

## PORTSMOUTH POLICE COMMISSION

### MINUTES OF THE MARCH 21<sup>ST</sup>, 2018 POLICE COMMISSION MEETING

4:30 p.m. Public Session – Eileen Dondero Foley Council Chambers

Joseph J. Onosko, Chair  
Jim Splaine  
Arthur Hilson

- I. **CALL TO ORDER:** The March 21<sup>st</sup>, 2018 monthly Police Commission meeting was called to order at 3:03 p.m. in the Wm. Mortimer Conference Room of the Portsmouth Police Department.

**The following people were present:** Commissioners Onosko, Splaine and Hilson, and Chief Merner

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

**Action: Commissioner Onosko moved** to enter non-public session for the purposes delineated above.

**Seconded by Commissioner Splaine.**

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

Commissioner Onosko:	“Aye.”
Commissioner Splaine:	“Aye.”
Commissioner Hilson:	“Aye.”

The Commission entered non-public session at 3:03 p.m.

**The public session resumed at 3:38 p.m. in the Eileen Dondero Foley Council Chambers in city hall.** (An archived video of the meeting is available on the city’s website.)

**The following people were present:** Commissioners Onosko, Splaine and Hilson, Chief Merner, DPW Director Peter Rice, Admin. Manager

Karen Senecal, Exec. Asst. Kathe Levesque, Herald reporter Elizabeth Dinan, members of the public.

II. **PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE:** Kathleen Levesque led the Pledge of Allegiance.

III. **ACCEPTANCE OF THE MINUTES OF THE MEETINGS HELD ON:**

February 27<sup>th</sup>, 2018, and the Budget Work Session held on March 16<sup>th</sup>, 2018.

**Action: Commissioner Hilson moved** to accept the minutes of the February 27<sup>th</sup>, 2018 Police Commission meeting.

**Seconded by Commissioner Splaine.**

**On a Voice Vote:** The motion carried to accept the minutes of the February 27<sup>th</sup>, 2018 Police Commission meeting.

**Action: Commissioner Hilson moved** to accept the minutes of the budget work session held on March 16<sup>th</sup>, 2018.

**Seconded by Commissioner Splaine.**

**On a Voice Vote:** The motion passed to accept the minutes of the March 16<sup>th</sup>, 2018 budget work session.

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. David Loehwing** – 130 Thornton Street: Mr. Loehwing was speaking to the Commission and Chief as a parent who walks his child to school and is concerned about the volume and speed of the traffic around New Franklin School on school mornings. He said there is not a lot of signage that tells drivers coming off the highway exit that they are entering a school zone. Mr. Loehwing said there was a traffic accident on March 9<sup>th</sup> involving a school employee and two children. Thankfully no one was hurt. He suggested now might be a good time to work together on how we might improve overall safety in this area, both while the construction is underway and going forward.

Addressing his concerns, Chief Merner said that prior to the start of the bridge repair work, we made sure we were part of the pre-meetings with

parents and the City's Dept. of Public Works and this location has been on Patrol's radar for some time just for these reasons. Chief Merner has been down there on school mornings, Officer Meyer has been doing speed enforcement at that location multiple times per week during key time blocks, and Captain Warchol has been down there as well monitoring traffic.

The Chief added that we are active at Bartlett & Thornton for the ongoing truck complaints in that neighborhood as well. He thanked Mr. Loehwing for his input and said the police will continue to address this problem and add coverage as needed. He also said we will work with DPW to look at adding signage.

**Mr. Joshua Cyr** – 990 Maplewood Ave.; Mr. Cyr said he was present to echo Mr. Loehwing's concerns, and to add that traffic speed does seem to be being addressed. His concern is for the actual physical safety at the intersection. He proceeded to describe the physical dynamics and the blind spots because of the two opposing left turn lanes and the straight through lanes where the drivers' vision is blocked by the opposing left-turning vehicles. And that dynamic is further impacted by vehicles pulling out of the school lot into the middle of that same left-turning intersection. He observed that an officer doing speed enforcement isn't going to be able to impact the blind spot dynamics he described. He asked for an officer to specifically address this particular aspect of the traffic dynamic.

Chief Merner said he has been down there himself, and will work this out with Lt. Maloney and get that addressed.

There being no other persons wishing to speak, the Chair closed the public comment session.

V. **UNFINISHED BUSINESS:** None.

VI. **NEW BUSINESS:**

A. **POLICE COMMISSION:**

a. **Commissioner Onosko:**

- i. COLA raises/contracts for all three Police Unions –  
Commissioner Onosko said the police unions have

requested an extension of the existing working agreements for the period of one year.

**Action: Commissioner Hilson moved** to extend the three union contracts for one year, until June of 2019.

**Seconded by Commissioner Splaine.**

**On a Voice Vote:** The motion passed to extend the three union contracts for one year, until June of 2019.

- ii. Correct the data on Police Department salaries that was published in the Portsmouth Herald.
  - a. Chief Merner explained that private vendors, not taxpayers, are paying for detail work done by officers. So a portion of the officer's annual earnings has been paid for by private vendors, not taxpayers.
  - b. Karen added that 'OT', or overtime, is another area where there is misunderstanding. A lot of our overtime is paid for by grant monies from New Hampshire Highway Safety and the Department of Justice, so an additional portion of officers' annual earnings can also be being paid for by a source other than Portsmouth taxpayers; these factors need to be kept in mind as one looks at the annual earnings of police officers in Portsmouth.

Karen added that she will have a breakout posted on the website as soon as she can get to it, that will clarify what overtime can consist of.

Commissioner Splaine asked Karen to explain how the department charges for detail work. Karen said she will work with City IT to get this added to the website.

- iii. Citizen Police Academy – Commissioner Onosko gave a brief history of the Citizen Police Academy started by the police department a number of years ago, saying he would like to start it up again. He thought we might consider doing a 2-hour session that would be an overview of police operations. If there is further interest, we can run a full curriculum.

Commissioner Splaine talked about doing ride alongs as well. He suggested getting information up on the website.

**b. Commissioner Splaine:**

- i. Out of City Hall Police Commission Meetings – The Commissioner would like to have meetings outside the city hall building. He has developed a list of locations:
  1. In May, perhaps a resident drop-in on a Saturday at the city's recycling center on the road going in.
  2. At the Community Campus, perhaps in July or August, a discussion forum with seniors and families.
  3. A third location might be at the high school in October or November.

The Commissioner said he will put this on the agenda for the next meeting, and the Chief and other Commissioners can add other locations.

**Action: Commissioner Splaine moved** that these three intended locations, provided that the logistics can be worked out properly with the city and the school department and those people responsible at Community Campus:

1. May at the recycling center;
2. July or August at the Community Campus;
3. October or November at the high school,

as the Chief and Karen and other officers are available they are invited, and this would be our goal to look at making this happen.

**Seconded by Commissioner Hilson.**

Commissioner Hilson said that Portsmouth High School has audio and video capability, and there are local houses of worship that have that ability to record and post to YouTube.

The Chair asked for a vote.

**On a Voice Vote:** The motion passed to look at making meeting forums or listening sessions happen at the following locations:

- May at the recycling center;

- July or August at the Community Campus;
- October or November at the high school,  
and as the Chief and Karen and other officers are available  
they are invited.

**B. CHIEF OF POLICE:**

- a. Congratulated K9 Officer Aaron Stacy and K9 'Axe', for their successful completion of a very intense and stressful six-week Narcotic Detection Class. They are now certified in a number of narcotics. Chief Merner asked K9 Officer Steven Blanding, who was present with K9 'Max', to describe the course for the Commissioners.
- b. DPW Director Peter Rice briefed the Commission on the start of repairs on the building façade.
- c. Accreditation Update
- d. Monthly Traffic Data
- e. Update on the Strategic Plan
- f. Financial Report
- g. Letters of Thanks & Appreciation from Outside the Department.
  1. An email from someone who had an interaction with Officer Bill Werner on a traffic stop. The person had a special needs adult in the vehicle at the time and thanked Officer Werner for his kind, upbeat and professional demeanor in dealing with both the driver and the special needs passenger, saying, "... it was another level of kindness altogether to have the insight...to know how to touch a (special needs) person...you really made his day..."
  2. An email from a parent of an 8<sup>th</sup> grader who attended the Police Department's Middle School presentation on school safety procedures. The parent said, "I left feeling confident that the Portsmouth Police Department is constantly thinking about next steps and is as prepared as a department can be to handle the unexpected...I feel lucky to have you in charge of our fabulous city."
  3. Another email from a parent who attended the Police Department's Middle School presentation on school safety procedures. The parent said, "...frankly, (I) am blown away and in awe of everything you must witness on a day-to-day basis...Thanks again for doing what you do..."

**VII. MISCELLANEOUS BUSINESS:**

Commissioner Splaine – Meeting notices: The Commissioner has prepared the relevant references of the New Hampshire Right to Know Law. He asked that his memo would be put on the agenda for the next meeting as a memo that he feels will simplify and clarify this process.

Chief Merner advised the Commission the scheduled repair work to the façade of the building is about to commence and will have a significant impact on the working conditions at police headquarters over the next five to six months.

**VIII. MOTION TO ADJOURN:**

There being no further business before the Commission, the Chair asked for a motion to adjourn.

**Action: Commissioner Splaine moved** the March 21<sup>st</sup>, 2018 Police Commission Monthly Meeting be adjourned.

**Seconded by Commissioner Hilson.**

**On a Voice Vote:** The motion passed to adjourn the 2018 Police Commission Monthly Meeting at 5:08 p.m.

END OF MEETING

*Kathe*

*Respectfully Submitted By Kathleen Levesque, Executive Assistant*

*Reviewed By Commissioner Hilson, Clerk of the Commission*

*Arthur L. Hilson*

**MONTHLY POLICE COMMISSION MEETING  
PUBLIC COMMENT PORTION**

DATE OF MEETING: \_\_\_\_\_

Name & Address: David Loehwing  
130 Thornton St.

Topic: Traffic at New Franklin School & Woodbury Ave.

Name & Address: Joshua Cyr  
990 Maplewood Ave

Topic: Safety + Traffic @ New Franklin School

Name & Address: \_\_\_\_\_

Topic: \_\_\_\_\_

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