

# PORTSMOUTH POLICE COMMISSION

## MINUTES OF THE AUGUST 19<sup>th</sup>, 2025 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, Executive Assistant Jackie Burnett and members of the public.

I. **CALL TO ORDER:** The meeting was called to order at 5:30 PM by Chair Coyle.

II. **PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE:** Led collectively by the Commission.

III. **NEW BUSINESS:**

- a. Acceptance of Grant: An ICAC Forensic Shield grant in the amount of \$1.3 million from the NH Department of Justice for the NH Internet Crimes Against Children Task Force.

Action: Commissioner Scherr moved to accept the ICAC Forensic Shield grant in the amount of \$1.3 million. Seconded by Commissioner Fernald. Vote: Unanimously approved, 3-0.

IV. **COMMUNITY DIALOGUE ON ICE & IMMIGRATION:**

The Police Commission and members of the public discussed concerns and sought clarity regarding new state laws related to immigration enforcement. One law prohibits municipalities from interfering with ICE and Homeland Security actions. The second allows the Attorney General's Office to investigate such interferences and, if verified, permits the state to withhold up to 25% of a municipality's funding. For Portsmouth, this could amount to approximately \$6 million, though that figure is an estimate.

Attendees asked what constitutes "interference". It was explained that interference can be both civil and criminal. For example, if a police department were to publicly announce ICE's plans to make an arrest in advance, this would be deemed civil interference. Criminal interference may involve direct obstruction of federal agents. Officers are not responsible for policing ICE agents, but they will respond to public safety concerns (e.g., a report of a window being broken), and any incident will be documented in police records. FOIA requests can be submitted for more information.

Concerns were raised about ICE agents operating in unmarked clothing, and wearing masks, making it difficult for the public to identify them as law enforcement. While the PPD cannot interfere with federal immigration operations, they can verify the identity of individuals claiming to be federal agents when requested. It was emphasized

that ICE agents have constitutional authority to conduct investigations, and any concerns or complaints about their conduct should be directed to the U.S. Attorney's Office. Additionally, people were reminded that ICE agents must obtain a judicial warrant to lawfully enter a person's home.

While the right to protest was affirmed, residents were warned that obstructing federal agents or providing false information is a federal offense. Regarding deportation flights at Pease, it was clarified that the Portsmouth Police have no jurisdiction; law enforcement at the gates falls under the Sheriff's Department.

Attendees asked how the new laws would affect PPD's responsibilities. The department confirmed there would be no changes. Commissioner Coyle emphasized that the PPD operates without political alignment and is committed to protecting the community. Commissioner Buzz Scherr added that the purpose of the forum was to address fears and misinformation surrounding federal immigration enforcement.

Community members expressed concern over the eroding trust between law enforcement and residents due to ICE-related actions. A request was made for the Police Commission to issue a public statement or editorial to clarify the PPD's role. It was also suggested that a statement be added to the department's website to address misconceptions.

The Commission welcomed continued dialogue and encouraged attendees to share what they learned. It was noted that "Know Your Rights" trainings are offered by the ACLU and that additional information may be obtained through the City Council or Department of Justice. One-on-one meetings with commissioners can be arranged to continue the conversation without requiring a public session.

Commissioner Scherr, also a state representative, noted that while he is active in legislative matters concerning immigration, his role on the Police Commission remains strictly nonpartisan. The Commission was thanked for facilitating this important and constructive public forum.

**V. NEXT REGULAR MEETING:**

Tuesday, September 16<sup>th</sup>, 2025, at 5:30 PM.

**VI. MOTION TO ADJOURN:**

**Motion: Commissioner Scherr moved to adjourn at 6:26 PM. Seconded by Commissioner Fernald. Vote: Unanimously approved (3-0).**

END OF MEETING

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