

26-116

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

Fire Station 2
George Pierce Training Room
September 15, 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, Deputy Fire Chief Scott Egan, Acting Deputy Fire Chief Chad Putney, Firefighters Marra, Hazelwood and Will, Lieutenant Cole along with members of their families, Administrative Manager Nancy Savini, member of the community Mr. Christopher Golumb, and members of the Portsmouth Fire Department.

III. Oath of Office

Chief McQuillen took a moment to recognize the following Firefighters who have successfully completed their 1-year probationary period. Chief did the honor of swearing them in and presenting the badge.

-Firefighter Joseph Marra (26-101) having his girlfriend Morgan do the honor of pinning the badge on his jacket.

-Firefighter Kira Hazelwood (26-102) having her father Bob do the honor of pinning the badge her jacket.

-Firefighter Kevin Will (26-103) having his wife Arial do the honor of pinning the badge on his jacket.

Chief McQuillen then took a moment to recognize the following Department promotions. Chief did the honor of swearing them in and presenting the badge.

-Firefighter Timothy Cole (26-104) promoted to Lieutenant having his wife Sam do the honor of pinning the badge on his jacket.

-Lieutenant Scott Egan (26-105) promoted to Deputy Fire Chief having his son Matthew do the honor of pinning the badge on his jacket.

Motion, to suspend rules at 18:10 to take a ten-minute break to allow the families to take pictures, was made by Commissioner Gamester. Motion was seconded by Commissioner Matthes and passed unanimously.

Motion, to resume back into session at 18:20, was made by Commissioner Gamester. Motion was seconded by Commissioner Matthes and passed unanimously.

Fire Commission Minutes of September 15, 2026 continued:

IV. Approval of Minutes of Previous Meeting:

Motion, to approve the minutes of August 11, 2026 (26-106), was made by Commissioner Matthes. Motion was seconded by Commissioner Hughes and passed unanimously.

V. Presentation of Written Communication: None.

VI. Public Comment Session:

Mr. Christopher Golumb approached the Fire Commission Board with the following:

-To post the rules on the website once adopted. He also asked to have the individual emails of each Commissioner to be put on the website. The Chief will follow up with IT to have them posted.

VII. Reports:

A. Fire Chief's Reports:

Commissioner Gamester motioned to discuss Chief's reports (26-107 through 26-110). Motion was seconded by Commissioner Matthes.

Fire Chief McQuillen reviewed reports with the Commission.

Report (26-107), 2026 Response Report for August 2026. The report shows the department responding to a total of 660 calls for the month: 289 Fire Calls with EMS Services and 198 Fire and Related Service Calls and 371 Ambulance Calls.

Chief spoke briefly about the following incidents of interest:

Aug 3 1531 Eng 3 & Amb 3 Assisted Action Ambulance with a critical transport after their ambulance was involved in an MVA in traffic circle and were unable to complete the transport to PRH.

Aug 16 0139 E3 Mutual Aid to Dover, Old Dover Road building fire, operated for an hour and a half.

Aug 17 0245 A1 assisted Augusta Me FD with a transport to Boston Hospital after their ambulance suffered a mechanical failure.

Aug 27 0149 Hours Eng 1 and C2 to 50 Tenney Hill Road in Kittery 2nd alarm fire, operated for 5 ½ hours.

Aug 19, 27, & 28 Station 1 & 2 Companies dealt with homeless campfires behind Dukin Donuts Lafayette Road. Each call was approximately an hour in length.

Fire Commission Minutes of September 15, 2026 continued:

For August's Safety Message, The Portsmouth Fire Department and Center for Campus Fire Safety and the NFPA would like to remind you of the following: As move-in season brings students back to campuses nationwide, the National Fire Protection Association® (NFPA®) and The Center for Campus Fire Safety (CCFS) are launching this year's Campus Fire Safety Month campaign to help create safer living environments in residence halls and off-campus housing. Observed each September, the campaign delivers fire safety education and resources to students, families, and campus housing professionals. This year, the initiative shines the spotlight on safe cooking practices and lithium-ion battery safety, two critical areas of concern that can help reduce fire risk where students live, study, and gather.

- Stay alert and present. Do not cook if you're tired or drowsy from medicine or alcohol. Stay in the kitchen when you are frying, boiling, grilling, or broiling food. Turn off the burner if you leave the kitchen for any reason.
- Keep flammables away from heat sources. Keep anything that can catch fire – oven mitts, wooden utensils, food packaging, towels or curtains – away from your stovetop.
- Be prepared for emergencies. Always have a lid within reach to smother small grease fires. Turn off the burner. Do not move the pan. To keep the fire from restarting, leave the lid on until the pan has cooled. If you have any doubt about fighting a small fire, get outside, close the door behind you, and call 911 from outside the home.
- Review campus policies. Some dormitories have rules about charging micromobility devices like e-bikes and e-scooters. Review your college/university's policies before using these devices.
- Buy only listed products. When buying a product that uses a lithium-ion battery, look for a safety certification mark. This means it meets important safety standards.
- Charge devices safely. Only use the charging equipment provided with your device, stop charging once full, and never charge overnight or with damaged chargers/batteries.
- Store devices properly. Keep your batteries away from extreme temperatures, direct sunlight, and flammable items, and never block an exit with charging or stored devices.

Report (26-108), Fire and EMS Call Summary Reports, shows the department responded to fire calls for the month of August. EMS activity was 371 with the top three responses being for abdominal pain, no apparent reason and weakness. There were 18 calls for head injury, 16 for behavioral problems, 12 for fainting and 54 non-transports.

Report (26-109), FY27 Budget, Chief reviewed the budget noting FY27 is just beginning, looking strong and good. Report (26-110), Overtime Analysis, provided a breakdown of how overtime was used in the month of July along with a summary of what was charged to OT-Recall for the month.

Fire Commission Minutes of September 15, 2026 continued:

Motion, to accept Chief's Reports 26-107 through 26-110, 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 (26-111) which are as follows:

Apparatus / Equipment / Facilities

1. Ambulance 3 has been out of service for mechanical issues for a week.
2. New Command Vehicle: Is currently at NEVO for radios and lights
3. Station 2 kitchen is nearing completion along with painting on the second floor following the completion of the rood project.

Personnel

1. Current open positions: 1 new firefighter starting on September 21st and a second starting on October 5th. Two additional candidates are in the interview process.
2. Interviews: Ongoing at this time.

Other

1. We have several drills coming up over the next few weeks to include the Pease Triennial FAA disaster drill, The PNSY full scale fire exercise, as well as the Seabrook Station full scale Emergency Operations Center (EOC) drill.
2. The Ambulance data collection survey was submitted to the NH Insurance Department ahead of the deadline. This will be used to set the ambulance reimbursement rates for the future beginning in January of 2028.

Deputy Chief Putney reported (26-112) on Fire Prevention activity for the month of August with 45 permits issued and 41 inspections done and trending upward. Revenue collected for August 2026 was a little under \$10K.

Other Notable Items are as follows:

- FPO Scholtz has begun fire investigator school at the Fire Academy
- Pre-start of school year inspections of city schools performed
- FPO Wheeler followed up on the Carbon Dioxide Leak at Toscana
- First Due development of assets, inventory continue

VIII. Old Business:

Presented was the Proposed Rules & Orders of the Portsmouth Board of Fire Commissioners (as adopted by the Fire Commission o 9/15/26) (26-113).

Motion, to accept the Proposed Rules as written and forward to the City Council & Legal for approval, was made by Commissioner Matthes. Motion was seconded by Commissioner Hughes and passed unanimously.

Submitted to the Board is an operational Complaint dated 9.3.26 (26-114) which is pursuant Portsmouth Fire Department Policy 200-11 regarding the continued

Fire Commission Minutes of September 15, 2026 continued:

deficiencies in the City's emergency communications system. Specifically, the additional operational responsibilities placed upon Fire Department Shift Commanders under General Order 26-09, which were imposed on me on August 29, 2026, during the overnight shift and to Captain Regonini the subsequent shift.

The Chief updated with a letter (response) just received from the Local 4039 attorney dated 9.15.26.

Chief explained, to alleviate the need to move to Rockingham County and the Shift Command will no longer take the responsibility of dispatch, that the city has entered into a 90-day contract with a third-party company (Motivations) to start September 28, 2026. They will be the interim Manager performing an assessment reviewing Dispatch policies and procedures. Making recommendations for stability and staff levels as well as providing any training needed. Also noted there are milestones in the contract that the Chief will have a voice in. This additional staffing will make the need to go to Rockingham go away and thereby address the concerns raised in the complaint.

Motion, to grant the Chief authority to answer questions and follow the process of the actions of addressing the complaint letter, was made by Commissioner Hughes. Motion was seconded by Commissioner Matthes and passed unanimously.

IX. New Business:

The chief discussed video options for the Board of Commissioners' meetings going forward (26-115). The scheduled time slot would remain the same, just the location would change.

The options discussed were to move in the direction of live streaming the monthly board meetings following what all other boards in the city provide which will have to be at City Hall in Conference room A which has the set up to do so and moving to the city Chambers if we were to ever need more space. If not live stream, the other option would be to have it recorded and posted to the website the next day.

Motion, for Commission to have the option of moving meetings to Conference Room A to be streamed live or remain at Station 2 and record the meetings to be posted the next day, was made by Commissioner Matthes. Motion was seconded by Commissioner Hughes and passed unanimously.

X. Adjournment:

Motion, to adjourn at 1858 hours, was made by Commissioner Hughes. Motion was seconded by Commissioner Matthes and passed unanimously.


Jennifer Mosher-Matthes, Clerk