

PORTSMOUTH POLICE COMMISSION

MINUTES OF THE JULY 14, 2026 MEETING

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

Buzz Scherr, Chair
Francesca Fernald, Commissioner
Jay Lieberman, Commissioner

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

- I. **CALL TO ORDER:** The meeting was called to order by Chair Scherr.
- II. **PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE:** Led by Commissioner Lieberman.
- III. **ACCEPTANCE OF THE 6/16/26 MEETING MINUTES:**
Motion: Commissioner Lieberman moved to accept the minutes from the June 16, 2026 Police Commission meeting.
Seconded: Commissioner Fernald.
Vote: Unanimously approved (3-0).
- IV. **MOTION TO SUSPEND THE AGENDA:**
Motion: Commissioner Lieberman moved to suspend the agenda to move to items #1 and #2 under the Chief's Report, Swearing-In Ceremony and Retirement Recognition.
Seconded: Commissioner Fernald
Vote: Unanimously approved (3-0)

Chief's Report:

1. **Swearing-In Ceremony:** Chief Newport hosted a ceremony to swear in seven new police officers, the largest single hiring group in department history.
2. **Retirement Recognition:** The department also honored the retirement of Master Patrol Officer Lynn Thomas (21 years of service) and Lieutenant Chris Kiberd (over 30 years of service – 24 of those working for Portsmouth PD).

Recess: Following the completion of Items #1 and #2 under the Chief's Report, Commissioner Lieberman made a motion to recess the meeting for approximately 15 minutes to allow photographs to be taken with officers. The motion was seconded by Commissioner Fernald. Motion carried.

The meeting recessed at 5:45pm and reconvened at 5:51pm.

Return to Regular Agenda: Following the recess, the Commission returned to the regular order of business and resumed consideration of the remaining agenda items.

V. **PUBLIC COMMENT:** No comments offered.

VI. **NEW BUSINESS:**

A. POLICE COMMISSION

1. Facilities Update

a. Municipal Building Blue Ribbon Committee Update

- **Overview of City Council Work Session, 7/13/26:** Chair Scherr provided an update on the municipal building project. The City Council is favoring “Concept C” for the conceptual design of the police station and City Hall complex.
- **Commission Approval of Current Committee Building Plans:** The plan proposed appears to meet the needs of the PD for next 10-20 years, is affordable and address most of the major issues at the police department. \$2.8M has been earmarked to continue with a comprehensive design process.
- **Next public meeting: September 9, 2026:** The commission emphasized the importance of community input before the project moves into the design and bonding phase.

b. Dispatch Remediation Update

- Chief Newport stated the dispatch center remediation is currently on schedule, with completion expected in September 2026.

B. CHIEF OF POLICE

1. Swearing-In Ceremony (See Section IV)

2. Retirement Recognition (See Section IV)

3. Grant

- a. \$24,100 NH Highway Safety Grant to support six highway safety initiatives.

Motion: Commissioner Lieberman moved to accept the terms of the NH Highway Safety Grant award in the amount of \$24,100.

Seconded: Commissioner Fernald.

Vote: Unanimously approved (3-0).

The Police Commission, in a majority vote, accepted the terms of the Highway Safety Grant as presented in the amount of \$24,100.

4. Crime Analyst Report

Based on average of 2023-2025 statistics: Jan 1 – June 31

Calls for Service: ↓ -30.0%	Reportable MV Accidents: ↓-21.7%
Arrests: ↓ -22.2%	Motor Vehicle Stops/Offenses: ↓ -39.3%
Reports Taken: ↓ -10.6%	DUI Arrests: ↓-12.1

Full Crime Analyst Statistics Chart is posted on the Police Department's webpage.

Chief Newport attributed the decline in calls for service to staffing shortages affecting proactive police activity.

5. Monthly Traffic Stats (June 2026)

- Motor Vehicle Stops: 391 (65 fewer than in May)
- Summonses Issued: 17 (Same as in May)
- Reportable Motor Vehicle Crashes: 30 (One fewer than in May)

6. Financial Report

The department reported an estimated FY26 budget surplus of approximately \$250,000, which will be returned to the City. Final year-end figures will be presented at the August Police Commission meeting.

a. Grant Application Update

- The Chief provided an update on several pending federal grant applications, including a \$1 million ICAC grant and a \$130,000 IT infrastructure/security grant.
- The department is awaiting notification on a project submitted through this year's congressional spending process to help fund the development of a Real-Time Crime Center.
- The department was awarded a \$13,827 JAG grant, which will be used to fund upgrades to department rifles.

b. Strategic Plan Update

Currently in progress.

VII. MISCELLANEOUS/OTHER BUSINESS:

The Commission recognized Commissioner Jay Lieberman at his final meeting, thanking him for his six months of service to the department. Gary Dozier will be sworn in prior to the next meeting to serve the remainder of Commissioner Lieberman's term.

VIII. NEXT REGULAR MEETING: Tuesday, August 18, 2026. Please check the municipal meetings calendar on the city's website for any important meeting updates.

IX. MOTION TO ADJOURN:

Motion: Commissioner Fernald moved to adjourn at 6:08 PM.

Seconded by Commissioner Lieberman.

Vote: Unanimously approved (3-0).

END OF MEETING

Respectfully Submitted by Jacqueline Burnett, Executive Assistant
Commissioner Francesca Fernald, Recording Clerk of the Commission