



# MINUTES

## CITY COUNCIL LEGISLATIVE SUBCOMMITTEE

Conference Room A at City Hall, 1 Junkins Avenue, Portsmouth, NH  
Monday, April 13, 2026 at 8:30 a.m.

In attendance: Mayor McEachern, Councilor Cook, Councilor Flynn, Senior Assistant City Attorney Ferrini. Also in attendance was Lisa Rapaport, School Board Chair.

1. **Greeting:** Mayor McEachern opened the meeting at 8:32 a.m.
2. **Approval of Minutes:** Approval of March 16, 2026 Minutes. Councilor Cook moved and Councilor Flynn seconded a motion to approve the March 16, 2026 minutes. The motion passed unanimously.
3. **Bills the City has registered in support or opposition:**

### **A. Risk Pool Bills:**

Attorney Ferrini summarized the status of the risk pool bills (SB 605, HB 1491 and SB 661). SB 605 was killed. The City registered in support of HB 1491 with the Senate Finance Committee and sent the Mayor's Op-ed on SchoolCare to the Committee. The City registered in opposition to amendment 2026-1315 to HB 1491 for a hearing on the same day. Attorney Ferrini reported that she has been in contact with Senator Perkins Kwoka regarding the bill and the amendment and was advised that there may be another amendment filed. The Committee affirmed its opposition to SB 661 and authorized Attorney Ferrini to register the City in opposition to the bill and to file the Mayor's Op-ed on SchoolCare.

### **B. Municipal liability bill:**

Attorney Ferrini advised that the City had registered in opposition to HB 1064, a bill that would increase the limits of liability for municipalities.

### **C. Open enrollment and education funding bills:**

#### **A. Education funding**

Attorney Ferrini discussed education funding bill HB 1563 that could have a financial impact on the City, and another bill that narrows the definition of adequate education. The Committee and Chair Rapaport discussed HB 1563, a

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bill that would create a cap on special education funding that could increase coverage but would also increase administrative oversight. Chair Rapaport noted that municipalities would need to apply for Medicaid and private insurance before receiving state aid. The Committee and Chair Rapaport expressed concern about the unclear language in the bill regarding caps on special education funding.

B. Open enrollment

Chair Rapaport discussed the open enrollment bill SB 101. She reported that the school board is in the process of reviewing and adopting a policy on open enrollment that will come before the Council. She further stated that the policy would not set open enrollment capacity at 0. She noted that there would also be a separate policy that would establish capacity for each school and further noted that there remains many unanswered questions about open enrollment. The Committee raised concerns about the lack of clarity in the bill about accepting students and how the bill would apply to existing Area Agreements. Councilor Cook raised concerns about school shopping for athletes who may want to play for a particular school's team. Chair Rapaport stated that NHIA may weigh in on eligibility rules, but they have not yet done so.

4. **Mayors' Roundtable:** Mayor McEachern noted that there was a meeting of the Mayors' Roundtable for this afternoon. He mentioned that the Mayors may create a League of Cities that would be separate from NHMA and the Mayors have been discussing hiring a lobbyist which would give the cities the ability to lobby on legislative issues that are of specific concern to cities. Councilor Flynn asked whether there were legislative issues that the Mayors support annually. Mayor McEachern responded that over the years, the Mayors' Roundtable has supported legislation on hotel occupancy fees, restoring the state's responsibility to fund a percentage of municipal employees' retirement and increasing meals and rooms distribution to municipalities.

5. **NHMA's Request for Legislative Policies:** Committee discussed drafting NHMA Legislative Policies due to NHMA by April 17, 2026. The Committee discussed drafting a policy to support statewide zoning amendments that would not have a negative fiscal impact to municipalities at its last meeting. After the Committee reviewed NHMA's existing Legislative Principles and Policies on supporting local control, the Committee decided not to move forward with this policy because Committee members did not think the NHMA's membership would support it.

The Committee discussed bringing forward a policy on homestead exemptions. NHMA has an existing policy to support legislation for a study commission of local enabling legislation to allow for a uniform homestead exemption for resident owners on the principal place of residence. The Committee discussed submitting a policy that would remove the reference to a study commission and amend the policy to support

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legislation that supports local enabling legislation to allow for a uniform homestead exemption for resident owners on their principal place of residence. Council Cook discussed the importance of the legislation supported by NHMA on homestead exemptions to not negatively impact its membership and lower equalized property tax values. Councilor Cook moved and Councilor Flynn seconded a motion to submit this amended homestead policy to NHMA. The vote to passed unanimously.

6. **Discussion of tracked bills:** The Committee review and discussed some bills on the updated bill lists. Attorney Ferrini gave a status update on several bills noted in the packet, including HB 1010 (residential development in commercial zones), HB 1196 (repealing state housing champion designation), HB 348 (eligibility for local assistance), HB 1184 (no trespass orders) and bills on childcare tax credits. Councilor Cook raised concerns about bills relative to the business profits tax cuts, CACR 12 (a constitutional amendment that would prohibit income taxes) and funding cuts to state highway funds.
7. **Adjournment:** Councilor Cook moved and Councilor Flynn seconded a motion to adjourn. The motion passed unanimously. The meeting adjourned at 9:19 a.m.

Meeting minutes prepared by Jane Ferrini, Senior Assistant City Attorney.