

**PORTSMOUTH POLICE COMMISSION**  
**MINUTES OF THE DECEMBER 19<sup>TH</sup>, 2017 MONTHLY POLICE**  
**COMMISSION MEETING**

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

**Brenna Cavanaugh, Chair**  
**Joseph J. Onosko**  
**Joe Plaia**

**I. CALL TO ORDER:**

The December 19<sup>th</sup>, 2017 monthly Police Commission meeting was called to order at 3:30 p.m. in the Wm. Mortimer Room of the police department for the purpose of going into non-public session.

The Chair called for a motion to go into non-public session under the provisions of RSA 91:A, 3-II (c), “Matters which, if discussed in public, would likely affect adversely the reputation of any person...”

**Action: Commissioner Plaia** to enter non-public session for the purpose delineated above.

**Seconded by Commissioner Onosko.**

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

Commissioner Cavanaugh:	“Aye.”
Commissioner Onosko:	“Aye.”
Commissioner Plaia:	“Aye.”

The motion passed to go into non-public session at 3:44 p.m.

**The public session 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 city’s website.)

**The following people were present:** Commissioners Cavanaugh, Onosko, and Plaia, Chief Robert Merner, Admin. Manager Karen Senecal, Exec. Assistant Kathleen Levesque, members of the public and the press.

**II. PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE:** Chief Robert Merner led the Pledge of Allegiance.

**III. ACCEPTANCE OF THE MINUTES:**  
The Chair asked for a motion to accept the minutes.

**Action: Commissioner Plaia moved** to accept the minutes of the November 30<sup>th</sup>, 2017 meeting.

**Seconded by Commissioner Onosko.**

**On a Voice Vote:** The motion passed to accept the minutes of the November 30<sup>th</sup>, 2017 meeting.

**IV. PUBLIC COMMENT:** (The following is a brief summary of each person's comments and represents the speaker's personal opinion. The entire meeting can be viewed online by going to the city's website and clicking "Channel 22", and then clicking on "Archived 2012, 2013, 2014, 2015, 2016, and 2017 meetings.")

Mr. Harold Whitehouse – 58 Humphreys Court: Complimented the Sgt. (Lt. Maloney) who handles patrol, who put cruisers on South Street. He thanked Chief Merner for his support on this matter. Mr. Whitehouse read a memo from another resident who has similar ideas to those of Mr. Whitehouse's "Pace Car" project to suppress the speed of vehicle traffic on Portsmouth streets.

Mr. Mark Brighton - 285 Union Street: Mr. Brighton aid his topic was the PPAF (Prescott Park Arts Festival). He said he had not yet read the Chief's after action report from the summer on alcohol and drug use at concerts. He referred to a particular incident in Prescott Park, where there was a strong odor of marijuana, but the crowd was so thick the police officers could not get into the crowd determine where it was coming from. He thanked Commissioner Cavanaugh for her service on the Commission.

Mr. Arthur Clough – 431 Pleasant Street: Mr. Clough thanked the outgoing Commissioner for her specific contributions to the Commission. Mr. Clough said he longer has a level of anxiety about the police that he previously had. He also said he appreciated the Chief's concerns regarding

the crowd size in Prescott Park. Mr. Clough spoke about additional concerns he still has with Prescott Park events. Mr. Clough handed the Commission and the Chief copies of a notice from another large venue as an example the Commission should consider for what types of personal items should be allowed into the Prescott Park Arts Festival events so people can no longer sneak alcohol into the city park.

Mr. Richard Gamester – 176 Dexter Road: Thanked the current Police Commission, and Commissioner Cavanaugh in particular, for the work that has been accomplished in the past four years.

**V. UNFINISHED BUSINESS:**

None.

**VI. NEW BUSINESS:**

**A. POLICE COMMISSION:**

None.

**B. CHIEF OF POLICE:**

1. Chief Merner addressed comments made in the public comment session, to correct information. He said he has been repeatedly quite vocal about the crowd size for certain Prescott Park Arts Festival events, saying that some of the crowds were clearly too large for the venue. Chief Merner also addressed Mr. Brighton's statements about 'covert drinking'. He laid out steps that were taken back in the summer, and those that will be taken going into the next season.

The Chief addressed Mr. Whitehouse's comments about speed as well. He said we have been, and will continue to address residents' concerns regarding speed.

2. Accreditation Update –  
Chief Merner reported we are 97% compliant with our written directives, and are ahead of schedule. Three percent of directives are still in process. We are already working on the next phase of CALEA accreditation which involves the documentation of something called 'Proofs'. Proofs show evidence of compliance on an operational basis with each of the Standard Operating Procedures.
3. Monthly Traffic Data Report:

In 2016 we had a total of 7,567 Motor Vehicle stops; in 2017 to date, we have had 11,607 MV stops. The number of summonses issued in 2017 will be twice what we did in 2016. Our officers are very active out there. Chief Merner added that a lot of the overall arrests made have come as a result of traffic stops. We've had 976 in-custody arrests; that is an average of 3 in-custody arrests a day. The work output from officers has quadrupled over the last two years. In 2016 we had 40,813 calls for service; so far in 2017, we've had 51,392 calls for service, and the year is not over. That is 10,500 more calls for service than we handled last year with the same number of resources.

Chief Merner said the Department are getting numerous requests for active shooter-type training (CRASE Training), from schools, private facilities, and public entities. We are also getting requests from surrounding towns for this training. Lt. Maloney is overseeing all of these requests. He advised the Commission that we are taking care of Portsmouth requests first.

4. Donation: A donation in the amount of \$500 has been received from the Newburyport Five Cent Savings Bank.

**Action: Commissioner Onosko moved** to accept the \$500 donation from the Newburyport Five Cent Savings Bank and forward to the City Council for their action.

**Seconded by Commissioner Plaia.**

**On a Voice Vote:** The motion passed to accept the \$500 donation from the Newburyport Five Cent Savings Bank and forward to the city council for their action.

5. Financial Report – Karen Senecal
  - a. Grant Applications Update
  - b. Facilities Report
    - We've seen new activity with mice and rats in the building.
    - A dehumidifier has been installed in the evidence room which vents to the outside, to handle the high level of moisture generated in that important room.

## **VII. MISCELLANEOUS BUSINESS:**

- Commissioner Onosko: Emphasized there are no quotas involved in the uptick in officer activity. This is due to the outstanding leadership from Chief Mara and Chief Merner.

- Commissioner Plaia: Talked about rush hour traffic drivers in the traffic circle. He said he witnesses borderline reckless driving conduct there every day, and asked Chief Merner to speak to this. The Chief said he comes through that area nearly every day at rush hour, and cited some of the repetitive violations that go on. He said we have officers regularly out there. Chief Merner has been in contact with Troop 'A', about these issues, since the New Hampshire State Police have primary jurisdiction over the circle.
- Commissioner Cavanaugh: The Chair said she wanted to clarify that all ticket revenue goes to the state of New Hampshire. The city does not get any of the revenue from traffic tickets or penalties.
- Commissioner Onosko: The Commissioner spoke about Commissioner Cavanaugh's work and tenure on the Police Commission. Commissioners Onosko and Plaia presented Commissioner Cavanaugh with a plaque for her service.
- Commissioner Cavanaugh: The Chair said she would like the next commission to consider the following items, and spoke briefly about bearded, low profile officers in a low profile police car, Drones, the Portsmouth Police Department cold cases, the School Resource Officer in the high school, and the old police cruisers awaiting auction.

#### **VIII. MOTION TO ADJOURN:**

The Chair announced the first Police Commission meeting in 2018 is scheduled for January 23<sup>rd</sup>, 2018. There being no further business before the Commission, the Chair asked for a motion to adjourn.

**Action: Commissioner Plaia moved** the December 19<sup>th</sup>, 2017 Police Commission meeting be adjourned.

**Seconded by Commissioner Onosko.**

**On a Voice Vote:** The motion passed to adjourn the December 19<sup>th</sup>, 2017 Police Commission meeting at 6:14 p.m.

END OF MEETING

Respectfully submitted,  
*Kathe Lavoie, Exec. Asst. to the Chief*  
Clerk of the Commission (Position Vacant)