

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

Fire Station 2
George Pierce Training Room
April 14, 2026

Portsmouth, NH
1730 hours

I. Call to Order:

Commissioner Gamester called the meeting to order at 1730 hours.

Motion, to enter into Non-public Session at 1730 hours in accordance with RSA 91-A:3, II (a) for Personnel Matter, was made by Commissioner Matthes. Motion was seconded by Commissioner Gamester and passed unanimously.

Motion, to close and come out of Non-public Session at 1806 hours and return to public session, was made by Commissioner Matthes. Motion was seconded by Commissioner Gamester and passed unanimously.

Motion, to seal the minutes of Non-public Session, was made by Commissioner Matthes. Motion was seconded by Commissioner Gamester. On a roll call vote of 3-0, motion passed unanimously.

Regular monthly meeting convened at 1807 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); Fire Chief William McQuillen, Assistant Fire Chief Jason Gionet, Acting Deputy Fire Chief Chad Putney, Administrative Manager Nancy Savini, and many fire department personnel and members of their family for pinning ceremony and presentation of Letter of Merit.

III. Oath of Office

Chief McQuillen took a moment to recognize Fire Prevention Officer Allan Scholtz who has been promoted from Firefighter to Fire Prevention Officer (26-051). Chief did the honor of swearing him in and presenting the pins. His wife Christine and daughter Avery did the honoring of placing the pins on his jacket.

IV. Letter of Merit

Chief McQuillen took a moment to read the Letter of Merit (26-052), pertaining to Incident # 25-2936, presented to the following department members:

Lt. Peter R. Gordon
Ff. Shaun M. Sullivan
Ff. Thomas A. Choquette
Ff. Jack B. Bouchard
Ff. Steven A. Morse

In recognition for their actions while on duty at 1638 hours on December 22, 2025.

Motion, to suspend rules at 1812 hours to take a break to allow the families to take pictures, was made by Commissioner Matthes. Motion was seconded by Commissioner Gamester and passed unanimously.

Motion, to resume back into session at 1823 hours, was made by Commissioner Gamester. Motion was seconded by Commissioner Matthes and passed unanimously.

V. Approval of Minutes of Previous Meeting:

Motion, to approve the minutes of March 10, 2026 (26-053), was made by Commissioner Matthes. Motion was seconded by Commissioner Gamester and passed unanimously.

VI. Presentation of Written Communication:

Chief McQuillen read Victoria O'Brien's Thank You (26-054) for the Portsmouth Fire Department's response to the recent call regarding a lift assist for her mother and advice about placing her mother at Webster Court in Rye, NH.

Motion, to accept Thank You and place on file (26-054), was made by Commissioner Matthes. Motion was seconded by Commissioner Gamester and passed unanimously.

VII. Public Comment Session: None.

VIII. Reports:

A. Fire Chief's Reports:

Commissioner Gamester motioned to discuss Chief's reports (26-055 through 26-058). Motion was seconded by Commissioner Matthes.

Fire Chief McQuillen reviewed reports with the Commission.

Report (26-055), 2026 Response Report for March 2026. The report shows the department responding to a total of 523 calls for the month: 212 Fire Calls with EMS Services and 121 Fire and Related Service Calls and 311 Ambulance Calls.

Chief spoke briefly about the following incidents of interest:

March 6 0454 E1 R7 A3 A4 95 SB at Exit South MVA, tractor trailer jack knifed with fuel spill, highway shutdown for cleanup companies operated for 2 hours.

March 15 1840 hours Truck 5 and C1 to Fern Road North Hampton for 1st alarm building fire, operated for 2 ½ hours.

March 16 2324 hours E4 and A3 to an C-17 incoming to Pease ANGB declared an in flight emergency and FD response was cancelled upon landing.

March 16 1140 hours A2 was responding to 25 Hodgdon Way for a medical aid, when it was involved in a MVA at Lafayette Rd and Constitution Ave. No injuries extensive damage to A2.

March 24 0308 hours Marine 1 and C1 to River Road Newington for a river search. Operated for an hour and a half.

The safety message focused on “Safety Doesn’t Happen by Chance”.

The Portsmouth Fire Department and National Fire Protection Agency remind you For April 2026, that "Safety Doesn't Happen by Chance," urging proactive fire prevention through education and adherence to safety codes. Key focus areas include securing lithium-ion battery safety (charging on hard surfaces), testing smoke alarms monthly, and implementing comprehensive home fire escape plan.

Safety tips to follow:

- Lithium-ion Battery Safety : Charge devices (phones, e-bikes) on hard surfaces, not beds or couches, and use only manufacturer-approved charging cords.
- Smoke Alarms & Detection: Test alarms monthly, replace batteries annually, and ensure they are on every level, in hallways, and in bedrooms.
- Cooking Safety: Never leave cooking unattended and keep the stove area clear of combustible items.
- Lithium-ion Battery Safety: Charge devices (phones, e-bikes) on hard surfaces, not beds or couches, and use only manufacturer-approved charging cords.
- Smoke Alarms & Detection: Test alarms monthly, replace batteries annually, and ensure they are on every level, in hallways, and in bedrooms.
- Cooking Safety: Never leave cooking unattended and keep the stove area clear of combustible items.
- Escape Planning: Develop and practice a home fire escape plan, ensuring everyone knows two ways out and a designated meeting spot outside.
- Electrical Safety: As spring brings more activity, inspect extension cords (used only temporarily) and avoid overloading outlets.
- For more specific tips go to "don't chance safety," visit the NFPA and dontchancesafety.org

Report (26-056), Fire and EMS Call Summary Reports, shows the department responded to 212 fire calls for the month of March. EMS activity was 311 with the top three responses being for weakness, abdominal pain, and head injury. There were 13 calls for back pain, 10 for cardiac, 10 for no apparent injury, and 22 non-transport.

Report (26-057), FY26 Budget, Chief reviewed the budget noting we are still tracking about 1% to the good and have projected expenses to fiscal year end noting a projection of higher overtime in last quarter due to training. Also, we are in a good positive state entering the last quarter of FY26. Report (26-058), 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 26-055 through 26-058, 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 (26-059) which are as follows:

Apparatus / Equipment/ Facilities

- * Engine 3 / Truck 2 Ariel Sensor fixed and both back in service.
- * Ambulance repaired and placed back in service.
- * Station 2 Roof Repairs
- * Dispatch temporarily moving to Station 2 while Police Station is under repair. Will operate out of Station 2 for approximately 4 to 6 months.

Personnel

- * Current open positions
- * 2 New Firefighters scheduled to begin on April 27, 2026
- * Lieutenants Exam: Written portion held last week & Oral Board to be held on Apr 15, 2026. Three Firefighters are taking the exam.

Training

- * Fire Training – Live fire training scheduled at the PNSY in May
- * All Personnel have completed their EMS recertification process for this year
- * All personnel to complete annual Fire Boat refresher training over the next month
- * Trench Rescue 4-day Training program to be held in Rochester with 8 Firefighters attending

Deputy Chief Putney reported (26-060) on Fire Prevention activity for the month with 38 permits issued and 57 inspections done. Revenue collected for March 2026 was just under \$25,000, noting the March 2026 nearly doubled February's revenue with an increase in activity of totalling 74 permit applications.

Other Notable Items are as follows:

- All Public Schools have been inspected
- Fire Prevention Officer Wheeler had two ride along students from Lakes Region Community College as a part of their Inspections class
- Ordinance change and Rules and Regulations planning is ongoing
- Outdoor dining permits have begun

Acting Deputy Chief Putney also provided charts showing month-over-month revenue and Permit & Inspections trending analysis along with current year vs. previous year analysis.

IX. Old Business: None.

IX. New Business:

Ordinance Update (26-061) pertaining to the Portsmouth Fire Department Rules and Regulations for Fire Protection Systems and Permits Was discussed. The ordinance is currently with the legal department for review. Once approved by legal, it will be presented to City Council as an ordinance change. When passed by City Council, Portsmouth will be the second municipality to comply with the state of New Hampshire new state law.

Motion, to enter into Non-public Session at 1840 hours in accordance with RSA 91-A:3, II (a) for Chief to inform the commission of several pending items, was made by Commissioner Matthes. Motion was seconded by Commissioner Gamester and passed unanimously.

Motion, to close and come out of Non-public Session at 1901 hours and return to public session, was made by Commissioner Matthes. Motion was seconded by Commissioner Gamester and passed unanimously.

Motion, to seal the minutes of Non-public Session, was made by Commissioner Matthes. Motion was seconded by Commissioner Gamester. On a roll call vote of 3-0, motion passed unanimously.

X. Adjournment:

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