



Safe Water Advisory Group Meeting

Conference Room A at City Hall, 1 Junkins Avenue
Wednesday, March 11, 2026 at 6:30 pm

For the Zoom recording of this meeting, go to: <https://youtu.be/mbxRX06k5Ek>

Minutes

1. **Introductions and new members - Andrea Amico, SWAG Co-chair**

Chair Andrea Amico, , Councilor Rich Blalock, Councilor Michelle Flynn, Rich DiPentima, Dan Finan, Chief Bill McQuillen, Katrie Hillman Zoom: Kim McNamara, aurel Schaider. Staff: Al Pratt, Mason Caceres. Laurel Schaider. Absent: Rep. David Meuse, State Sen Rebecca Perkins Kwoka.

2. **Mission update - Al Pratt, Water Resource Manager & SWAG co-chair**

To review and communicate the latest science on the health and environmental effects of PFAS, to monitor federal and state level legislative changes, and to anticipate policy changes that could impact the City of Portsmouth.

To discuss topics relevant to the City's drinking water quantity, water quality, preservation and conservation efforts, and water infrastructure projects. Outreach to get to SWAG and Council.

To discuss public health aspects of water quality, support and provide public education about drinking water topics, and take proactive stances to protect and conserve water quality and quantity. Outreach to the community with SWAG advocates to inform and educate the community.

Considering new topics to discuss – things we haven't covered but follow mission but not veer off drinking water. Categories covered over 6 years

- PFAS – history tonight
- Regulations
- Updates: more on compliance parameters
- Water System tours – Madbury, Reservoir, another Pease PFAS treatment
- Special topics: schools, Dover landfill
- Spark your thoughts on what we might like to do
 - Flouride supply – Potential impact of war; Israel is #2 producer. Portsmouth receives from China. Also costs – fuel and chemical supplies. Any disruption to the use of fluoride requires public notice (covering healthcare providers).

- Impact in southern part of state of health concerns such as brownfields, PFAS, etc. For health – public education to understand chemicals that surround us in our environment. Emerging contaminants. Northern part of the state looking at initiatives that caused the PFAS issues. DES? Education centers (eg Silent Spring)

SWAG Topics

- Per- and Polyfluoroalkyl Substances (PFAS)
 - Pease PFAS History
 - Drinking Water Regulations
 - EPA Health Advisories
 - Health Studies
 - PFPRA & PFBA
 - Testing Opportunities
- Routine Updates
 - Water Supply Updates
 - Water Supply Master Plan – Projects Review
 - State Legislative Updates
 - Lead Service Line Inventory
 - Water Quality Monitoring Programs
 - Lead & Copper
 - Cyanobacteria
- Water System Site Tours
 - Madbury Water Treatment Facility & Bellamy Reservoir
 - Pease Tradeport PFAS Treatment Facility
- Special Topics
 - Portsmouth Schools Lead Updates
 - Former Dover Landfill Update
 - Water Supply System Overview
 - Climate Change & Emergency Planning
 - Fluoridation
 - Seacoast Drinking Water Initiatives
 - Water Main Flushing Program

3. Quarterly Water Supply Update - Al Pratt – Details

[https://files.portsmouthnh.gov/minutes/2026/SWAG/WaterSupplyUpdate SWAG 031126.pdf](https://files.portsmouthnh.gov/minutes/2026/SWAG/WaterSupplyUpdate%20SWAG%20031126.pdf)

A. Water Supply

Seacoast is still in severe drought. This has been is the longest and lowest precipitation period in 29 years. While ground is frozen, water just runs off. Will wait to see how precipitation shapes up in Mar-Apr-May to recharge the aquifer. Otherwise restrictions may be needed. First would be voluntary, then odd-even. The Seacoast communities are looking at the forecast to determine how to act collaboratively. SWAG suggested proactive outreach before people start planting gardens, education on rain barrels (environmentally sustainable materials), irrigation, etc.

Stream flows are low; but the reservoir is full. Portsmouth wells are in better shape now than in the 2016 drought. Water system trades off between Portsmouth well (which has had high demand) and Greenland well, by monitoring the levels. Using more (70%) surface water (from Bellamy Reservoir). We have extra headroom so the draw from development (fire services and hydrants) is not impacting the supply.

PFAS data – not much change. Portsmouth, Collins and Greenland wells are treated and we remain under the State limit but slightly over the projected EPA MCLs which are not yet implemented.

B. Water System Projects Update:

- Bellamy dam – 70% completed in fall 2025; will finish this April.
- Greenland well PFAS treatment – design to be finalized in Aug and bid in Sep. Cost now \$8.5 million (was \$2.5 million 6 years ago) due to a number of drivers. State Revolving Fund covering \$6.5 million with 10% loan forgiveness and \$1.5 million in Emergent Contaminants grant. Will have 2 granular activated carbon vessels. Old well reactivated in case of emergency need. City has purchased 1 acre of land for the facility from Greenland in exchange for paving. At the moment the adjacent athletic field is natural turf and does not have an impact but would if synthetic turf were added.
- Portsmouth and Collins well PFAS treatment – Air Force has agreed to pay for treatment but City is now sending second request for payment. May need SWAG to assist with Congressional input as City is up against the timeline. \$600,000 for design is included in FY27 CIP and \$13 million scheduled for FY29.
- Water Tank refurbishment: Spinney now fall 2026 (early Sep-Nov); Newington in spring 2027, Lafayette in fall 2027. Spinney will require outreach to inform the neighborhood about the 300k gallon drawdown which will be visible on the road and draining to the catchbasins.
- Little Bay Transmission Line – 3rd line design was to have been SRF but City did not yet have a match. Still a priority. In CIP for FY31.
- Revenue Study – Stantec assessed rates, tiers, service fees. Two Work Sessions with City Council. Annual service fee may go up for the first time in 24 years, but by adding a low tier the basic water customer won't see a big difference. The City operates on a 100-year plan for Water infrastructure. Pipes are 70-100yr assets, with 1% replaced each year at a cost of \$4 million.

4. Lead update - Mason Caceres, Assistant Water Resource Manager

[https://files.portsmouthnh.gov/minutes/2026/SWAG/ServiceLineLeadTestingReport SWAG 031126.pdf](https://files.portsmouthnh.gov/minutes/2026/SWAG/ServiceLineLeadTestingReport%20SWAG%20031126.pdf)

Full service line inventory must be completed by 2037.

Mailed 2,327 letters in Nov 2025 to those with unknown or known galvanized lines. Received 80 replies; did 12 inspections, offered 43 free lead tests with 23 participants. Found no lead.

8,661 services; 8,204 identified. 457 unknown.

6,612 City-side services of which 2,049 are unknown and being inspected by statistical pot-holing starting with 48 sites in Maple Haven: 15 completed (5/day) rest to be done in next few weeks.

Lead monitoring compliance protocols: 31 samples, all galvanized with 2 lead detections but under 15 ppb limit. Pease system: 21 tests, 1 detect. All detects notified. Flushing with cold water for 30 sec resolves the detection – results from old plumbing fixtures within the house.

5. PFAS timelines: City - Al Pratt; Community – Andrea Amico

<https://files.portsmouthnh.gov/minutes/2026/SWAG/PFAS%20Impact%2012%20Year%20Community%2010%20Year%20SAWG%20031126.pdf>

6. Disinfection by products and monitoring - Mason Caceres

A. A new topic regarding 11 of the 94 registered contaminants.

[https://files.portsmouthnh.gov/minutes/2026/SWAG/Disinfection Byproducts SWAG 031126.pdf](https://files.portsmouthnh.gov/minutes/2026/SWAG/Disinfection%20Byproducts%20SWAG%20031126.pdf)

DBPs result from organic matter in surface water reacting to chlorine. Higher levels in the summer, in drought conditions and in water that stagnates. Control with source management, minimizing nutrient loading and optimizing the added chlorine balance. Flushing programs and aeration address the problem of sitting water.

The two compounds are tasteless and odorless, but can respond to reverse osmosis and carbon filtration.

7. Community Resources - Andrea Amico

[https://files.portsmouthnh.gov/minutes/2026/SWAG/SWAG Community Resources 031126.pdf](https://files.portsmouthnh.gov/minutes/2026/SWAG/SWAG%20Community%20Resources%20031126.pdf)

Online resources to learn more about community and State initiatives, PFAS (eg Environmental Working Group ewg.org and pfas-exchange.org/resources)

8. Public Comment

A. Shane Zigma, UNH hydrologist – Q. Does Portsmouth collaborate with other Seacoast towns on drought and water supply issues? A. Yes. Portsmouth Water System and Aquerion (Rye) have a concerted effort, looking at reviving the 2016 Drought Drinking Water Task Force if needed.

9. Next meeting: June 2026, TBD

10. Adjourned at 8:36 pm.

MEETING PURPOSE

Founded by City Council action on October 5, 2020, the group's stated mission is:

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