

PORTSMOUTH POLICE COMMISSION
MINUTES OF THE APRIL 15th, 2025, POLICE COMMISSION MEETING

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

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

The following people were present for the public session: Commissioners Coyle, Scherr and Fernald, Chief Mark Newport, Business Manager Karen Senecal, Executive Assistant Jackie Burnett and members of the public.

- I. **CALL TO ORDER:** Meeting called to order at 5:30 PM by Chair Coyle.
- II. **PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE:** Led collectively by the Commission.
- III. **MOTION TO SUSPEND THE AGENDA:**
Motion: Commissioner Fernald moved to suspend the agenda to address:
- Police Commission Report #1: Chief Newport's 30 Years of Service
 - Chief's Report #1 & #1: Swearing-In Ceremony and Police Social Worker Update.
- Seconded:** Commissioner Scherr.
Roll Call Vote: Unanimously approved (3-0)

Police Commission Report:

#1, Chief Newport's 30 Years of Service

Chair Coyle formally recognized Chief Newport for his 30 years with the department, highlighting his career from his start in 1995 to his role as Chief. The Commission expressed gratitude for his leadership and service.

Police Chief's Report:

#1, Swearing-In Ceremony – Scott South

Chief Newport officially welcomed Officer Scott South to the department in a formal swearing-in ceremony.

#2, Police Social Worker Update

Police Social Worker Brooke Murphy-Corcoran summarized her first year in the role, highlighting major accomplishments, collaborative efforts, and the integration of social work into the department. She reported the following:

- 85% service acceptance rate
- Frequent service to elderly clients (80%), housing-related support (16%), and mental health/legal issues (3%)

Murphy-Corcoran noted that while there's no formal co-response program yet, referrals are increasingly coming from officers rather than just self-referrals. She routinely reviews police logs to identify service needs and is actively collaborating with Cross Roads House and regional partners for housing solutions. A new initiative is underway to launch an outreach team that will accompany patrol officers during substance-use-related calls. Commissioners praised the program's effectiveness, calling her impact "phenomenal" and emphasized the value of having a dedicated liaison between police and community resources. When asked for a real-world example, Murphy-Corcoran described assisting an elderly woman without heat in February – successfully coordinating services to refill her fuel tank alongside Detective Sergeant Brian Houde.

IV. ACCEPTANCE OF THE 3/18/25 MEETING MINUTES:

Motion: Commissioner Fernald moved to accept the minutes of the above-noted Police Commission meeting.

Seconded: Commissioner Scherr.

Roll Call Vote: Unanimously approved, 3-0

V. PUBLIC COMMENT: None.

VI. NEW BUSINESS:

A. POLICE COMMISSION:

1. **Chief Newport's 30-Years of Service** (see above)
2. **Facilities Update**

a. Municipal Building Blue Ribbon Committee

Chair Coyle noted that recent Blue Ribbon Committee meetings had been cancelled pending the results of the Matrix Staffing Study. A community input session for the study is scheduled for April 23rd. The Chair also shared that the police department's staffing levels have not grown in over 25 years. The Commission expressed their frustration over the lack of substantive committee meetings, echoing concerns about the slow pace of progress.

3. Community Priorities

Commissioner Scherr commended the department for addressing major goals, including the pending rollout of body-worn cameras, the implementation of a new CAD/RMS system (expected by the end of

2025), and the hiring of a police social worker. Chair Coyle added that the body-worn camera demo team is being formed, with a goal to begin deployment by summer. New recruitment programs are also in place to facilitate the hiring process.

Chief Newport reported on staffing, stating that 7 of 10 public safety dispatcher positions are currently filled, with three additional candidates in the background process. For sworn officers, the department is down 5, with 3 in the hiring pipeline.

B. CHIEF OF POLICE:

1. Swearing-In Ceremony

a. Officer Scott South (see above)

2. Police Social Worker Update (see above)

3. Police Explorers Fundraising Donation

a. A check for \$30.00 from Mrs. Gail Frongillo for the Portsmouth Police Explorers Post #2609.

Motion: Commissioner Fernald moved to accept the \$30 check for the Portsmouth Police Explorers a and forward to the City Council for their approval.

Seconded: Commissioner Scherr.

Roll Call Vote: Unanimously approved (3-0).

b. A check for \$250.00 from Geno's Chowder and Sandwich Shop for the Portsmouth Police Explorers Post #2609.

Motion: Commissioner Scherr moved to accept the \$250 check and forward to the City Council for their approval. Noted fellow PPC is the owner of this shop.

Seconded: Commissioner Coyle.

Roll Call Vote: Approved (2-0-1), with one abstention.

4. Crime Analyst Report

Stats from January 1st – March 31st, 2025:

Calls for Service: ↓ 18.5%

Arrests: ↓ 11.6%

DWI Arrests: ↓ 14.9%

Reports Taken: ↓ 12.5%

Reportable Motor Vehicle Crashes: ↓ 5.3%

Motor Vehicle Stops: ↓ 24.2%

IEA (Involuntary Emergency Admissions): ↑ 42.9%

Juvenile Matter Calls: ↓ 37.8%

Chief Newport explained that the 24% decrease in motor vehicle stops correlates to the department's staffing challenges.

5. Monthly Traffic Stats (March 2025):

- Motor vehicle stops: 595
- Summonses issued: 17
- Reportable motor vehicle crashes: 35

6. Financial Report

The department's FY25 budget remains 3% below the cap, with some fourth-quarter purchases – such as ammunition and training – still pending. FY26 budget workshops are scheduled to begin on May 12th. Also working to complete a Q&A document to address the public comment questions from last month's meeting.

a. Grant Applications Update

Two federal grant requests have been submitted with the help of Representative Pappas and Senator Shaheen, one for the ICAC Task Force and the other for IT equipment for a new facility. Chair Coyle reminded attendees that the City Council is requesting no more than a 2.5% budget increase for FY26. Commissioner Scherr about potential impacts of recent federal tightening of grant funding through DOGE. Karen, the department's grant manager, responded that although there is uncertainty around future funding, no current Department of Justice grants have been lost. However, funding levels may be reduced in upcoming cycles. The ICAC Commander is working diligently to advocate for continued funding for the State ICAC Task Force to support its critical services. (ICAC: Internet Crimes Against Children)

b. Strategic Plan Update

Strategic Plan development remains underway.

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 meeting packet.

IX. MISCELLANEOUS/OTHER BUSINESS: No items were raised.

X. NEXT REGULAR MEETING:

Tuesday, May 20th, 2025, at 5:30 PM.

XI. MOTION TO ADJOURN:

Motion: Commissioner Fernald moved to adjourn at 6:17 PM.

Police Commission Meeting
April 15, 2025

Seconded: Commissioner Scherr.

Roll Call Vote: Unanimously approved (3-0).

END OF MEETING

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