

MEETING MINUTES AND ACTIONS OF THE PORTSMOUTH CITY COUNCIL
August 3, 2026, 7:00 PM
MUNICIPAL COMPLEX, 1 JUNKINS AVENUE, PORTSMOUTH, NEW
HAMPSHIRE

Mayor McEachern called the meeting to order at 7:19 pm.

A Non-Public Session was held in Conference Room A in accordance with RSA 91-A:3, II (a) and (I).

Assistant Mayor Kelley moved to leave the non-public session and seal the minutes. Seconded by Councilor Cook. Motion passed unanimously.

1. Roll Call

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

2. Pledge of Allegiance

Mayor McEachern led the Pledge of Allegiance

3. Acceptance of Minutes

Minutes and Actions of July 13, 2026, City Council Meeting

Assistant Mayor Kelley moved to accept and approve the minutes of the July 13, 2026, City Council meeting. Seconded by Councilor Cook. Motion passed unanimously.

4. Recognitions and Volunteer Committee Reports

Mayor McEachern recognized the Portsmouth Little League Team on their way to the New England Tournament in Bristol, CT as the NH Little League Champions.

5. Public Comment Session

There were six speakers:

Kevin Dwyer — RAPP program problems as they relate to many hospitality workers and referenced a petition signed by 2,000 people

Erik Anderson – Portsmouth Housing Plan; Housing issues are a regional problem

Esther Kennedy — RAPP is a hinderance; agrees there is a housing problem in Portsmouth; Public comment was not allowed at the Banfield Road Work Session; Public comments at the Vaughan Mall presentation were ignored

Linnea Grim – Ranger Chapter Daughters of the American Revolution recognition plaque – Stoodley's Tavern, Agenda Item 16.C

Tyler Garzo – Redacting personal information in City Council email correspondence; Senders should be asked if they want their contact information visible

Beth Goddard — Municipal Building Project. She would like to see the police and municipal projects divided

Councilor Cook moved to take items out of order, Agenda Item 16.C. Ranger Chapter Daughters of the American Revolution – Historic Marker Donation and Placement Request and Agenda Item 13.A Coakley Presentation. Seconded by Assistant Mayor Kelley. Motion passed unanimously.

16.C. Ranger Chapter Daughters of the American Revolution – Historic Marker Donation and Placement Request

Councilor Tabor moved to suspend the rules to allow Barbara Pamboukes to speak on the topic. Seconded by Assistant Mayor Kelley. Motion passed unanimously.

Ms. Pamboukes and local historian, Michael Geanoulis, Sr., gave an overview of the historical event and the request by the Ranger Chapter Daughters of the American Revolution (DAR) to donate and place a historic marker near Stoodley's Tavern on Hancock Street. The Tavern was a meeting place for local Patriots. The marker would be created by the William G. Pomery Foundation and read: *"Stoodley's Tavern 12 Dec 1775 Paul Revere alerted and organized local Patriots to seize gunpowder and cannon from Fort William and Mary."* Ranger DAR will obtain the street sign at no charge to Ranger DAR and donate it to the City. City staff to determine the exact location of the sign placement.

Councilor Bagley asked about the 20-word limit on the plaque. It is a limit set by the William G Pomery Foundation.

Assistant Mayor Kelley moved to accept this historic marker and authorize the City Manager to coordinate installation based on Department of Public Works location recommendation near Stoodley's Tavern on Hancock Street. Seconded by Councilor Cook. Motion passed unanimously.

13.A. Coakley Presentation — Peter Britz, Director of Planning and Sustainability, gave a general overview of the Coakley Landfill, and the status and activity of the site. There were follow-up questions and discussions by the City Council.

Coakley Landfill Group (CLG) meetings are open to the public and there is the opportunity for public comment.

6. Public Hearings and Vote on Ordinances and/or Resolutions

A. Public Hearing and Adoption of Resolution #13-2026 authorizing a Bond Issue and/or Notes of the City under the Municipal Finance Act of up to Six Million Five Hundred Thousand Dollars (\$6,500,000) for costs related to

- School Facilities Capital Improvements
- Elementary Schools Upgrade
- Elementary Schools Playground Upgrade
- School Facilities – Pavement and Roofing

• **CITY COUNCIL DISCUSSION**

Councilor Bagley — inquired about which school playground is currently being updated. Little Harbor School is currently under construction, and New Franklin School is the next to be upgraded.

Councilor Blalock - looks forward to the upgrades.

• **PUBLIC HEARING SPEAKERS**

Tyler Garza – requests pavement and roofing be divided into separate line items. Do student parking fees go towards paving? Answer to question – Student parking fees offsets public transportation

Councilor Tabor moved to adopt Resolution #13-2026 as presented. Seconded by Councilor Blalock and roll call vote was taken. Motion passed unanimously (2/3 in favor vote met).

B. Public Hearing and Adoption of Resolution #14-2026 authorizing a Bond Issue and/or Notes of the City under the Municipal Finance Act of up to Six Million Four Hundred Eighty-Five Thousand Dollars (\$6,485,000) for costs related to

- Ambulance Replacement Program
- Municipal Building Audit – Implementation
- Citywide Facilities Capital Improvements
- Hampton Branch Rail Trail (NH Seacoast Greenway)
- Citywide Storm Drainage Improvements
- The Creek Neighborhood Reconstruction
- Vaughan Mall Restoration
- Police Facility and Municipal Complex Design

• **CITY COUNCIL QUESTIONS and DISCUSSION**

Councilor Bagley emphasized the need to do the upgrades due to the life span of the current building. Coupling the Police Station and Municipal Building is more cost effective. He spoke to the current plan and supports the project.

Councilor Moreau asked if the City has the right to make improvements on the Rail Trail.

Peter Britz commented on the need to negotiate one short section near the cemetery.

Councilor Hopkins spoke in favor of the Municipal Building Project and the need for the safety of our employees.

Councilor Cook was originally hesitant about renovations to Police Station. The HVAC for the entire complex needs to be upgraded. She commented that the project has grown in scope but has decreased in cost.

Councilor Blalock commented the building needs some work.

Councilor Bagley affirmed our bond cycle is confusing. Sometimes projects are not immediately started and are delayed. Projects can be authorized but not yet bonded because the funds are not yet needed.

Mayor McEachern took the opportunity to talk about the Police Station, and the need for a better working environment.

Councilor Hopkins spoke on the Municipal Building Work Session that recently occurred.

• **PUBLIC HEARING SPEAKERS**

Susan Sterry, member of the Municipal Building Committee, talked about the positive interactions with the public about the project at the Farmers Market with Deputy City Manager Weber this past weekend.

Petra Huda commented we are giving the City the authority to borrow money later. She would like to see transparency of every bond sale, and would like to know what has been authorized, borrowed and spent.

Esther Kennedy commented that we honor our history and our buildings, but we do not need the Taj Mahal. Why is there a need for an additional ambulance? How much are other communities giving us towards the purchase of this vehicle since they are utilizing the service? How much burden are we putting on taxpayers? We are not making this city affordable.

Councilor Bagley moved to adopt Resolution #14-2026 as presented. Seconded by Councilor Moreau and roll call vote was taken. Motion passed unanimously (2/3 in favor vote met).

C. Public Hearing and Adoption of Resolution #15-2026 authorizing a Bond Issue and/or Notes of the City under the Municipal Finance Act of up to Six Hundred Thousand Dollars (\$600,000) for the costs related to the purchase of one fire apparatus

• **CITY COUNCIL QUESTIONS and DISCUSSION**

Councilor Blalock is against the fire boat. He cannot justify the cost.

Councilor Tabor commented Portsmouth is the medical/paramedics on the water.

Councilor Bagley supports the cost of the fire boat. We need the correct type of boat to service our community. Other communities have asked us for assistance in emergencies as well.

Councilor Cook is not confident that our current fire boat can facilitate emergency needs in all weather conditions in its current size and condition and supports the purchase of the fire boat.

Mayor McEachern would like to table this discussion and bring it up at a future City Council meeting soon.

• **PUBLIC HEARING SPEAKERS**

Esther Kennedy — We do not need a fire boat. In an emergency, the Coast Guard will be called first.

Erik Anderson — spoke about the cost of the fireboat and who, outside of Portsmouth, should be contributing to funding it.

Sue Sterry - talked about security on the water and the bridges spanning the area and the cost of the boat.

Petra Huda – the high cost of the fire boat

Councilor Bagley moved to table the discussion to the October 13, 2026, City Council Meeting. Seconded by Councilor Tabor. Motion passed 7-2.

D. Public Hearing and Adoption of Resolution #16-2026 authorizing a Bond Issue and/or Notes of the City under the Municipal Finance Act and/or participation in the State Revolving Fund (SRF) Loan Program up to Four Million Nine Hundred Thousand Dollars (\$4,900,000) for costs related to

- Annual Water Line Replacement
- Well Stations Improvements
- Madbury Water Treatment Plant – Facility Repair and Improvements
- Portsmouth and Collins Wells – Treatment
- The Creek Neighborhood Reconstruction
- Vaughan Mall Restoration

Councilor Blalock - mentioned the benefits of having safe drinking water.

Assistant Mayor Kelley moved to adopt Resolution #16-2026 as presented. Seconded by Councilor Cook and roll call vote was taken. Motion passed unanimously (2/3 in favor vote met).

E. Public Hearing and Adoption of Resolution #17-2026 authorizing a Bond Issue and/or Notes of the City under the Municipal Finance Act and/or participation in the State Revolving Fund (SRF) Loan Program of up to Three Million One Hundred Thousand Dollars (\$3,100,000) for the costs related to:

- Wastewater Pumping Station Improvements

- Peirce Island Wastewater Treatment Facility
- Citywide Storm Drainage Improvements
- Vaughan Mall Restoration

Councilor Tabor moved to adopt Resolution #17-2026 as presented. Seconded by Councilor Blalock and a roll call vote was taken. Motion passed unanimously (2/3 in favor vote met).

F. First Reading for Annual Omnibus Ordinance, Amending Chapter 7, Vehicles, Traffic and Parking

DISCUSSION

Councilor Cook asked for clarification on the location and description of the parking spaces. The City Manager said there will be a presentation at the second reading.

Councilor Bagley moved to pass first reading of the Annual Omnibus Ordinance amending Chapter 7, VEHICLES, TRAFFIC and PARKING, Article III, TRAFFIC ORDINANCE, Section 7.326, Limited Parking – Fifteen Minutes, Section 7.330 A, No Parking, and Article VI, LOADING ZONES, Section 7.601, Limited Hours Loading Zones and schedule public hearing and second reading at the August 17, 2026, City Council meeting. Seconded by Councilor Moreau. Motion passed unanimously.

G. Public Hearing and Second Reading of Ordinance Amending Chapter 6, Licenses and Encumbrances, Article I, Encumbrance Permits and Licenses for Use of Public Property, Relative to Section 6.111, fees

Senior Assistant City Attorney Ferrini explained that this is a housekeeping measure. She explained how the fees will be adopted consistent with Chapter 1 Administrative Code, Article XVI, Section 1.1601 regarding the adoption of fees section.

Councilor Flynn moved to pass second reading and schedule a third and final reading on August 17, 2026, on the amendment to Chapter 6, Licenses and Encumbrances, Article I, Encumbrance Permits and Licenses for use of Public Property, Section 6.111, Fees, as presented. Seconded by Councilor Hopkins. Motion passed unanimously.

Councilor Cook moved to suspend the rules and schedule third and final reading. Seconded by Councilor Moreau. Motion passed unanimously.

Councilor Cook moved to pass third and final reading. Seconded by Councilor Blalock. Motion passed unanimously.

H. Public Hearing and Second Reading of Ordinance Amendment to Chapter 12, City of Portsmouth Building Code, Section 1201 through 1209, by deleting and replacing the entire Chapter

- **PRESENTATION** by Shanti Wolph, Chief Building Inspector

- **CITY COUNCIL DISCUSSION**

Councilor Cook — would like to see a Green Building Code developed down the road.

Chief Building Inspector Wolph explained that we cannot pass third and final reading tonight because this version must now go to the Building Code Review Board.

Mayor McEachern mentioned the Building Department is available for questions until 10:00 am daily.

Assistant Mayor Kelley moved to pass second reading of the amendment to Chapter 12, City of Portsmouth Building Code, Sections 1201 through 1209, and schedule a third and final reading at the August 17, 2026, City Council meeting. Seconded by Councilor Cook. Motion passed unanimously.

I. Public Hearing and Second Reading of Chapter 1, Administrative Code, Article XVI, Adoption of Fees, Section 1.1601, Procedure

- **CITY COUNCIL QUESTIONS**

Councilor Moreau — wanted clarification on fixing the motion regarding RAPP fees

Councilor Bagley - we need to get the word out before we raise the rates.

Councilor Tabor — agrees with Councilor Bagley. Everything is happening at once, increasing garage rates, and the RAPP program.

Councilor Blalock – we are confusing the public with all the parking rate changes.

- **PUBLIC HEARING SPEAKERS**

Tyler Garzo — normally supports fee increase. We are below Hampton and York. Any increases should go towards transportation alternatives, but we are increasing parking fund balance instead. Transportation Alternatives are not the priority.

Colin Scholler - in favor of increasing rates. Parking funds should go to transportation alternatives. Transportation alternatives are not the priority.

- **ADDITIONAL COUNCIL QUESTIONS AND DELIBERATIONS**

The Council discussed parking fee changes and agreed there should be more discussion before moving forward. Councilor Hopkins questioned who is responsible for making fee decisions and later raised the need to include hotels, noting that hotel parking is a significant revenue source and that Portsmouth, Hanover, and Durham are all looking at

workforce parking issues. Mayor McEachern suggested bringing a different motion to the Fee Committee. Councilors Bagley, Cook, Tabor, and Assistant Mayor Kelley supported holding a work session on parking. Councilor Cook proposed exploring a shuttle loop program and suggested amending the motion by removing the final line. Councilor Tabor agreed and questioned the need for another study, suggesting discussion of a shuttle loop pilot and electronic garage inventory signs.

Assistant Mayor Kelley emphasized including COAST in the discussion because of its data on transit needs and cautioned against undercutting existing COAST service, while also suggesting the Chamber may need to be involved. Councilor Bagley noted he had researched hotels, ride shares, and shuttles, and said there are valid reasons to increase parking rates but emphasized community input and identifying tangible benefits for downtown workers. Peter Rice noted that \$50,000 had already been approved to evaluate micro-transit options and supported holding a work session.

Councilor Bagley moved to schedule a work session at 6:00 pm on August 17, 2026, to discuss increased on-street parking rates and how the revenue will be used. Seconded by Councilor Hopkins. Motion passed unanimously.

Councilor Cook moved to amend the original motion to remove the last phrase of the existing motion so that it reads, "move to set the parking fees for on-street and lot parking for FY2027: \$3 per hour for the first 3 hours and \$6 per hour thereafter pursuant to Chapter 1, Administrative Code, Article XVI, Adoption of Fees, Section 1.1601, Procedure, and no change to resident parking rates". Seconded by Councilor Blalock. Motion passed 8-1. (Assistant Mayor Kelley opposed)

Assistant Mayor Kelley moved to continue public hearing on the motion as amended. Seconded by Councilor Cook. Motion passed unanimously.

7. City Manager's Items Which Require Action

There were no items under this section

Councilor Moreau moved to go past 10:30 pm. Seconded by Councilor Bagley. Motion passed 8-1. (Assistant Mayor Kelley opposed).

8. Consent Agenda

- A. Granite State Wheeler's Annual Seacoast Country bicycle ride
- B. St. Paddy's 5k/10k by Millennium Running
- C. Eastern States 20 Miler & Half Marathon by Millennium Running

Councilor Bagley moved to adopt the Consent Agenda as presented. Seconded by Councilor Moreau. Motion passed unanimously.

9. Presentations and Written Communications

A. Coakley Presentation (Agenda Item taken out of order)

B. PPMtv Funds Request

Assistant Mayor Kelley requested clarification on how the funds are used. City Manager Conard explained this request. Regulatory Counsel Suzanne Woodland confirmed that it is only for PPMtv. It is likely that no additional funds will come into this trust. There were follow-up questions and discussions by the City Council. Nathan Lunney, Deputy City Manager — Finance & Administration, explained the wind down of this fund. This is the cycle that follows the decision or non-decision that the City Council made to not reverse or amend the 2009 policy. It is now time to act on the remaining interest balance in the trust.

Councilor Flynn moved to authorize the City Manager to exercise authority under Paragraph 3 of the Cable Television Public Access Charitable Trust to direct the Trustees of the Trust Funds to release the remaining funds to Portsmouth Public Media Television, Inc. for purposes consistent with the Trust. Seconded by Councilor Hopkins. Motion passed 8-1. (Councilor Bagley opposed)

C. Letter from Attorney Colby T. Gamester regarding 0 Elm Street

Assistant Mayor Kelley moved to refer the letter from Attorney Gamester regarding 0 Elm Street to the Legal Department and to the Planning Board for a report back. Seconded by Councilor Cook. Motion passed unanimously.

D. Email Correspondence

Councilor Tabor moved to accept and place on file. Seconded by Councilor Blalock. Motion passed unanimously.

10. Mayor McEachern

A. Appointments to be Considered

- Appointment of Wendi Alip to the Sustainability Committee

B. *Appointments to be Voted

Councilor Bagley moved to appoint the following as presented. Seconded by Councilor Moreau. Motion passed unanimously.

- Reappointment of Stephen Buzzell to the Cemetery Committee

C. Resignation of Paul Mannle of the Zoning Board of Adjustment effective July 1, 2026

Councilor Flynn moved to accept with regret the resignation of Paul Mannle from the Zoning Board of Adjustment and send a letter of thanks to Paul for his service to the City. Seconded by Councilor Hopkins. Motion passed unanimously.

- D. Resignation of Heather Krans of the Public Art Review Committee effective August 15, 2026

Councilor Cook commented that Heather will be missed.

Councilor Cook moved to accept with regret the resignation of Heather Krans from the Public Art Review Committee and send a letter thanking Heather for her service to the City. Seconded by Assistant Mayor Kelley. Motion passed unanimously.

- E. *Working Group on Service Delivery and Technology

Mayor McEachern explained that this is an effort to bring a working group together of citizens focused on technology with a report back by January 2027 in terms of things that could be done through technology to provide or improve services for our community.

Mayor McEachern moved to move this item to the August 17, 2026, City Council meeting.

11. City Council Members

- A. Assistant Mayor Kelley and Councilor Tabor

- Presentation and Update on Housing Action Plan — Peter Britz, Director of Planning and Sustainability

Assistant Mayor Kelley moved to refer to the August 20, 2026 Planning Board meeting for review and comment and schedule Public Information and Input Sessions on September 23, 2026, in the Levenson Room at the Portsmouth Public Library, and September 28, 2026, as part of the regular City Council Meeting. Seconded by Councilor Tabor. Motion passed unanimously.

- B. Councilor Cook

Councilor Cook suspended the rules and brought an item out of order City Manager Informational Item 17.C Status of Vaughan Mall Restoration Design. Seconded by Assistant Mayor Kelley. Motion passed unanimously.

City Manager Conard explained the request for a report back and we provided the last public information session on July 22, 2026 with stakeholders and the Public Art Review Committee (PARC). Councilor Cook provided additional information and feedback from the public information session.

Councilor Tabor questioned removing trees. City Manager Conard mentioned some larger trees have been lost and removed. There is a net loss of trees, yet additional greenery and trees will be planted.

Councilor Cook moved to accept the Vaughan Mall Re-Design Plan in substantially similar form as presented to the City Council, noting that any changes made on Vaughan Mall do not preclude later implementation of the 2017 plans for Vaughan Mall, Worth Lot, and Bridge Street Lot. Seconded by Councilor Moreau. Motion passed unanimously.

- Vaughan Mall Art

Councilor Cook explained her next motion as it relates to a concept from the LGBTQ+ community.

Councilor Moreau questioned, "How can we set aside space if we do not know what the piece will be?"

Councilor Cook moved to support the recommendation of the Public Art Review Committee (see attached Report from PARC) for the concept of a donated "City of the Open Door" art piece in the Vaughan Mall. Seconded by Councilor Bagley for discussion.

The group would like permission before they start raising money. There is no RFP or timeline at this time. Can an outside organization be allowed to do this?

Councilor Bagley said we are getting a gift from a Sister City. It is bad taste for another group to fundraise simultaneously for another piece.

Mayor McEachern spoke to the merits of this proposal.

Councilor Blalock explained who Vaughan Mall is named after.

Councilor Cook moved to support the recommendation of the Public Art Review Committee (see attached Report from PARC) for the concept of a donated "City of the Open Door" art piece in the Vaughan Mall. Seconded by Councilor Bagley for discussion, Motion passed 8-1. (Councilor Bagley opposed).

C. Councilor Hopkins

- Parking & Traffic Safety Committee Action Sheet and Minutes of July 2, 2026

Councilor Hopkins moved to approve and accept the action sheet and minutes of the July 2, 2026, Parking & Traffic Safety Committee meeting. Seconded by Assistant Mayor Kelley. Motion passed unanimously.

12. Approval of Grants/Donations

A. New Hampshire Department of Health and Human Services, Opioid Abatement Program - City of Portsmouth in the amount of \$776,653 for an additional Police Department Social Worker, an additional School Department Social Worker, and housing funds for the Welfare Department

Assistant Mayor Kelley thanked everyone who worked on this grant application and request. City Manager Conard noted this is a two-year grant.

Councilor Bagley moved to accept the New Hampshire Department of Health and Human Services, Opioid Abatement Program Grant - City of Portsmouth in the amount of \$776,653 as presented. Seconded by Councilor Moreau. Motion passed unanimously.

B. New Hampshire Highway Safety Grant - Police Commission, in the amount of \$24,100, to support six highway safety initiatives

Councilor Flynn moved to accept the terms of the Highway Safety Grant as presented in the amount of \$24,100. Seconded by Councilor Hopkins. Motion passed unanimously.

C. Ranger Chapter Daughters of the American Revolution — Historic Marker Donation and placement request (Item taken out of order)

D. Donation from Portsmouth Lodge of Elks No.97 in the amount of \$4,500 to cover fees associated with training American Red Cross lifeguards for the Portsmouth Indoor Pool

Councilor Blalock thanked the Elks for their donation.

Councilor Tabor moved to accept the Portsmouth Lodge of Elks No. 97 donation in the amount of \$4,500 as presented. Seconded by Councilor Blalock. Motion passed unanimously.

13. City Manager's Informational Items

A. *Update on DPW Project Pages – City Manager Conard provided a brief verbal update.

B. *Report Back on the Online Guide for Residents Navigating Land Use Boards and One-Page Guides City Manager Conard provided a brief verbal update.

C. Status of Vaughan Mall Restoration Design (Item taken out of order)

14. Miscellaneous Business Including Business Remaining Unfinished at Previous Meeting

15. Adjournment

**Councilor Moreau moved to adjourn the meeting at 11:05 pm. Seconded by Councilor Bagley.
Motion passed unanimously.**

*Indicates verbal report with no attachments

Prepared by:

Approved by the City Council

Sally A. Kellar

City Clerk

Date: _____

The Portsmouth City Council meeting of August 3, 2026, can be viewed in its entirety on the City of Portsmouth YouTube Channel.