

PORTSMOUTH POLICE COMMISSION

MINUTES OF THE MAY 26TH, 2020 MONTHLY POLICE COMMISSION MEETING

5:30 p.m. Public Session – Via Zoom Meeting Platform

Joseph J. Onosko, Chair
Stefany Shaheen, Commissioner
Thomas P. Hart, Commissioner

- I. **CALL TO ORDER:** The May 26th 2020 Monthly Police Commission meeting was called to order at 5:34 p.m. via the City's Zoom meeting platform.

The following people attended the meeting: Commissioners Onosko, Shaheen, and Hart, Chief Robert Merner, Admin Manager Karen Senecal, Exec. Assistant Kathleen Levesque. The meeting was televised on Channel 22.

- II. **ACCEPTANCE OF THE MINUTES OF THE MEETINGS HELD
ON:**

April 28th and May 7th, 2020.

Action: Commissioner Hart moved to accept the minutes of the April 28th and May 7th, 2020 Police Commission Meetings.

Seconded by Commissioner Shaheen.

On a Roll Call Vote: The motion passed unanimously to accept the minutes of the April 28th, and May 7th, 2020 Police Commission Meetings. The vote was as follows:

Commissioner Onosko:	"Aye"
Commissioner Shaheen:	"Aye"
Commissioner Hart:	"Aye"

III. PUBLIC COMMENT:

There being no one wishing to comment, the Chair closed the public comment session.

IV. NEW BUSINESS:

A. POLICE COMMISSION:

1.) Exploration of Additional Budget Cuts

Chief Merner reviewed this year's budget process using a PowerPoint Presentation developed by Karen Senecal for the City Council. He explained why the Police Department started this fiscal year \$137,444 in the hole as a result of cooperating with requests from the City during the last budget cycle. Right now we are still at pre-2008 staffing levels, while our calls for service continue to increase by an average of 12,000 over the last three years. In a work session, the Chief, Karen Senecal, and the Commissioners reviewed all areas of PD operations and decided what would take cuts this year. They made the decision to continue at the pre-2008 staffing deficit and not hire the 69th officer, to forego the 11th dispatcher again, and to restructure the court and investigative units to be able to hire one civilian employee at a lower pay rate to replace a retiring employee. Additional cuts were made to our rolling stock or vehicle replacement schedule. Our cruisers are on the road 24 hours a day, 365 days a year, winter and summer, and we have not purchased new vehicles for about 18 months. We have cruisers breaking down, and cruisers offline and unavailable needing repairs. In response to calls for more cuts to the 'FY '21 operating budget, the Chief and the Commission have sacrificed most of the rolling stock replacement vehicles requested this year, which will be a loss of 4 of the 6 vehicles slated for replacement. During the work session with the Commission, the Capital Improvement Budget was also looked at in detail, resulting in an additional \$288,000+ in other capital improvement equipment being sacrificed.

2.) Traffic Update: Speed and Noise

Chief Merner briefed the Commission on what is in place to address speed and noise in various areas of the city, and

what is being added as the state opens back up from the COVID-19 lockdown. Chief Merner observed that roadway speeds have definitely increased since the number of cars on the road has declined because of the lockdown.

3.) Officer Health & Safety During COVID-19

Chief Merner told the Commission his Department got out in front of this pandemic early, with our Command Staff going to their first COVID 19 meeting on March 3rd to plan alongside other City and regional stakeholders. Chief Merner described what safety protocols are in place inside police headquarters for daily operations, as well as protocols that were put in place for the officers and the public.

4.) Building Renovation Update re: Mold and Plumbing

We have been conducting the mold remediation in phases so that operations in Detectives, IT, and Patrol can continue to function at some level.

When the plumbing contractor conducted the initial surveys prior to the start of work in detectives, he was alarmed at what he saw. He notified Captain Newport it was his belief the pipes could literally fail within the next 24 hours, they were so degraded. The vendor will have to replace four floors of piping infrastructure going straight up from the detective area.

Additionally, removing degraded pipes in the Telecom room will be a huge project. The Telcom room in the basement level of city hall which is occupied by the police department, is a maze of bundles of telecommunication wires which are directly exposed to a maze of aged and degraded plumbing and water pipes. A pipe failure in this room will wipe out police telecommunications as well as the City's internet. As an interim safety measure, the City purchased an emergency bladder to provide some protection in the event the pipes fail before they can be replaced. We purchased another small emergency bladder for the police department's IT office as well, because of similar water threats. The pipes in that office have already failed more than once.

(The complete discussion on these items can be viewed on the city's website.)

B. CHIEF OF POLICE:

1.) Accreditation update:

- a) All of our aggregate data for 2019 has been compiled. The Annual web-based file review has also been completed. The purpose of the file review is to confirm that all applicable CALEA standards are being followed. Chief Lou Moretti of Manalapan, NJ did a random review of 25% of our 400+ policies. He was able to offer suggestions to polish up or tweak a few of them. We are down to two items, and anticipate that by week's end we will get a complete thumbs-up for this annual review.
- b) We have identified and captured 200 of the 1000 proofs that will be required by the end of 2020. Maintaining our CALEA certification requires that we produce one thousand proofs every year which demonstrate the Portsmouth Police Department is maintaining CALEA standards in all aspects of our police operations and policies.
- c) The Response to Resistance and Bias-based Policing Reports will be out shortly. Both reports will be posted to the website. Chief Merner reviewed the Pursuit Report, which is a third report just released by Lt. Kinsman, who heads up the Professional Standards Division. The Chief explained the accountability and review process for all police pursuits by the Portsmouth Police Department. This report will also be put up on the city's webpage.
- d) Financial Report:
 1. We anticipate we will have a surplus to return to the City again this year.
 2. Strategic Plan – The plan is finished, published, and up on the City's website.
 3. Grants Applications Update – New Hampshire Highway Safety grant dollars over last year and this year have gone from about \$32,000 to about \$17,000. We were told the State is using a new formula to allocate funds.

4. The FY '21 Budget document is up on the website. We had our work session with the City Council on May 11th.
5. Facilities Report –
 - i. Mold abatement will begin in Detectives; The area has been sealed up.
 - ii. Duct cleaning will start on the city side of the bldg. first.
 - iii. The Police Department is losing a room to a generator project the City is undertaking, which will begin shortly.
 - iv. Resurfacing of the front parking lot will begin next week.

V. MISCELLANEOUS/OTHER BUSINESS:

Commissioner Shaheen asked for Karen and Chief Merner to talk them through the timeline remaining on the budget process. Chief Merner said there are meetings scheduled for June 1st, 8th, and 15th. By Charter, the City must pass a budget by June 30th, so there may well be additional meetings.

VI. MOTION TO ADJOURN:

There being no further business before the Commission, the Chair asked for a motion to adjourn. He said the next regularly scheduled Police Commission meeting will be Tuesday, June 23, 2020 via the Zoom platform.

Action: Commissioner Shaheen moved to adjourn the May 26th, 2020 Monthly Police Commission Meeting.
Seconded by Commissioner Hart.

On a Roll Call Vote: The motion passed to adjourn the May 26th, 2020
Monthly Police Commission Meeting at 6:45 p.m. The roll call vote was as
follows:

Commissioner Onosko:	"Aye"
Commissioner Shaheen:	"Aye"
Commissioner Hart:	"Aye"

Kathe Levesque

Respectfully Submitted, Kathleen Levesque, Executive Assistant to the Chief
Reviewed, Commissioner Hart, Clerk of the Commission

Tom Hart