



**Portsmouth Sister City Committee**  
**Conference Room A**  
**City Hall, 1 Junkins Avenue, Portsmouth NH**  
**Thursday April 16, 2026 at 5:00 pm**

For the Zoom recording:

<https://youtu.be/gE3NL-DEYOw?si=otMhBXAq5x683HbZ>

## Minutes

**Attending: Councilor Rich Blalock, chair; Robert Sullivan, Robert Conard, Mary Carey Foley, Ben VanCamp, Stephanie Seacord. Staff: Christine Friese.**

### 1. Review and approve past minutes

- On a motion by VanCamp seconded by Conard, the Committee voted to approve the minutes for January 15, February 19, March 5 and March 19, 2026.

### 2. Old Business

- Santarcangelo visit debrief – Councilor Blalock reported that Mayor Sacchetti said, “We feel hugged every time we visit Portsmouth.”
  - Friese reported 55 guests at the Library reception and that the refreshments were on target on selection and quantity and were enjoyed, especially the Portsmouth Orange Cake from Popovers. This example is a good model for future receptions.
  - She and Joseph Marquette provided transportation from Logan on Friday and back to the Italian Consulate in Boston on Monday and entertained the group for dinner on Friday. It was helpful to have someone who could translate as that facilitated conversation.
  - VanCamp commented on the Facebook responses to the City’s post of images – that residents were not aware of the visit and would have participated. Friese noted that the visit was arranged by and for the UNH Ritrovato Film Festival so the City had limited scope for any further publicity, but she is collecting a list of interested residents, especially those who are Santarcangelo relatives. UNH is aiding Emilia-Romagna (former Mayor Parma is the regional representative) with organizing a Foundation to continue Italian support of the relationship.

- On a motion by Seacord seconded by VanCamp the committee voted to suspend the rules to bring forward two meeting guests: Kim Golding and Julie Gagne. Kim is an Italian teacher in Portsmouth schools who accompanied the Portsmouth High School visits to Santarcangelo and is also the Correspondente Consulare for the Italian Consulate in Boston supporting Italian-American interests and residents in New Hampshire. Julie is a Santarcangelo descendant who narrated the “Lost North End” documentary. Both attended the Film Festival and reception on March 29 and expressed their continuing interest in the Committee’s Work. The students from Santarcangelo will be visiting Portsmouth again in October and she will keep us informed on the dates and details. PHS students are already applying for the next exchange trip in February 2027. Student siblings on both sides are reinforcing the friendships they have established.
- Friese noted the Committee’s interest in exploring collaborations between Sister/Friendship Cities and residents – beyond the schools – to develop the people-to-people connections that last when leadership changes, as is the goal for having a permanent Sister City Committee. Discussion around: working with the NH International Development person on a partner conference on business best management practices such as technology; City government, sports (kids and adults); a cross-cultural culinary program e.g. Great Bay Community College or Evan Mallet’s trip to explore and train students.
- The Committee discussed meeting with the new Portsmouth High School principal Chris Tebo to brief him on the work, the existing PHS relationships and exchanges and opportunities.
- Regarding next steps on the gift of the Tiziano Corbelli art illumination installation, Seacord will follow-up with the Public Art Review Committee.
- Gagne will follow up on her interest in joining the Committee and was directed to the application available from the City Clerk’s office/webpage.
- Update on Halifax, Nova Scotia – No further input from the Mayor but there may be more opportunity if the Portsmouth-Halifax ferry idea advances. Sullivan suggested and on a motion by Van Camp seconded by Foley, the Committee voted to support the idea that the Sister City Committee send an individually-self-funded delegation of volunteers to meet with city officials in Halifax at the first convenient date and enlist the City Manager’s office to identify the appropriate city officials there.
- Update on Sister City Fund – The Committee reviewed and revised the draft letter to be supplied to donors wishing to contribute to the Special Revenue Fund for Sister Cities. Seacord will revise the draft for Friese for discussion with Legal and Finance. On a motion by Van Camp seconded by Seacord the Committee voted to approve the letter as amended, pending approval from Legal and Finance.

### **3. New Business**

- New correspondence with Szolnok, Hungary – The Mayor of Szolnok wrote on March

4, 2026, prior to the April 12, 2026 election of the new Prime Minister, to invite a delegation of 2-3 people from the Portsmouth Sister City Committee to visit Szolnok for the annual Tisza (blossom) Festival June 19-21, 2026. Conard suggested it might be better to wait until next year given the short time frame. On a motion by Sullivan, seconded by Seacord the Committee voted to have Seacord draft a letter graciously declining the invitation while expressing the City's friendship.

- Carrickfergus contacts – Van Camp reported on his follow-up with the Gavin Millar, president of Rotary in Carrickfergus with whom the Friends Forever delegation of Steve Martineau and Amelia Burke met. Sullivan suggested a self-funded trip. Seacord suggested a zoom with Van Camp and Friese from Rotary here and Carrickfergus Rotary to discuss that idea and whom else from Portsmouth might be interested.

4. **Public Comment** – Gagne inquired about the difference between Friendship and Sister City status and how Santarcangelo could move from the former to the latter. Blalock noted that in some cases, as in Nelson, the counterpart city has requirements for investing in the program to fund exchange trips.
5. **Adjournment.** On a motion by Sullivan seconded by Foley, the meeting was adjourned at 6 pm.