

MEETING MINUTES AND ACTIONS OF THE PORTSMOUTH CITY
COUNCIL August 17, 2026, 7:00 PM
MUNICIPAL COMPLEX, 1 JUNKINS AVENUE, PORTSMOUTH, NEW
HAMPSHIRE

Mayor McEachern called the meeting to order at 7:15 pm.

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

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

1. Roll Call

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

Absent: Councilor Tabor

2. Pledge of Allegiance

Mayor McEachern asked the Portsmouth Little League Team to lead the Pledge of Allegiance.

3. Acceptance of Minutes

Minutes and Actions of August 3, 2026, City Council Meeting

Assistant Mayor Kelley moved to accept and approve the minutes of the August 3, 2026, City Council meeting. Seconded by Councilor Cook. Motion passed unanimously.

4. Recognitions and Volunteer Committee Reports

A. Proclamation – National Service Dog Month

Mayor McEachern proclaimed September as National Service Dog Month in the City of Portsmouth. Brendan Madden thanked the Mayor and Council for this proclamation. The Mayor thanked Brendan for his service dog advocacy.

B. Recognition – Portsmouth Little League

Mayor McEachern recognized the Portsmouth Little League as the 2026 NH Little League Champions. This is Portsmouth Little League's first championship since 2010. He presented the players with City of the Open Door doorstops.

5. Public Comment Session

Assistant Mayor Kelley made a motion to suspend the rules and continue public comment from the work session. Seconded by Councilor Cook. Motion passed unanimously.

There were 12 speakers:

Tyler Garzo mentioned the real pressure is visitors. Suggested a park and ride at the Pease Lot. Alternatives need to be ready now and the rate increase should go towards these initiatives

Margot Doering thanked the Council for the Service Dog proclamation. She supports the efforts of the Parking Ecosystem study. She would like this situation considered holistically – walkability, public transit, ride share, alternatives to parking and more parking garages. It takes less than 10 minutes to walk downtown.

Evie Summermatter feels the workforce parking program needs revisions. She and many of her employees commute into Portsmouth. RAPP undermines small business owners.

Justin Richardson gave his perspective about parking. Make parking easy and affordable for everyone.

Buzz Sherr spoke about FLOCK and license plate readers. He would like the Council to wait to see what is going to happen in the legislature and to allow the Police Commission to meet on this matter.

David Hansen spoke about workforce parking at the Foundry Garage and would like to see the 10-hour limit extended to 14 hours.

Penny Dreadful is a Portsmouth business owner. It is hard to get workforce into the city when there is no parking for them. Parking is expensive in Portsmouth for visitors. The sidewalks are not walkable in the winter. They have lost spots in front of Fezziwigs.

Colin Scholler spoke about COAST. Parking is based on supply and demand and there is a higher personal cost associated with it. The intention of a parking program is to make parking available for those who need it.

Jared Parker would like parking to be looked at as a workforce issue rather than a revenue issue. The workforce can support local businesses, but they cannot afford it. The Foundry garage can be a far walk, especially in the winter.

Moiria Wright explained Portsmouth is a special place. She would like to see parking pressure off taken away from the workforce, businesses and residents. Put the money back into the people that work and live here.

Kelsey Wilson wanted to mention the privately owned lots. Is there a way to consider arrangements for workforce parking after business hours to offer up some sort of solution?

Nissa Bagelman would like to see discounted rates for the workforce parking.

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

- A. First Reading to Amend Chapter 10, ZONING ORDINANCE, Article 2 – Administration and Enforcement, Section 10.234 – Procedures for Variances, Special Exceptions and Appeals from Decisions of the Code Official; Section 10.246 Expiration and Abandonment of Approvals and Section 10.1017.70 Expiration and Extension

Councilor Flynn moved to pass first reading and schedule a public hearing and second reading for September 14, 2026. Seconded by Councilor Blalock. Motion passed unanimously.

- B. First Reading Amending Chapter 7, Vehicles, Traffic and Parking, Article III, Traffic Ordinance, Section 7.330 A, No Parking, and Section 7.336 A, One-Way Streets (Fleet Street Section 1 Reconstruction)

Councilor Bagley explained, with the reconfiguration of Fleet Street, it makes more sense to move the parking spaces on Fleet Street. Councilor Hopkins mentioned it is also a safety issue. Mayor McEachern explained outdoor dining on the street will be affected. Councilor Bagley gave alternative options. He is worried about public pushbacks to a contraflow bike lane. Councilor Cook feels we are gaining a benefit for larger sidewalks. Councilor Hopkins explained the benefits of a counter flow bike lane.

Councilor Bagley moved to pass first reading and schedule a public hearing and second reading at the September 14, 2026, City Council meeting regarding an amendment to CHAPTER 7, VEHICLES, TRAFFIC AND PARKING, ARTICLE III, TRAFFIC ORDINANCE, Section 7.330 A, No Parking, which will move the parking spaces from the west to the east side of Fleet Street as presented. Seconded by Councilor Moreau. Motion passed unanimously.

And

Councilor Bagley moved to pass first reading and schedule a public hearing and second reading at the September 14, 2026, City Council meeting regarding an amendment to CHAPTER 7, VEHICLES, TRAFFIC AND PARKING, ARTICLE III, TRAFFIC ORDINANCE, Section 7.336 A, One-Way Streets, changing Fleet Street to one-way from Congress Street to Hanover Street as presented. Seconded by Councilor Moreau. Motion passed unanimously.

- C. Public Hearing and Second Reading of the Annual Omnibus Ordinance, Amending Chapter 7, VEHICLES, TRAFFIC and PARKING, Article III, TRAFFIC ORDINANCE, Section 7.326 A, Limited Parking – Fifteen Minutes, Section 7.330 A, No Parking, and Article VI, LOADING ZONES, Section 7.601, Limited Hours Loading Zones

Eric Eby, Traffic Engineer, gave a presentation to explain the amendment and

the parking spaces under consideration. Councilor Cook asked if other parking spaces have been asked to be removed. Mayor McEachern and Councilors Cook and Bagley contributed to the discussion. Questions were asked regarding state laws regarding the amount of clearance needed for parking spaces.

There were no comments during Public Hearing.

Councilor Hopkins moved to pass second reading of the Annual Omnibus Ordinance amending Chapter 7, VEHICLES, TRAFFIC and PARKING, Article III, TRAFFIC ORDINANCE, Section 7.326 A, Limited Parking – Fifteen Minutes, Section 7.330 A, No Parking, and Article VI, LOADING ZONES, Section 7.601, Limited Hours Loading Zones and schedule third reading at the September 14, 2026, City Council meeting. Seconded by Councilor Flynn. Motion Passed unanimously.

Councilor Bagley moved to suspend the rules to bring forth third and final reading of the Annual Omnibus Ordinance amending Chapter 7, VEHICLES, TRAFFIC and PARKING, Article III, TRAFFIC ORDINANCE, Section 7.326 A, Limited Parking – Fifteen Minutes, Section 7.330 A, No Parking, and Article VI, LOADING ZONES, Section 7.601, Limited Hours Loading Zones. Seconded by Councilor Cook. Motion passed 7-0. (Assistant Mayor Kelley absent)

Councilor Bagley moved to pass third and final reading of the Annual Omnibus Ordinance amending Chapter 7, VEHICLES, TRAFFIC and PARKING, Article III, TRAFFIC ORDINANCE, Section 7.326 A, Limited Parking – Fifteen Minutes, Section 7.330 A, No Parking, and Article VI, LOADING ZONES, Section 7.601, Limited Hours Loading Zones. Seconded by Councilor Moreau. Motion passed 7-0. (Assistant Mayor Kelley stepped out)

- D. Third and Final Reading of Ordinance Amendment to Chapter 12, Building Code, Section 1201 through 1209, by deleting and replacing the entire Chapter

Councilor Blalock moved to pass third and final reading of the Amendment to Chapter 12, Building Code, Section 1201 through 1209, as presented. Seconded by Councilor Cook. Motion passed 7-0. (Assistant Mayor Kelley absent)

- E. Public Hearing continued from August 3, 2026, meeting to set parking fees for on-street and lot parking for FY 2027: \$3 per hour for first 3 hours and \$6 per hour thereafter pursuant to Chapter 1, Administrative Code, Article XVI, Adoption of Fees, Section 1.1601, Procedure

Councilor Hopkins moved to set 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. Seconded by

Councilor Blalock for discussion.**PUBLIC HEARING**

Sue Sterry asked if this would change the resident rate. She asked if there was a study done on raising the rates. Councilor Bagley explained how rates are raised. The best practice is on-street should always be the highest because it is the most desirable.

DISCUSSION

There was extensive discussion among all Councilors regarding:

- Clear signage
- Making sure workforce parking is not negatively impacted
- Pricing structure – street parking rates vs. garage parking rates
- Implementation Timeline

Assistant Mayor Kelley and Councilors Cook and Blalock feel we need more time before a decision is made. Assistant Mayor Kelley would like data from the Parking Work Session to help with reconsideration of this motion.

City Manager Conard suggested a report back at the September 14, 2026, City Council Meeting.

The gavel was passed to Assistant Mayor Kelley. Mayor McEachern feels we need more time to discuss this motion. He understands the need to change the parking rate, however a better plan to include workforce parking should be considered. There needs to be a better plan regarding Parking Funds collected.

Councilor Hopkins moved to set 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. Seconded by Councilor Blalock. A Roll call vote was taken.

Assistant Mayor Kelley - NO

Councilor Cook - NO

Councilor Blalock - NO

Councilor Bagley - YES

Councilor Moreau - YES

Councilor Flynn - NO

Councilor Hopkins - YES

Mayor McEachern - NO

Motion failed 3-5.

Assistant Mayor Kelley made a motion to reconsider at the September 14, 2026 City Council Meeting. Seconded by Councilor Cook. Motion passed 6-2. Councilors Bagley and Moreau voted in opposition.

A short recess was taken at 9:40 p.m.

7. City Manager's Items Which Require Action

A. *Request for Rolling Stock Work Session

Councilor Hopkins would like to discuss biofuels.

Councilor Bagley moved to schedule a Rolling Stock Work Session at 6:00 p.m. on October 26, 2026. Seconded by Councilor Moreau. Motion passed unanimously.

B. Rescission of City Council Policy No. 2018-02 – License Fee for Encumbrance of City Property

Councilor Flynn moved to rescind City Council Policy No. 2018-02 - License Fee for Encumbrance of City Property. Seconded by Councilor Hopkins. Motion passed unanimously.

C. Request for First Reading of Amendment to Chapter 1, Administrative Code, Article III, Boards, Section 1.302 (D), Appointments, Tenure, and Removal

Assistant Mayor Kelley moved to schedule first reading of Amendment to Chapter 1, Administrative Code, Article III, Boards, Section 1.302 (D), Appointments, Tenure, and Removal at the September 14, 2026, City Council Meeting. Seconded by Councilor Cook. Motion passed unanimously.

D. *Polling Hours for NH State Primary and General Election

Councilor Hopkins moved to set the polling hours for the NH State Primary Election on September 8, 2026, and the NH General Election on November 3, 2026, from 8:00 a.m. to 7:00 p.m. Seconded by Councilor Blalock. Motion passed unanimously.

E. Approval of Custodial Supervisors Tentative Agreement

Councilor Bagley moved to approve the proposed Custodial Supervisors Tentative Agreement as presented. Seconded by Councilor Moreau. Motion passed unanimously.

F. Approval of the AFSCME 1386A Tentative Agreement

Councilor Flynn moved to approve the proposed AFSCME 1386A Tentative Agreement as presented. Seconded by Councilor Hopkins. Motion passed unanimously.

G. Donation of Memorial Bench at Bohenko Gateway Park in Honor of Sue Werner Thoresen

Assistant Mayor Kelley moved to request the City Council accept a ten-thousand-dollar (\$10,000.00) donation to the City from Bob Thoresen to be used toward the

bench; and vote to accept any additional financial contribution toward the bench from Bob Thoresen, the Thoresen family, or other private donor(s). Seconded by Councilor Cook. Motion passed unanimously.

And

Assistant Mayor Kelley moved to authorize and direct the Trustees of Trust Funds to disburse such sums from the City of Portsmouth Public Art Trust as directed and certified by the City Manager that such funds are needed to complete the design, fabrication and installation of the sculptural memorial bench to be installed in Bohenko Park not otherwise paid by private donations. Such sums may include, without limitation, payments due or obligations satisfied under a contract with Sijia Chen and any incidentals that might fall outside of said contract. Funds shall come from the Capital Improvement Program contributions to the Public Art Trust. No further approval of the City Council is required. Seconded by Councilor Cook. Motion passed unanimously.

Councilor Blalock spoke in favor of these motions.

8. Consent Agenda

- A. Active City Encumbrances
- B. Seacoast Rotary Club Event Request – Turkey Trot Race
- C. Lieutenant Dan Band Event

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

9. Presentations and Written Communications

- A. CIP Kickoff Presentation by Nathan Lunney, Deputy City Manager – Finance & Administration

Councilor Blalock asked if the CIP subcommittee will be able to see citizen requests in advance of meeting? Answer: Yes

Councilor Hopkins asked what a citizen CIP request requires. Answer: The portal is very intuitive.

Councilor Cook encouraged residents to submit CIP requests if they consider something that needs to be improved.

- B. Email Correspondence

Councilor Bagley moved to accept and place on file. Seconded by Councilor Moreau. Motion passed unanimously.

10. Mayor McEachern

- A. Appointments to be Considered

- Appointment of John (Jack) Holzman to the Zoning Board of Adjustment

B. Appointments to be Voted

- Appointment of Wendi Alip to the Sustainability Committee

Councilor Flynn moved to appoint Wendi Alip to the Sustainability Committee. Seconded by Councilor Hopkins. Motion passed unanimously.

11. City Council Members

A. Councilor Cook

- Legislative Subcommittees Report Back regarding its Recommendations to Council to Approve NHMA's 2027-2028 Proposed Legislative Policies and Principles

Councilor Cook moved to approve NHMA's 2027-2028 Proposed Legislative Policies and Principles as recommended by the Legislative Subcommittee. Seconded by Assistant Mayor Kelley. Motion passed unanimously.

B. Councilor Bagley

- Automated License Plate Reader Systems

City Attorney Morrell mentioned that the Police Commission has concerns. She explained that there are strict State policies regarding the use of these devices. In NH, these devices cannot be used legally outside of law enforcement. She also explained the applicability of Council authority, City charter, and State laws. There are many issues at-play and the Police Commission would like to weigh in. A discussion ensued among the Councilors. Assistant Mayor Kelley would like a report about everything the City Attorney outlined before any consideration is made.

Councilor Bagley moved to direct the City Attorney to review the attached proposed ordinance language regarding automated license plate reader systems, and to return a final draft ordinance to the City Council for first reading. Seconded by Assistant Mayor Kelley. Motion passed unanimously.

Councilor Blalock moved to go past 10:30 p.m. Seconded by Councilor Moreau. Motion passed unanimously.

C. Councilor Hopkins

- Parking & Traffic Safety Committee Action Sheet and Minutes of August 6, 2026 Meeting

Councilor Hopkins moved to approve and accept the action sheet and minutes of August 6, 2026, Parking & Traffic Safety Committee Meeting. Seconded by Assistant Mayor Kelley. Motion passed unanimously.

12. City Manager's Informational Items

A. *Report Back on Encumbrance Permits

13. Adjournment

Councilor Moreau moved to adjourn the meeting at 10:37 pm. Seconded by Councilor Bagley. Motion passed unanimously.

*Indicates verbal report with no attachments

Prepared by:

Approved by the City Council

Sally A. Kellar

Sally A. Kellar

City Clerk

Date: September 14, 2026

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