

MEETING MINUTES AND ACTIONS OF THE PORTSMOUTH CITY COUNCIL  
APRIL 20, 2026, 7:00 PM  
MUNICIPAL COMPLEX, 1 JUNKINS AVENUE, PORTSMOUTH, NEW HAMPSHIRE

**Mayor McEachern called the meeting to order at 7:13 PM**

**1. Non-Public Session**

**Councilor Moreau moved to close the Non-Public Session and seal the minutes, seconded by Councilor Bagley.**

**On a unanimous vote, motion passed.**

**2. Roll Call**

Present: Mayor McEachern, Councilors Cook, Tabor, Blalock, Bagley, Moreau, Flynn and Hopkins.

Absent: Assistant Mayor Kelley

**3. Invocation**

Mayor McEachern then took a moment to acknowledge the passing of long-time Portsmouth resident, Beverly Splaine, extending his condolences to the Splaine family.

**4. Pledge of Allegiance**

Mayor led the Pledge of Allegiance

**5. Recognitions and Volunteer Committee Reports**

- a. Proclamation(s) – National Library Week in Portsmouth: Library Director Christine Friese was presented the Proclamation by Mayor McEachern
- b. Recognition(s) – Portsmouth Police Department Awarded New Hampshire Law Enforcement Accreditation: Police Chief Mark Newport spoke to the City's accomplishment, accompanied by Accreditation Manager Kate Young.
- c. Volunteer Committee Report(s) – Report Back from Public Art Review Committee (PARC) Regarding Plans for Jay Smith Park

**Councilor Cook moved for Council to accept report from the Public Art Review Committee and send it to the Trustees of Trust Funds so they can disburse the funds from the Jay Smith Park Trust, seconded by Councilor Moreau.**

**On a unanimous vote, motion passed.**

6. **Public Comment Session** – There were fourteen speakers: Karina Quintans (West Bank Town Hall), Beth Margeson (Prescott Park), Linnea Grim (Prescott Park), Theodore Porter (Crossing Guard Appreciation Day), Tyler Goodwin (Prescott Park), Jameson French (Prescott Park), Sean Mahoney (Prescott Park), Lee Frank (Prescott Park), Jim Lee (School Board Budget), Petra Huda (Prescott Park), Rick Becksted (Meeting Minutes/Prescott Park), Esther Kennedy (Administrative Assistants Week/Prescott Park/School Board Budget), Colin McKenna (Prescott Park), Patti Gormley (Prescott Park)

**Councilor Cook moved to suspend the rules and bring forward Item 13. B. Presentation Regarding Report Back on Prescott Park Master Plan Implementation Phase 1A, seconded by Councilor Tabor.**

**On a unanimous vote, motion passed.**

7. **13. B. Presentation Regarding Report Back on Prescott Park Master Plan Implementation Phase 1A**

City Manager Conard directed the Council's attention to Public Works Director Peter Rice, who provided the presentation. Director Rice gave background to the Master Plan's origins, current progress, and future recommendations for design.

Councilor Tabor inquired whether there's room for a stage with the current plan for the Shaw Building, to which Director Rice explained there's multiple options for a stage from a grading standpoint, but nothing had been solidified.

Further comments from Councilors Hopkins, Cook, Bagley, Flynn, and Mayor McEachern explored the implications of a stage and ancillary structures with respect to the current design—as well as concerns of whether Prescott Park maintenance items were being adequately addressed.

**Councilor Cook moved to temporarily suspend implementation of the Prescott Park Master Plan after Phase 1A, to focus on basic functions and improvements in the park, seconded by Councilor Tabor.**

Following parliamentary inquiry from Councilor Moreau as to why the plan would need to be suspended to address maintenance items, Attorney McCourt suggested an alternate motion approach that merged infrastructure maintenance into the CIP.

**Councilor Cook amended her motion, now moving to request DPW incorporate infrastructure maintenance at Prescott Park into the CIP. Councilor Tabor agreed to the amendment.**

**On a unanimous vote, motion passed.**

**Councilor Cook moved to suspend the rules and bring forward Item 15. A. Prescott Park Improvements, seconded by Councilor Bagley.**

**On a unanimous vote, motion passed.**

**8. 15. A. Prescott Park Improvements**

**Councilor Cook moved for the City to collaborate with Prescott Park Arts Festival, to plan for and initiate improvements to the Park infrastructure, including a stage and ancillary structures, funded by the Festival to support the long-term needs of the organization, seconded by Councilor Tabor.**

Councilor Tabor proposed a friendly amendment to the motion's language, **modifying "stage" to specify a "covered stage"**. Discussion ensued, with Councilors expressing support and requesting opportunities for public input.

**On a unanimous vote, motion passed.**

**Councilor Bagley moved to suspend the rules and open public comment, seconded by Councilor Cook.**

**On a unanimous vote, motion passed.**

There were four speakers, all in response to Prescott Park Improvements: Beth Margeson, Rick Becksted, Petra Huda, & Courtney Perkins.

**Following public comment, Mayor McEachern called for a five-minute recess at 9:29 PM**

**Mayor McEachern called the meeting back to order at 9:36 PM**

**9. First Reading of Ordinance amending Chapter 7, Parking, Article I - Parking Meters, Section 7.102, Parking Meter Rates, to establish parking rates for the Resident Access Parking Program (RAPP) Pilot**

**Councilor Tabor moved to pass first reading and schedule public hearing and second reading at the May 4, 2026, City Council meeting, seconded by Councilor Blalock.**

Councilors discussed the exploration of whether community partner volunteers could be included in the scope of the program, asking staff to report back later.

**On a unanimous vote, motion passed.**

**10. Public Hearing Regarding Resolution Authorizing \$6,000,000 to Participate in the Clean Water State Revolving Fund for Fleet Street Area Reconstruction Phase 2B**

Water Resource Director Al Pratt provided a brief presentation on the reconstruction project. Councilor Bagley noted he was happy to see this opportunity. Mayor McEachern opened the public hearing to speakers for or against. There were no speakers. Mayor McEachern closed the hearing.

**Councilor Bagley moved to adopt the Resolution as presented, seconded by Councilor Flynn.**

**Following a roll call vote, the motion passed 8-0.**

**11. Public Hearing Regarding Resolution Authorizing \$6,500,000 to Participate in the Drinking Water State Revolving Fund for Greenland Well PFAS Treatment**

Water Resource Director Al Pratt provided a brief presentation on the resolution. With no comments from Councilors, Mayor McEachern opened the public hearing to speakers for or against. There were no speakers. Mayor McEachern closed the hearing.

**Councilor Moreau moved to adopt the Resolution as presented, seconded by Councilor Hopkins.**

**Following a roll call vote, the motion passed 8-0.**

**12. Town of Madbury Request for Easements on City Property**

**Councilor Flynn moved to authorize the City Manager to execute the permanent and temporary easements to the Town of Madbury for the culvert replacement on Freshet Road and accept their de minimis payment of \$500 as presented, seconded by Councilor Hopkins.**

**On a unanimous vote, motion passed.**

**13. Consent Agenda**

- a. Letter from CJ Baroni and Jax Dieker of Peak East Coast Requesting the Peak East Coast 5K and Wellness Summer Series on August 8, 2026
- b. Letter from Victoria Spofford of Aware House Yoga Requesting the Yoga Series: Saturday Yoga in Prescott Park on June 20, July 25, August 22, and September 19, 2026
- c. Letter from Timothy Cole of Portsmouth Professional Firefighters Local 1313 Requesting the Fill-the-Boot Drive on August 8, 2026
- d. Letter from Nissa Bagelman of Reedmor Books and Brews Requesting an Event in the Memorial Bridge Parking Lot on July 25, 2026
- e. Active City Encumbrances Report from Peter Rice, Director of Public Works dated April 8, 2026

**Councilor Hopkins moved to adopt the consent agenda as presented authorizing the City Manager to act, seconded by Councilor Cook.**

**On a unanimous vote, motion passed.**

**14. Email Correspondences**

**Councilor Tabor moved to accept and place on file, seconded by Councilor Blalock.**

**On a unanimous vote, motion passed.**

**15. Appointments to be Voted:**

- Appointment of Eric Weinrieb to the Housing Blue Ribbon Committee (Verbally added by Mayor McEachern to the written list of appointments in the agenda)
- Appointment of Elissa Margolin to the Board of Commissioners Portsmouth Housing Authority
- Appointment of Paula Glynn to the Citywide Neighborhood Committee
- Appointment of Colleen Ovecka to the Citywide Neighborhood Committee
- Appointment of Jessica Blasko to the Conservation Commission
- Reappointment of Mary Loane to the Housing Blue Ribbon Committee
- Reappointment of Jen Stebbins Thomas to the Housing Blue Ribbon Committee
- Reappointment of Dagan Migirditch to the Housing Blue Ribbon Committee
- Reappointment of Andrew Samonas to the Housing Blue Ribbon Committee
- Reappointment of Byron Matto to the Housing Blue Ribbon Committee
- Reappointment of Erik Anderson to the Housing Blue Ribbon Committee
- Appointment of Caitlin McGrath-Levesque to the Housing Blue Ribbon Committee
- Reappointment of Richard Duddy to the Recreation Board
- Reappointment of Lauren Krans to the Recreation Board
- Appointment of Shan Zuidema to the Safe Water Advisory Group

**Councilor Bagley moved to confirm appointments as presented, seconded by Councilor Moreau.**

**Councilor Cook requested that Erik Anderson's appointment be considered separately.**

**On a unanimous vote to consider all appointments other than Erik Anderson, motion passed.**

**Councilor Bagley moved to reappoint Erik Anderson to the Housing Blue Ribbon Committee, seconded by Councilor Moreau.**

Discussion ensued regarding Anderson's reappointment.

**On a 7-1 vote, the motion passed, with Councilor Cook voting in opposition.**

**16. Amend Board/Commission/Committee Appointments of the City Council to Include Assistant Mayor Kelley, Councilor Tabor, and Councilor Moreau on the Portsmouth Housing Blue Ribbon Committee**

Mayor McEachern's amendment did not require a vote.

**17. Elementary School Citizen Day**

**Councilor Blalock moved to request a report back from Superintendent McLaughlin on Enabling an Elementary School Citizen Day, seconded by Councilor Bagley.**

**On a unanimous vote, motion passed.**

**18. Proposed NHMA Legislative Policy – Uniform Homestead Exemption**

**Councilor Cook moved to approve the proposed NHMA Legislative Policy on Homestead Exemptions as presented, seconded by Councilor Moreau.**

Councilor Moreau proposed a friendly amendment, **modifying "Homestead" to "Homeowners"**. Councilor Cook agreed to the amendment.

**On a unanimous vote, motion passed.**

**19. Community Power**

**Councilor Bagley moved to authorize the City Manager to send an EDDM (Every Door Direct Mail) postcard to all households in Portsmouth showing community power pricing versus Eversource and how to opt out, seconded by Councilor Flynn.**

Councilors discussed whether sending a mailer as the next rate change approaches was pragmatic. Councilor Bagley stressed the importance of rate transparency. Other councilors believed an EDDM was not an effective way to reach the community, citing mailing costs and efficacy of a physical mailer in the digital age.

**On a 2-6 vote, the motion failed, with Councilor Bagley and Mayor McEachern as the affirmative votes.**

Councilor Cook moved to suspend the rules and keep the meeting going past 10:30 PM, seconded by Councilor Moreau.

On a unanimous vote, motion passed.

**20. Approval of Parking and Traffic Safety Committee April 2, 2026 Action Sheet and Minutes**

Councilor Hopkins moved to approve and accept the action sheet and minutes of the April 2, 2026, Parking & Traffic Safety Committee meeting, seconded by Councilor Blalock.

On a unanimous vote, motion passed.

**21. Approval of Grant from the NH Department of Transportation for Improvements to the Intersection of Market Street and Russell Street - \$1,450,000**

Councilor Cook moved to authorize the City Manager to enter into a grant agreement, approve any future schedule modifications, and accept \$1,450,000 from the New Hampshire Department of Transportation to take advantage of State and Federal funding opportunities for improvements to the intersection of Market Street and Russell Street, seconded by Councilor Tabor.

On a unanimous vote, motion passed.

**22. Approval of an Amendment to a previously approved Emergency Management Performance Grant (EMPG) from the NH Department of Safety for the Emergency Operations Center**

Councilor Blalock moved to accept the terms of the Emergency Management Performance Grant (EMPG) amendment as presented, to reflect the change of Federal Funding Year and Period of Performance dates from August 31, 2024, to August 31, 2026, and authorize the City Manager to enter into the amended Grant Agreement as presented, seconded by Councilor Bagley.

On a unanimous vote, motion passed.

**23. Approval of Victims of Crime Award (VOCA) Grant - \$41,000**

Councilor Moreau moved to approve and accept the VOCA Grant as presented, seconded by Councilor Flynn.

On a unanimous vote, motion passed.

## **24. City Manager's Informational Items**

- a. Report Back on 134 Pleasant Street Revocable License Request – Deputy City Attorney McCourt provided an update that the property owner has revised the plan for redevelopment of the site and is currently not requiring a license for the vehicular egress from the property over the Parrott Avenue Parking Lot. There will be a request for revocable license for stormwater infrastructure crossing the Parrott Avenue lot at a later date.
- b. Report Back on Water and Sewer Rate Model Questions – City Manager Conard noted the memorandum in the City Council agenda packet prepared by City staff and David Hyder of Stantec responding to Councilor questions raised during the recent water and sewer rate study work session. She further advised she would proceed with a recommendation to adopt the proposed three rate tier structure at the May 4, 2026 City Council Meeting, to allow staff enough time to process accounting and billing updates prior to July 1.
- c. Public Art Review Committee (PARC) Art Exhibitions in the Portsmouth Room – City Manager Conard explained this was an opportunity to brighten the renovated Portsmouth Room. PARC will seek to host art exhibits with curated art, as well as seek proposals for art that will lead to the pilot occurring in May. Art will not be for sale but will serve as a space to showcase local artists.
- d. Master Plan Open House Reminder – City Manager Conard mentioned that the Master Plan Open House will take place on April 22<sup>nd</sup> at 6:00 p.m. at the Community Campus.
- e. Report Back on Transcription and Indexing Capabilities of the City's YouTube Channel – Per the City Manager, YouTube automatically generates captions or transcripts for uploaded videos—these are not immediate and may take some time to process. The City would not declare these to serve as official transcripts. There are no licensing restrictions that prevent transcription or captions, as they are built-in features available to all channels. YouTube provides large video storage capacities, with defined limits of up to 12 hours or 256 gigabytes per video. YouTube does not publish a total storage limit per channel. Timestamping sections of a meeting is possible but is a manual and limited process. The City can create chapter stamps in the video description, which become clickable navigation points. These could be manually created and maintained, but do not provide agenda-based indexing like a dedicated meeting management system. The City Manager also mentioned that staff is reviewing options from vendors for meeting management systems.
- f. Household Hazardous Waste Collection Day – City Manager Conard mentioned that Household Hazardous Waste Collection Day will take place on Saturday, May 9<sup>th</sup> from 8:00 AM to 12:00 PM.
- g. Draft City Council Policy No. 2026-01 – Resident Access Parking Program (RAPP) Pilot – The City Manager noted this policy will be incorporated into the Public Hearing and Second Reading of the Resident Access Parking Program (RAPP) Pilot at the next Council meeting.

**25. Miscellaneous Business Including Business Remaining Unfinished At Previous Meeting**

- a. Councilor Tabor noted the meeting of the Housing Blue Ribbon Committee, occurring Thursday, April 23<sup>rd</sup> at 5:30 PM
- b. Councilor Blalock noted the upcoming Strike Out the Stigma baseball/softball game on May 13<sup>th</sup>, organized by Portsmouth High School students.

**Councilor Moreau moved that the City Council support the City Attorney filing an amicus curiae in support of Dover School District in the case Dover School District & Boston v. SchoolCare, seconded by Councilor Bagley.**

For context, Attorney McCourt explained the Dover School District's suit against SchoolCare. The amicus curiae filed by the City of Portsmouth would not make the City a party in this suit, rather serving as additional legal articulation.


**On a unanimous vote, motion passed.**

**26. Adjournment**

**At 10:43 PM, Councilor Moreau moved to adjourn the meeting, seconded by Councilor Bagley.**

**On a unanimous vote, motion passed.**

Prepared by:  
Jefferson H. Lane  
Interim Recording Secretary

Submitted to City Council by:  
  
Katelyn Griggs  
Acting City Clerk

Approved by the City Council

Date: May 4, 2026

*The Portsmouth City Council meeting of April 20, 2026, can be viewed in its entirety on the City of Portsmouth YouTube Channel.*