln for building Fire, 4th alarm. Companies operated for 3 plus hours.

February 28 1647 hours Engine 1 and Ambulance 1 to Portsmouth High School for electrocution. On arrival Companies found a female patient bleeding from dog bite, was walking dogs when they became exposed to underground electrical current. One dog died. Eversource and PHS School maintenance and Inspection Dept consulted. Power isolated hazard removed. Companies operated for 2 hours

The safety message focused on the dangers of Carbon monoxide. The Portsmouth Fire Department and the NH State Fire Marshall's Office remind you to stay safe this winter season and remind you Carbon monoxide is an invisible killer and can build up quickly. It is odorless and colorless, and can cause death in minutes.

Safety tips to follow:

- A generator should be used in a well-ventilated location outdoors away from windows, doors and air intakes
- DO have your heating system and water heater serviced every year by a licensed, qualified professional
- CO alarms should be installed in a central location outside each sleeping area and on every level of the home, including the basement
- Gas and charcoal grills produce CO, use them only outside

- If warming a vehicle remove it from garage immediately after starting it. Do not run a vehicle or other fueled motor indoors even if garage doors are open. Make sure exhaust pipes are not covered or blocked with snow
- During and after a snowstorm, make sure vents for the dryer, furnace, stove, and fireplace are clear of snow build-up
- Test your CO detectors monthly
- If you live in a rental unit, the owner of the rental unit shall be responsible for maintaining the automatic fire warning device and carbon monoxide detection device in a suitable condition. * NH RSA 153:10-a Automatic Fire Warning Devices and Carbon Monoxide Detection Devices in Dwellings

Report (26-045), Fire and EMS Call Summary Reports, shows the department responded to fire calls for the month of February. EMS activity was 299 with the top three responses being for weakness, no apparent illness/pain and Sepsis. There were 11 calls for head/scalp injury, 9 for cardiac, 8 for non-cardiac chest pain and 35 non-transport.

Report (26-046), FY26 Budget, Chief reviewed the budget noting we are still tracking about 1% to the good and have projected expenses to fiscal year end. Report (26-047), Overtime Analysis, provided a breakdown of how overtime was used in the month of February along with a summary of what was charged to OT-Recall for the month.

Motion, to accept Chief's Reports 26-044 through 26-047, was made by Commissioner Matthes. Motion was seconded by Commissioner Gamester and passed unanimously.

B. Staff Reports:

Assistant Chief Gionet reported on facilities and operations happening within the department (26-048) which are as follows:

Apparatus / Equipment/ Facilities

- * New Engine in service at Station3
- * New ambulance should be arriving in January 2027
- * Marine 1 to be put back in the river for the season

Personnel

- * Current open positions
- * 1 Firefighter Starting on 3/16/2026
- * 3 candidates progressing through the hiring process
- * Lieutenants Exam scheduled for early April

Training

- * Fire Training - Ongoing probationary training
- * EMS Recertification is finishing for the 2026 cycle
- * New Lonza facility tours conducted for all 4 shifts

Deputy Chief Putney reported (26-049) on Fire Prevention activity for the month with 39 permits issued and 36 inspections done. Revenue collected for February 2026 was \$7,211.35, noting the March 2026 should nearly double this amount with the increase in activity of permit applications.

Other Notable Items are as follows:

- Fire Prevention Officer Scholtz's onboarding and training has begun.
- Fire Prevention Officer Wheeler assisted the Rye Fire Department with a fire investigation.
- First Due is being adopted by other municipalities and we will be working with them to coordinate a uniform approach to using it for incidents and pre-plans.
- Place of Assembly inspections will be a focus in the coming month. There are currently 170 locations.

Commissioner Matthes asked if Deputy Chief Putney could provide (going forward) month over month trending analysis along with current year vs. previous years analysis.

VIII. Old Business:

- *Verbal report on package to amend City ordinance for Fire codes and regulations to be worked on by Fire Chief & Legal.
- *Disposal of Engine 4 to be presented at March 16, 2026 City Council Meeting.

IX. New Business:

Dispatch Center update on temporary placement of operations at Station 2 for a period of at least 4 months, and Lt Egan appointed as liaison with police to assist in management.

X. Adjournment:

Motion, to adjourn at 1848 hours, was made by Commissioner Gamester. Motion was seconded by Commissioner Matthes and passed unanimously.


Jennifer Mosher-Matthes, Clerk