

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

**Mayor McEachern called the meeting to order at 7:11 PM**

**I. Non-Public Session**

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

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

**II. Roll Call**

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

**III. Invocation**

Mayor McEachern took a moment to thank the Seacoast NAACP for leading a celebration of Martin Luther King Jr. Day at the South Church.

**IV. Pledge of Allegiance**

Mayor McEachern invited children from the gallery to assist leading the Pledge of Allegiance.

**V. Recognitions and Volunteer Committee Reports**

1. Proclamation(s) – Stalking Awareness Month: Councilor Cook read the Proclamation. Victim Witness Advocate Ryan Grogan and Prosecutor Jean Reed accepted the Proclamation.

2. Recognition(s)

– Holiday Lights Contest: Mayor McEachern recognized four Honorable Mention winners:

- Kids' Choice: the Goldstein Family at 170 FW Hartford Drive
- Creative: the Blandina Family at 3 Sanderling Way
- Traditional: (tie) Chris Polizzotto at 660 Middle Street and Donna Figler at 114 Cabot Street

And three First Place winners:

- Kids' Choice: Matt and Nicole Beyer at 580 FW Hartford Drive
- Creative: Cathy LaFata and Liz Rutman at 520 FW Hartford Drive
- Traditional: the Manganos Family at 752 South Street

VI. **Public Comment Session** – There were two speakers: Peter Sommsich (Solar Energy Ordinance), Margot Doering (Planning & Sustainability Staff—HDC Report Back)

VII. **Public Hearings and Vote On Ordinances and/or Resolutions**

**A. First Reading of Ordinance amending Chapter 10, Zoning Ordinance, Article 5 – Dimensional and Intensity Standards, Section 10.515.14, Power Generators; Article 15, Definitions, Section 10.1530 – Terms of General Applicability, amending Building Coverage, Mechanical System, Power Generator and Structure**

**Assistant Mayor Kelley moved to pass first reading and schedule public hearing and second reading for the February 17, 2026, City Council meeting, seconded by Councilor Moreau.**

Councilor Moreau commented that there were inconsistencies in the last variation of the ordinance, and that this was an effort to capture all intended changes.

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

**B. First reading of Ordinance amending Chapter 10, Zoning Ordinance Article I – Purpose and Applicability, Section 10.122 (1), Sustainability Objections; Article 4 – Zoning and Use Regulations, Section 10.440 – amending Table of Uses for Ground Mounted Solar Energy Systems; Article 8 – Supplemental Use Standards, Section 10.811 – amending Accessory Uses to Permitted Residential Uses; and Chapter 15, Definitions, Section 10.1530 – Terms of General Applicability, amending Solar Energy Systems and Structure**

**Councilor Tabor moved to pass first reading and schedule public hearing and second reading for the February 17, 2026 City Council meeting, seconded by Councilor Blalock.**

Councilor Moreau noted this item had previously been brought forward by Councilor Denton and took time to get through at the Planning Board level, as they waited for a new member to onboard who works in the solar industry, and wanted his input.

Councilor Cook extended her thanks to the Planning Board for getting this amendment back to the Council.

Councilor Blalock extended his thanks to the Planning Board and Councilor Denton, noting his support for solar and believes this amendment will help support solar energy in Portsmouth.

Councilor Moreau proposed City Staff explore the ordinance's objectives further, based on public comment from Peter Sommsich.

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

**VIII. City Manager's Items Which Require Action**

1. Optional Veterans Tax Credit for Service-Connected Total Disability

**Assistant Mayor Kelley moved to schedule a public hearing at the February 17, 2026, City Council meeting, seconded by Councilor Flynn.**

Councilor Flynn questioned the scope of public outreach for the item, to which City Manager Conard explained City Assessor Rosann Maurice-Lentz's past engagement with Portsmouth's senior citizens.

Councilor Moreau suggested engagement with the Elks Lodge.

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

2. Request for Public Hearing Regarding Disabled Exemptions

**Councilor Bagley moved to schedule a public hearing at the February 17, 2026, City Council meeting, seconded by Councilor Hopkins.**

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

3. Request for Public Hearing Regarding Elderly Exemptions

**Councilor Moreau moved to schedule a public hearing at the February 17, 2026, City Council meeting, seconded by Councilor Blalock.**

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

4. Access Easements for Water Services for Property Located at 0 Banfield Road

**Councilor Cook moved to authorize the City Manager to accept and record an Access Easement for Water Services from Chinburg Development, LLC., seconded by Councilor Tabor.**

Councilor Flynn asked to clarify if these easements ran in perpetuity with the land, to which Councilor Moreau and Mayor McEachern confirmed.

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

5. Drainage Easement at 333 Borthwick Avenue

XI. **Letter from Julien Icher, The Lafayette Trail, Inc., requesting permission to donate and install an official Lafayette Trail Revolutionary War sign at the Plains**

**Councilor Blalock moved to refer to the City Manager with Authority to Act, seconded by Councilor Cook.**

Councilor Moreau stated this is a great idea and she was excited to read about it.

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

XII. **Letter from Attorney Derek Durbin requesting the City Council authorize the City Manager to execute an easement deed for 4 Sagamore Road in substantially similar form to the draft easement deed**

**Assistant Mayor Kelley moved to refer to the Legal Department for report back, seconded by Councilor Bagley.**

Councilor Moreau clarified this item would typically come through the Planning Board but did not given that the location is beyond City limits.

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

XIII. **Ethics Committee Drawing by Lot**

**Councilor Moreau's name was selected to serve on the Ethics Committee at a Drawing by Lot.**

XIV. **Board, Commission, and Committee Assignments for City Councilors**

**Mayor McEachern announced the City Council Assignments:**

**Mayor McEachern** – Legislative Sub-Committee, Economic Development Commission (Ex-officio), Rockingham Planning Commission, and Veterans Organization

**Assistant Mayor Kelley** – African Burying Grounds Preservation Committee, Legislative Sub-Committee, and Trees & Public Greenery Committee

**Councilor Cook** – Arts & Cultural Commission, Chamber of Commerce, Historic District Commission, Legislative Sub-Committee, Municipal Building Blue Ribbon Committee, and Public Art Review Committee

**Councilor Tabor** – Fee Schedule Study Committee, Energy Advisory Committee, Municipal Building Blue Ribbon Committee, and Public Access Financial Advisory Committee

**Councilor Blalock** – City-wide Neighborhood Blue Ribbon Committee, Economic Development Commission, Recreation Board, Safe Water Advisory Group Blue Ribbon Committee, and Sister Cities Blue Ribbon Committee

- Municipal Building Blue Ribbon Committee
- Safe Water Advisory Group (SWAG)
- Sister Cities Blue Ribbon Committee

**Assistant Mayor Kelley moved to ratify as presented, seconded by Councilor Blalock.**

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

**XVIII. Reappointment of City Manager Conard to the Pease Development Authority**

**Councilor Bagley moved to reappoint City Manager Conard to the Pease Development Authority, seconded by Councilor Blalock.**

Mayor McEachern spoke on the importance of the City Manager's involvement in the Authority and expressed support for the motion.

Councilor Flynn spoke on her experience touring PDA and was impressed by the ongoing work and partnership taking place.

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

**XIX. Appointments to be Considered**

**The City Council considered the appointments as presented and will act upon them at the February 2, 2026 meeting:**

- Reappointment of Jeffrey Cooper to the Arts & Cultural Commission
- Appointment of Demi Dubois to the Arts & Cultural Commission
- Reappointment of Eli Kaynor to the Arts & Cultural Commission
- Appointment of Hope Anderson Puzzo to the Arts & Cultural Commission
- Appointment of Margherita Giacobbi as an Alternate to the Arts & Cultural Commission
- Appointment of Joshua Cyr to the Economic Development Commission
- Appointment of Jason Goodrich as an Alternate to the Economic Development Commission
- Appointment of Amy Dutton to the Cemetery Commission
- Appointment of Jennifer Merriam to the Cemetery Commission
- Appointment of Susan Sterry to the Municipal Building Ribbon Committee

**XX. Resignation of Cassandra Lund from the Arts and Cultural Commission**

**Councilor Cook moved to accept with regret the resignation of Cassandra Lund from the Arts and Cultural Commission and to send a letter thanking Cassandra for her service to the City, seconded by Assistant Mayor Kelley.**

Mayor McEachern commented on the dilemma of 'design by committee', expressing the importance of maintaining standards architects can work with in the future.

**Councilor Cook suggested a friendly amendment to Councilor Blalock's motion to request a report back from the Planning & Sustainability staff, Historic District Commission and the Planning Board on the impact and costs associated with review of new construction from the Historic District Commission, and any recommendation to improve review efficiency.**

**Assistant Mayor Kelley moved to suspend the rules to allow Historic District Commission Chair Reagan Ruedig to speak on this matter, seconded by Councilor Bagley.**

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

Chair Ruedig spoke concerning HDC funding and trainings, including training on review of new construction. Chair Ruedig expressed the importance of maintaining building integrity and character in the years to come in HDC decision-making.

**Following discussion, Council voted on the amended main motion.**

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

**XXV. Request to Schedule a Work Session to consider enacting RSA 79-E (Community Revitalization Tax Relief Incentive) into our Zoning Ordinance**

Councilor Moreau requested a Work Session with staff to review RSA 79-E and the Community Revitalization Tax Relief Incentive process.

**XXVI. Acceptance of Donation to the Senior Activity Center Luncheon Fund 13 from Karen Parnes - \$500.00**

**Councilor Tabor moved to approve and accept the donation as presented, seconded by Councilor Flynn.**

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

**XXVII. Update on 2123 Time Capsule**

City Manager Conard reported that the 2123 Time Capsule is on display and will remain in the Portsmouth Room for a period of time. She said the capsule was part of the work during the City's 400th anniversary and was led by former Assistant Mayor Jim Splaine and former Mayor Bob Lister. She said contents of the capsule are items of significance and a plaque will be created in honor of the time capsule and the work of former Assistant Mayor Splaine and former Mayor Lister.

**XXVIII. Master Plan Update**

City Manager Conard reported that Master Plan consultant Utile completed the visioning-stage portion of its engagement following the Public Visioning Open House in September 2025. A vision, values, and goals plan has been drafted and a FlashVote survey was conducted with responses from 362 residents. She reported that an anticipated Draft Plan Open House will be coming in April.