

PORTSMOUTH POLICE COMMISSION

MINUTES OF THE JANUARY 23rd, 2024 POLICE COMMISSION MEETING

5:30 p.m. Public Session – Eileen Dondero Foley Council Chambers

Kate Coyle, Chair
Buzz Scherr, Commissioner
Francesca Fernald, Commissioner

- I. **CALL TO ORDER:** The January 23rd, 2024 monthly Police Commission meeting was called to order at 5:30 p.m. in the Eileen Dondero Foley Council Chambers. (An archived video of the meeting is available on the police department’s website and the city’s YouTube channel.)

The following people were present for the public session:

Commissioners Coyle, Scherr and Fernald, Chief Mark Newport, Deputy Chief Michael Maloney, Business Manager Karen Senecal, Executive Assistant Jackie Burnett and members of the police department and the public.

- II. **PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE:** Chief Newport led the Pledge of Allegiance.

- III. **MOTION TO SUSPEND THE AGENDA:**

Action: Commissioner Scherr moved to suspend the agenda to move to items #1 “Appointment of Commission Chair and Clerk” & #2 “Representative on the City Ethics Committee”, under the Police Commission Report.

Seconded by Commissioner Fernald

On a Voice Vote: The motion passed as follows:

Commissioner Coyle: “Aye.”

Commissioner Scherr: “Aye.”

Commissioner Fernald: “Aye.”

Police Commission’s Report:

#1 “Appointment of Commission Chair and Clerk”

Action: Commissioner Scherr moved to appoint Commissioner Coyle as Chair.

Seconded by Commissioner Fernald

On a Roll Vote: The motion passed as follows:

Commissioner Coyle:	“Aye.”
Commissioner Scherr:	“Aye.”
Commissioner Fernald:	“Aye.”

Action: Commissioner Coyle moved to appoint Commissioner Scherr as Clerk.

Seconded by Commissioner Fernald

On a Roll Vote: The motion passed as follows:

Commissioner Coyle:	“Aye.”
Commissioner Scherr:	“Aye.”
Commissioner Fernald:	“Aye.”

The Chair asked for a motion to suspend the agenda and move to items #1 & #2, “Swearing-In Ceremony” and “City Manager’s Report Re: FY25 Budget Requests”, under the Chief’s Report.

Action: Commissioner Scherr moved to suspend the rules for the purpose noted above.

Seconded by Commissioner Fernald.

On a Roll Call Vote: The motion passed as follows:

Commissioner Coyle:	“Aye.”
Commissioner Scherr:	“Aye.”
Commissioner Fernald:	“Aye.”

Chief’s Report:

#1 “Swearing-In, Award & Recognition Ceremony”

Chief Newport swore in three of Portsmouth’s newest police officers:

- Officer Owen Rand
- Officer Eric Cross
- Officer Mac Dalton

#2 “City Manager’s Report Re: FY25 Budget Requests”

City Manager Karen Conard and Director of Finance and Administration Judie Belanger outlined the goals and objectives of the City as they set expectations for FY25 budgeting planning for the department. The 10-year rolling average came way down, so the City is pulling back a bit and requests the police department mindfully plan their budget while remaining frugal. The City is performing a revaluation, which will impact taxpayers. The CM requests that all departments and charter groups come in as low as possible without

compromising services to the community. Tomorrow night at 6pm, department heads will gather to focus on some of the highlights to the budget. Commissioner Coyle will ensure the police department and commission remains fiscally responsible while planning out FY25 budget “asks”.

IV. ACCEPTANCE OF MEETING MINUTES:

➤ October 23rd, 2023

Action: Commissioner Scherr moved to accept the minutes of the 10-23-23 Police Commission meetings.

Seconded by Commissioner Coyle.

On a Roll Call Vote: The motion passed as follows:

Commissioner Coyle:	“Aye.”
Commissioner Scherr:	“Aye.”
Commissioner Fernald:	“Abstain.”

V. PUBLIC COMMENT: None

VI. NEW BUSINESS:

A. POLICE COMMISSION:

1. Appointment of Commission Chair and Clerk

Chair Kate Coyle took a moment to her fellow commissioners for their vote and trust in leading the Board in carrying out their duties. Commissioner Coyle and Scherr also offered Commissioner Fernald a warm welcome to the Board.

2. Representative on the City Ethics Committee

Deputy Chief Maloney drew a name out of a box – Commissioner Scherr’s name was chosen, therefore he will serve as the PD representative on the City’s Ethics Committee.

3. Facilities Update

a. Restoration

Chief Newport provided an overview of the current projects and deficiencies requiring attention inside the police facility. Currently, the PD’s IT team is performing updates to the back-up Dispatch Center over at Fire Station 2. Once this is complete, remediation can be scheduled. This would consist of transitioning the day-to-day dispatch operations over to Fire Station 2 so that the Dispatch Center in the 3 Junkins Ave. building can be remediated of mold.

b. Community Policing Facility Planning

The Chair reported that the Chief gave a presentation to the City Council last week on the status of the plans for a new community policing facility. The working group received feedback from the Council that there is an opportunity to look at developing a new facility out in front of the building, utilizing existing space. It is believed this could be the most cost effective option and will require geotechnical engineering in order to determine whether the land in front of the building can be built upon. The working group is keeping the Granite Street option as an alternative location. The group will meet with the City Council again in April of 2024. Commissioner Coyle added that the Brick Grant opportunity is still being researched to offset some of the costs of an expansive project like this.

4. Community Priorities

a. Crime Analyst Report

Deputy Chief Maloney reported on the Crime Analyst's statistics and added that end of year statistics from 2023 and 2022 have been uploaded to the Police Department's website. Also included on the website are statistics gathered through the CALEA accreditation program.

There was a slight increase in overall calls for service from 2022 to 2023. Encouraging data revealed that a number of incident/crime stats have decreased. The Deputy explained situation that can have an impact, positive or negative, on the stats from year to year. Chief Newport pointed out that the mental health calls have decreased as the mobile crisis response program has really taken off in the Seacoast area. This means the program is working to reduce instances in which people in mental health crisis are dealing with the police as their initial contact with a professional.

B. CHIEF OF POLICE:

1. Swearing-In Ceremony: (See Section III)

2. City Manager's Report Re: FY25 Budget Requests (See Section III)

Chief Newport added that he will do his best to stay within the budget parameters as requested by the City Manager.

3. Monthly Traffic Stats

Deputy Chief Maloney reported the statistics from December 2023: 671 total motor vehicle stops, which included a number of grant funded patrols. 27 summonses, 47 reportable mv crashes.

4. Financial Report

Business Ops. Manager Karen Senecal briefed the Commission on the current state of the police department's budget. The police department is tracking 4% below the cap (tracking well for FY24). Salary and benefits make up 85% of the PD's operating budget. There is a public hearing on February 14th at 5:30pm to take a closer look at the FY25 budget request.

Commissioner Scherr asked if money will be added to the budget for body cams – the department budget and/or the CIP? Karen stated the department is having two vendors submit figures for equipment and storage costs to have a better idea of how much money should be allocated to that initiative. The Director of Finance and Administration, Judie Belanger, will present to the Council different avenues to fund things like the body cams. Commissioner Coyle asked if the department has vetted the internal operating costs and long-term maintenance costs for implementing body cams. Commissioner Scherr pointed out some funding may come from the city's legal office for Right to Know requests.

a. Grant Applications Update

The Business Office is in the process of reviewing the following grants: an \$11,000 Seacoast Emergency Response Team grant opportunity; a FEMA Brick Grant to help offset the cost of a new building. Research is being performed to determine whether or not the department even qualifies for the FEMA Brick Grant, as it may not apply if the current option to build an addition to the existing building is chosen. A body cam grant is also in the pipeline for the near future.

VII. PATROL DIVISION:

- a. This report was included in the commission meeting packet.

VIII. COURT OFFICE REPORT:

- a. This confidential report was included in the commission meeting packet.

IX. MISCELLANEOUS/OTHER BUSINESS:

- A. On February 14th, 2024, at 5:30 pm, Chief Newport, alongside the Police Commission, will present the police department's proposed FY25 budget at a Public Hearing held in Conference Room A in City Hall. Members of the public are encouraged to attend and provide input.

X. NEXT REGULAR MEETING:

The next regular commission meeting date is February 27th, 2024, starting at 5:30 pm. Always check the municipal meetings calendar for any changes to the schedule leading up to the next meeting.

XI. MOTION TO ADJOURN:

Action: Commissioner Scherr moved to adjourn the January 23rd, 2024, Police Commission meeting at 6:06 PM.

Seconded by Commissioner Fernald.

On a Voice Vote: The motion passed 3-0.

END OF MEETING

Respectfully Submitted by Jacqueline Burnett, Executive Assistant
Commissioner Buzz Scherr, Recording Clerk of the Commission