

MEETING MINUTES AND ACTIONS OF THE PORTSMOUTH CITY COUNCIL
MAY 4, 2026, 7:00 PM
MUNICIPAL COMPLEX, 1 JUNKINS AVENUE, PORTSMOUTH, NEW HAMPSHIRE

Mayor McEachern called the meeting to order at 7:00 PM

1. Roll Call

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

Absent: Councilor Bagley

2. Invocation

Mayor McEachern asked all to hold in our hearts the brave men and women, deployed on behalf of all of us, and for a safe return from the war in Iran.

3. Pledge of Allegiance

Mayor McEachern led the Pledge of Allegiance.

4. Acceptance of Minutes

A. April 6, 2026, City Council meeting

Assistant Mayor Kelley moved to accept and approve the minutes of the April 6, 2026, City Council meeting. Seconded by Councilor Cook. Motion passed unanimously.

B. April 20, 2026, City Council meeting

Councilor Tabor moved to accept and approve the minutes of the April 20, 2026, City Council meeting. Seconded by Councilor Blalock. Motion passed unanimously.

5. Recognitions and Volunteer Committee Reports

A. Recognitions

- Crossing Guard Appreciation
- Public Service Recognition Week
- Donation in Honor of Frankie

B. Proclamations

- Progressive Supranuclear Palsy & Corticobasal Degeneration Awareness Month – Colin Gibney was presented the Proclamation by Mayor McEachern

- Affordable Housing Week – Kara Anne Rodenhizer was presented the Proclamation by Assistant Mayor Kelley
 - Mental Health Awareness – Amy Michaels was presented the Proclamation by Councilor Blalock
 - Kids to Park Day – Todd Henley was presented the Proclamation by Councilor Flynn
6. **Public Comment Session** – There were nine (9) speakers: Deborah Van Patten (Breakaway Burger Night to benefit SPCA in honor of Frankie), Amy Michaels (Mental Health Awareness upcoming events) Colin Scholler (RAPP fee increase), Stephanie Young (Affordable Housing), Jim Lee (City Clerk appointment), *Petra Huda (City Clerk Appointment), Paige Trace (former City Clerk), Rick Becksted (Teacher Appreciation Week, Meeting Minutes, former City Clerk), Roy Helsel (speeding motorists)

***Mayor McEachern suspended the rules and brought forth an item out of order under his name, Item 14. A. Appointment of Sally Kellar as City Clerk of the City of Portsmouth. This appointment is made in accordance with City Charter, Section 4.2 and NH RSA 48:2**

7. (14. A) Appointment of Sally Kellar as City Clerk of the City of Portsmouth. This appointment is made in accordance with City Charter, Section 4.2 and NH RSA 48:2

Mayor McEachern asked Acting City Attorney McCourt to explain who has the authority to appoint the City Clerk. Acting City Attorney McCourt explained, the Portsmouth City Charter was validly enacted upon the previous NH RSA 49:A which has since been repealed. However, NH RSA 49-B:13 allows this charter to still be valid. Under the Portsmouth City Charter, the City of Portsmouth adopted the City Council/City Manager form of government. It is the City Manager that has the authority to appoint/remove all employees and officers of the City of Portsmouth. For this reason, NH RSA 48:2 does not apply to the appointment or removal of the City Clerk. The City Council does not have the authority to make this appointment.

This appointment was not taken up.

8. **Public Hearings and Vote on Ordinances and/or Resolutions**

- A. Public Hearing and Second Reading of Ordinance Amending Chapter 11, Article II, Section 11.216 (B) Relative to Sewer Use Charges

Suzanne Woodland, Regulatory Counsel, presented a minor amendment to allow the City to collect fixed service fees in addition to sewer use charges. This is in accord with the recommendations made at the March 2, 2026, City Council work session on the Water and Sewer Rate Study.

Mayor McEachern opened the public hearing. After seeing no speakers, Mayor McEachern closed the public hearing.

Councilor Moreau moved to pass second reading of the amendment to Chapter 11, Article II, Section 11.216 (B) relative to the establishment of sewer fees and hold third and final reading at the May 18, 2026 City Council meeting. Seconded by Councilor Flynn.

On a unanimous vote, motion passed.

Councilor Moreau moved to suspend the rules and move to bring forward the third and final reading, seconded by Councilor Cook.

On a unanimous vote, motion passed.

Councilor Moreau moved to pass third and final reading of the amendment. Seconded by Councilor Blalock.

On a unanimous vote, motion passed.

- B. Public Hearing and Second 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

Deputy City Manager Carl Weber presented a summary of a one-year RAAP pilot program prioritizing resident parking and testing new on-street approaches to public parking.

This program includes:

- Prioritizing access to resident on-street parking
- Testing whether charging non-residents improves parking availability
- A license plate-based system
- A new on-street pilot for Downtown Workforce Parking on Parrot Ave
- A data driven program with quarterly reporting and the ability to adjust

Key Points:

- Resident-first parking strategy
- Simple system
- New on-street solution for Downtown Workforce parking
- Financially self-supporting pilot
- Data Driven approach to future neighborhood/stakeholder explosion
- May support higher density affordable housing developments

There was Council discussion about approving pricing and the timeline of implementing the pilot program.

Mayor McEachern opened the public hearing. There were four speakers: Rick Becksted, Brooks Stevens, Robin Husslage (via Zoom), Tyler Garzo

Councilor Hopkins moved to pass the second reading and hold third and final reading at the May 18, 2026, City Council meeting. Seconded by Assistant Mayor Kelley.

Councilor Cook moved to amend Chapter 7, Parking, Article I - Parking Meters, Section 7.102, Parking Meter Rates Section 3.B to state the parking rate for non-residents will be set by the fee study committee and Section 3.C to state the parking rate for downtown workers who have registered for the Downtown Workforce Parking Program for on street parking will be set by the fee study committee. Parrott Avenue is the only street in the RAPP Zone where downtown worker parking is permitted. Seconded by Assistant Mayor Kelley.

On a unanimous vote, motion to amend passed.

Councilor Moreau moved to request a report back from the fee committee by June 22, 2026. Seconded by Councilor Blalock.

On a unanimous vote, motion passed.

Acting City Attorney McCourt opined that the amendment was a material change. Councilor Tabor moved to re-notice public hearing and reschedule second reading at the May 18, 2026 City Council meeting. Seconded by Councilor Moreau.

On a unanimous vote, motion passed.

Councilor Moreau moved to suspend the rules and bring forth an item out of order, Item 13. B. Presentation from David Allen, President of New Hampshire Seacoast Greenway Alliance Regarding Railtrail. Seconded by Assistant Mayor Kelley.

On a unanimous vote, motion passed.

9. (13. B.) Presentation from David Allen, President of New Hampshire Seacoast Greenway Alliance Regarding Rail Trail

Assistant Mayor Kelley moved to suspend the rules and brought forth an item out of order, 11.D. Open Enrollment Policy for Portsmouth School District/SAU 52 Seconded by Councilor Tabor.

On a unanimous vote, motion passed.

After Mr. Allen's presentation, Councilor Cook asked about the potential for murals along the Railtrail. Councilor Blalock spoke to the positive impact of the Railtrail to the City.

Councilor Moreau moved to suspend the rules and bring forth an item out of order, Item 11. D. Open Enrollment Policy for Portsmouth School District/SAU 52. Seconded by Councilor Tabor.

10. (11. D.) Open Enrollment Policy for Portsmouth School District/SAU 52

School Superintendent Dr. McLaughlin and School Board Chair Rappaport gave an update on the status of Open Enrollment legislation. Pending the potential passage of State legislation to adopt a policy to mandate open enrollment to take effect July 1, 2026, the School Board has passed a cautious and conservative policy so that guidance is in place. There are still many unknown and unanswered questions regarding Open Enrollment for NH schools.

Assistant Mayor Kelley moved to schedule a public hearing on the Open Enrollment Policy for Portsmouth School District/ SAU 52 at the May 18, 2026 City Council meeting. Seconded by Councilor Cook.

On a unanimous vote, motion passed.

Councilor Blalock moved to suspend the rules to bring forth an item out of order, 14.B. Appointments to be Considered and Voted. Seconded by Assistant Mayor Kelley.

On a unanimous vote, motion passed.

11. (14.B.) Appointments to be considered

- Appointment of Amy Michaels to the Behavioral Health Blue Ribbon Committee
- Appointment of Kelly Hartnett to the Behavioral Health Blue Ribbon Committee
- Appointment of Lisa Jacobus to the Behavioral Health Blue Ribbon Committee
- Appointment of Olivia Harris to the Behavioral Health Blue Ribbon Committee
- Appointment of Whitney Brown to the Behavioral Health Blue Ribbon Committee
- Appointment of Anne Poubeau to the Bicycle & Pedestrian Blue Ribbon Committee
- Appointment of Patrick Daley to the Bicycle & Pedestrian Blue Ribbon Committee
- Appointment of Stella Whitehouse to the Bicycle & Pedestrian Blue Ribbon Committee
- Appointment of Matthew Glenn to the Bicycle & Pedestrian Blue Ribbon Committee
- Appointment of Robin Lurie-Meyerkopf to the Bicycle & Pedestrian Blue Ribbon Committee
- Appointment of Colleen Garcia to the Bicycle & Pedestrian Blue Ribbon Committee

- Appointment of Stephen Longstaffe to the Bicycle & Pedestrian Blue Ribbon Committee
- Appointment of Dawn Przychodzien to the Bicycle & Pedestrian Blue Ribbon Committee
- Appointment of William Lyons to the Bicycle & Pedestrian Blue Ribbon Committee
- Appointment of Anne Torrez to the Bicycle & Pedestrian Blue Ribbon Committee
- Appointment of Freddy Petrone to the Bicycle & Pedestrian Blue Ribbon Committee

Councilor Cook moved to appoint the following as presented. Seconded by Councilor Flynn.

On a unanimous vote, motion passed.

Councilor Moreau moved to suspend the rules and bring forth an item out of order, Item 11. C. Request for First Reading Regarding Ordinance Amendment to Chapter 5, Fire Department and Prevention Regulations, Article IX: Adopted Fire Codes. Seconded by Councilor Hoopkins.

On a unanimous vote, motion passed.

12. (11.C) Request for First Reading Regarding Ordinance Amendment to Chapter 5, Fire Department and Prevention Regulations, Article IX: Adopted Fire Codes

Councilor Flynn moved to schedule first reading of the amendment to Chapter 5, Fire Department and Prevention Regulations, Article IX: Adopted Fire Codes, at the May 18, 2026 City Council meeting. Seconded by Councilor Hopkins.

On a unanimous vote, motion passed.

Mayor McEachern called for a recess at 9:27 PM.

Mayor McEachern called the meeting back to order at 9:37PM

13. (11.A) Adoption of Three-Tier Water and Sewer Rate Structure for FY27

Councilor Cook moved to adopt the recommended three-tier rate structure for water and sewer service for FY27. Seconded by Councilor Tabor.

On a unanimous vote, motion passed.

14. (11.B) Street Naming for 550 Sagamore Avenue

Councilor Blalock moved to authorize the use of Spruce Street as the private street name for the new private street originating at the former street address known as 550 Sagamore Avenue. Seconded by Councilor Moreau.

On a unanimous vote, motion passed.

15. Consent Agenda

- i. Letter from Ian Coughlan of Coureur Goods Requesting the Go Skate Day Event on June 21, 2026
- ii. Active City Encumbrances Report from Peter Rice, Director of Public Works dated April 23, 2026
- iii. Letter from Phil von Hemert and Nancy Cassidy of Sail Portsmouth Requesting the Sail Portsmouth Maritime Event on July 23, July 24, July 25 and July 26, 2026
- iv. Letter from Julien Icher of the Lafayette Trail Requesting a Lafayette250 Program on May 27, 2026

Councilor Tabor moved to adopt the consent agenda and authorize the City Manager to act as presented. Seconded by Councilor Blalock.

On a unanimous vote, motion passed.

16. Presentations and Written Communications

A. Email Correspondence

Councilor Cook moved to accept and place on file. Seconded by Councilor Blalock.

On a unanimous vote, motion passed.

17. City Council Members

A. Councilor Cook

- Municipal Arts & Cultural Banner Policy Report Back

Councilor Cook requested a report back from the Legal Department on the status of the Arts & Cultural Banner Policy.

B. Councilor Bagley/Councilor Moreau

- Report Back on On-Street Parking

Councilor Moreau moved that the City Manager be directed to report back to the City Council with an analysis of on-street parking rates and policies in light of the anticipated garage parking rate increase, with the understanding that any recommended adjustments shall not result in increased on street parking costs for Portsmouth residents. Seconded by Councilor Cook.

There was discussion/possible inclusion in the motion above about Fee Committee approval for both garage and on street parking.

On a unanimous vote, motion passed.

C. Councilor Flynn

- School Food Insecurity Taskforce

Councilor Flynn moved to direct City staff to coordinate with the Portsmouth School Board and staff to jointly establish a School Food Insecurity Taskforce as specified by the Council's 2026-2027 Strategic Goals, and report back/offer preliminary findings by the end of the calendar year. Seconded by Assistant Mayor Kelley.

On a unanimous vote, motion passed.

18. Approval of Grants/Donations

- A. Acceptance of Wellness Reward from Health Trust - \$2,000

Councilor Hopkins moved to accept the donation as presented. Seconded by Councilor Tabor.

On a unanimous vote, motion passed.

- B. Acceptance of Grant for Household Hazardous Waste Collection Day from New Hampshire Department of Environmental Services (NHDES) - \$4,204

Assistant Mayor Kelley moved to authorize the City Manager to enter into a Grant Agreement with New Hampshire Department of Environmental Services to accept \$4,204 from the Household Hazardous Waste Collection Grant Program and execute any contracts or documents which may be necessary for this grant agreement. Seconded by Councilor Flynn.

On a unanimous vote, motion passed.

19. City Manager's Informational Items

- A. Upcoming Budget Meetings - City Manager Conard shared the upcoming FY27 Budget Meeting Schedule and encouraged the public to participate in person or via Zoom.
- B. Dog Licensing – City Manager Conard shared the Clerk's Office update that dog license late fees and fines can be avoided by licensing dogs before June 1st.
- C. Update on SchoolCare – A verbal update was given by Acting City Attorney McCourt.
- D. Draft City Council Policy No. 2026-01 – Resident Access Parking Program (RAPP) Pilot was reshared

20. Adjournment

Councilor Tabor moved to adjourn the meeting at 9:59 PM. Seconded by Councilor Blalock.

On a unanimous vote, motion passed.

Prepared by:
Sally Kellar
City Clerk



Approved by the City Council

Date: May 18, 2026

The Portsmouth City Council meeting of May 4, 2026, can be viewed in its entirety on the City of Portsmouth YouTube Channel.