

PORTSMOUTH POLICE COMMISSION

MINUTES OF THE JUNE 17th, 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 at 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:** The meeting was called to order at 5:31 PM by Chair Coyle.

II. **MOTION TO SUSPEND THE AGENDA:**

Motion: Commissioner Scherr moved to suspend the agenda to move to #1 under the Chief's Report: *Award/Recognition Ceremonies*.

Seconded: Commissioner Fernald.

Vote: Unanimously approved (3-0).

Chief's Report: 1, Award/Recognition Ceremonies

Lt. Kiberd presented the following Field Training Officers (FTOs) with Letters of Commendation and a uniform patch signifying their role as mentors, trainers and evaluators of new police officers.

- Master Patrol Officer Lynn Thomas
- Master Patrol Officer William Werner
- Officer Jack Maloney
- Officer Joseph Melanson
- Officer Alexander Mulcahey
- Officer William Mahoney
- Officer Joshua Haile
- Officer Nicholas Young
- Officer Robert Meyer
- Officer Alex McMillen
- Officer Timothy Conroy

Chief Newport recognized the following officers and civilian staff with awards for their outstanding service:

Honorable Service Medals: Awarded to officers who located a missing man during a nighttime search in 19-degree weather. The individual was found and transported to the hospital, where he was treated for hypothermia.

- Sergeant Matthew Young
- Master Patrol Officer William Werner
- Officer Jeff Rohde
- Officer Ian Efstathiou

Letter of Recognition: For successfully organized the department's 2025 Citizen's Police Academy.

- Detective Rochelle Jones

Letter of Commendation: For completing the department's CALEA file review and maintaining compliance with national best practice standards.

- Accreditation Manager Kate Young

III. **PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE:** Led by the Commission.

IV. **ACCEPTANCE OF THE 5/20/25 MEETING MINUTES:**

Action: Commissioner Scherr moved to accept the minutes of the above-noted Police Commission meeting.

Seconded: Commissioner Fernald.

Vote: Unanimously approved, 3-0.

V. **PUBLIC COMMENT:** None.

VI. **NEW BUSINESS:**

A. POLICE COMMISSION:

1. Facilities Update

a. Municipal Building Blue Ribbon Committee

Chair Coyle reported that the Committee met last week. Tomorrow's meeting is postponed to next week, pending the release of the final Matrix Study report. The report will guide staffing and building recommendations for future planning. Efforts are currently underway to secure a design team for the municipal complex project.

2. Community Priorities

Commissioner Scherr reported great progress with the statewide rapid response teams. However, there is concern that funding may be cut. He urged the public to contact their state legislators to advocate for

continued funding. Chair Coyle noted the program's positive impact: reduced arrests and mental health-related calls, leading to both better interventions and cost savings for the community.

Chair Coyle observed several officers now wear body-worn cameras (BWCs). Chief Newport confirmed that officers who completed training last week are now using them on duty. The Chair commended Commissioner Scherr for his longstanding support of BWCs.

Commissioner Scherr shared his appreciation for the progress made, having previously served on a BWC committee.

B. CHIEF OF POLICE:

1. Award/Recognition Ceremonies (See Section II above)

2. Crime Analyst Report

January 1st – May 31st, 2025 Stats: (compared to last 3 years)

Calls for Service: ↓ 10.5%

Arrests: ↓ 3.7%

DWI Arrests: ↓ 8.8%

Reports Taken: ↓ 15%

Reportable Motor Vehicle Crashes: ↓ 1.5%

Motor Vehicle Stops: ↓ 14.9%

IEA (Involuntary Emergency Admissions): ↑ 4.2%

Juvenile Matter Calls: ↓ 31.4%

Chief Newport credited increased visibility of police and rapid response efforts for the improved statistics. Chair Coyle also cited staffing challenges as a contributing factor. Commissioner Scherr complimented the department's Crime Analyst for the clear pie charts included in the monthly activity report that is posted on the department's Facebook page

May highlights:

- Top offenses: Juvenile matters, including conduct after an accident
- Most common arrests: DWI and driving after suspension
- Most common self-initiated activity: Property checks and motor vehicle stops

Chief Newport explained a "property check" involves officers inspecting local businesses to ensure they are secure, helping deter crime. Commissioner Scherr added that this visible presence is reassuring to the public.

3. Monthly Traffic Stats (May 2025):

- Motor vehicle stops: 733 (up 69 from April)

- Summonses issued: 32
- Reportable motor vehicle crashes: 44 (up 14 from April)

Increases attributed to Memorial Day traffic and summer weather.

4. Financial Report

The FY25 budget is approximately 4% below the cap. Karen Senecal reported around \$700k in salary savings, which is largely offset by a \$454k overtime overage. The department does not overbudget for overtime in anticipation of staffing vacancies, which contributes to the variance. Hidden costs were explained in context of these salary savings to clarify the budget figures. End-of-year purchases are currently underway to replenish essential supplies.

a. Grant Applications Update

- The department is currently undergoing an ICAC (Internet Crimes Against Children) grant audit – the first since 2001. Staff are compiling data covering the past three years of the previous grant and the first year of the new grant, with a submission deadline of Friday. Chair Coyle emphasized that when the department is short-staffed, funds allocated for vacant positions are redirected to cover overtime to meet minimum staffing requirements. This practice applies to both officers and dispatchers.

b. Strategic Plan Update

Expected to be finalized and shared with the Commission by the next meeting.

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:

Note: Last day of school is tomorrow – drivers are reminded to watch for increased vehicle and pedestrian traffic, especially children.

X. NEXT REGULAR MEETING:

Tuesday, July 15th, 2025, at 5:30 PM.

XI. MOTION TO ADJOURN:

Motion: Commissioner Scherr moved to adjourn at 6:09 p.m.

Seconded: Commissioner Fernald.
Vote: Unanimously approved (3-0).

MEETING ADJOURNED

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