

PORTSMOUTH POLICE COMMISSION
MINUTES OF THE FEBRUARY 23rd, 2021 POLICE COMMISSION
MEETING

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

***Remote Meeting via Zoom Conference Call**

Stefany Shaheen, Chair
Joseph Onosko, Commissioner
Thomas Hart, Commissioner

- I. **CALL TO ORDER:** Chairwoman Stefany Shaheen called the meeting to order at 5:33 p.m., following the non-public session. (A full recording of this meeting is available on the City’s website & City’s Youtube Channel.)

Present: Commissioners Shaheen, Hart and Onosko, Chief Mark Newport, Admin. Manager Karen Senecal, Exec. Assistant Jackie Burnett, members of the Department and the public.

- II. **PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE:** Commissioner Onosko led the Pledge of Allegiance.

The three Police Commissioners took a moment to recognize the life and career of Ret. Officer John Connors who sadly passed away last month at the age of 70. John served 42 years on the police force in various roles. A moment of silence was shared in his honor. The Commission offered their condolences to his wife, family and loved ones. He will be missed.

- III. **ACCEPTANCE OF THE MINUTES:** January 19th, 2021

Action: Commissioner Hart moved to accept the minutes of the January 19th, 2021 Police Commission Meeting as drafted.

Seconded by Commissioner Onosko.

On a unanimous roll call vote 3-0, motion passed.

- IV. **PUBLIC COMMENT:**

There being no one wishing to speak, Commissioner Shaheen closed the public comment section.

V. **UNFINISHED BUSINESS:** None.

VI. **NEW BUSINESS:**

A. POLICE COMMISSION:

1. Official Acknowledgement of Kathe Levesque's Years of Service

Commissioner Onosko commented on a terrific 5 ½ years working together and expressed great appreciation for the support she lent the Police Commission. He also recognized the incredible energy she put towards her work and her continued passion for volunteer work.

Kathe Levesque took a moment to thank the Commission and department for the recognition of her 22 years of service. Karen Senecal presented Kathe with an engraved clock to commemorate her hard work and dedication to the Portsmouth Police Department. Kathe commented that she'll display the clock in a prominent place in her home, with honor.

2. Official Acknowledgement of Chief Newport -formal appointment of Mark as Chief

The Chair commented that normally, we would more formally recognize these accomplishments with a ceremony and badge presentation; however, due to the pandemic, these must occur via Zoom. We plan to host a formal event to honor the Chief, and others, at a future public ceremony. In the meantime, the Commission publicly honored Mark's formal appointment to Chief of Police. Each Commissioner took a moment to share their excitement and appreciation for Chief Newport's willingness to step into this role and move the department forward.

Commissioner Onosko adding that Chief Newport is "a class act all around. We're delighted to have him."

Commissioner Hart said, "congratulations... you've jumped into it head first without hesitation... I really look forward to working with you."

Commissioner Shaheen commented "we're all grateful for the service and sacrifice, the leadership... it makes you feel proud to be part of a community that is willing to give so much to ensure peoples' safety and security."

Chief Newport thanked the Commission for their kind words and appreciates the Commission and the community for their support. He looks forward to leading the police department forward.

3. Official Acknowledgement of Captain Peracchi

The Chair recognized the depth and level of talent, across the board, is remarkable.

Commissioner Onosko echoed the Chair that the talent here at the department is incredible. With every interview, he is blown away by the talent – these officers are articulate, they see the big picture and have a great understanding on how to lead the next generation of officers.

Commissioner Hart reiterated what the other Commissioners said – to see the talent of this department is unbelievable, from patrol all the way up. It's rare and you don't necessarily see that at every agency. They take great pride in being a Portsmouth Police Officer. Chief Newport added that we have great employees here – everybody works hard. We have many leaders at this department. Shaheen – grateful for the leadership and sacrifice employees of the department lend to the community.

4. Official Acknowledgement of Lieutenant Aubin

The Commission shared their sentiments for both Lt Aubin and Capt. Peracchi (see above). They recognized Lt. Aubin's talent and willingness to step up and lead. The Commission wished Lt. Aubin well and have no doubt that he will excel in his new position.

5. Facilities Update

Chief Newport reported that the work continues on remediation of the 2nd floor Executive Wing (mold removal project). The contractors ran into some plumbing/HVAC issues as a result of the water damage behind the walls. They are working hard to resolve any issues that arise.

The Chair asked Chief whether resources have been held up as a result of the CIP planning process. Chief explained that the PD is utilizing the monies approved in the last CIP to address the current remediation project. We are looking at a new facility, as we plan for upcoming CIP for FY '22. We're hopeful it'll get approved. We're starting the process of having a site selection study performed to identify potential locations. Once that is complete, we can move forward with designing a facility.

6. Community Forum Update

Commissioner Onosko reported that great progress has been made, primarily with Lisa Wolford, Stephanie Hausman and Marta Hurgin. A second meeting will take place next week with The Center for Policing Equity. Next Tuesday, the Chair will be speaking with CAHOOTS, a community organization that increases collaboration with social service agencies to take the pressure off of police departments. The Commission is also interested in meeting with local social service agencies to talk about current levels of collaboration and future possibilities. A meeting with the Legal Department to talk more about court data gathering is also scheduled. Another update will be provided once the logistics are ironed out.

7. Budget Planning Process Review:

Karen Senecal reported that there is a public hearing on the preliminary police budget tomorrow evening at 4pm. The budget being presented upon is a result of two budget workshops with the Commission and a separate meeting between the PD and City Councilors Huda & Kennedy in early February. The PD will present a level services budget, as requested. The public is encouraged to attend and provide comment.

Commissioner Onosko commented that 2.7% of the 4.78 % is completely out of our hands based on the government initiative. Chief Newport added that there are no requests for new positions. We're just looking to maintain our contractual obligations.

The Chair commented that this process has been ongoing for many months now. There are serious facility needs and programming goals and objectives. The Commission also understand the times we're living in and are taking all of that into consideration in the budget request.

The Commissioners each provided examples of scenarios in which there was an increased need for police response/added stress on the department during the pandemic – all of this impacts the budget. They reiterated that is a 24/7/365 agency that has not had a break during the pandemic. Chief Newport described PPD's experience to Senator Maggie Hassan on a call last week and expressed to her the stress that Covid-19 has placed on our first responders and their families. The stress is high.

Commissioner Hart commented that on top of dealing with the pandemic, the police department employees have also been working through various disruptive building construction projects while maintaining service to the community.

The Chair gave Admin. Manager Karen Senecal a special thanks on her tireless work with the police budget. “We definitely couldn’t do it without you!”

B. CHIEF OF POLICE:

1. Commendations for Outstanding Police Work:

Chief Newport provided a description of a call for service that led to two Patrol Officers, Andrew Bridges and Rob Meyer, receiving Letters of Commendation for their heroic efforts. Their instincts and split-second actions during their response to a call of a suicidal female, who was actively hurting herself, ultimately saved her life that day. She was swiftly rendered aid, with the assistance of the FD, and connected with services to provide her with the help that she needed.

2. Thanks and Recognition

An individual involved in a car accident in Portsmouth wrote a letter of thanks to Officer Sean Kennedy for his assistance during their contact that day. The man stated that Officer Kennedy was very professional and took a lot of the stress out of the situation. He was incredibly grateful.

3. Accreditation Update

Jackie Burnett reported that there is currently a candidate for the Accreditation Manager position that is moving through the hiring process now. The department is hopeful she will successfully complete the process and assume the role in the very near future. Jackie also commented on the anticipation of an upcoming file review in May of 2021. A CALEA assessor will perform a “spot check” of the PD’s policies and supporting documentation to ensure continued compliance with industry best practices. If issues are discovered during the week-long review, they will be addressed and resubmitted for evaluation by the assessor for final approval.

4. Monthly Traffic Stats

Chief Newport reported that weather had an impact on traffic stats in January. This is the typical trend this time of year.

The Chair asked Chief Newport if there was a reporting mechanism or any way community members can alert each other when something like black ice is a factor?

Chief responded that officers are quick to notify DPW for response when black ice is determined. They also have the ability to contact NH DOT, as needed.

5. Financial Report – Karen Senecal

Karen Senecal reported that the PD is 61 % through fiscal year. That's 6.65% below where we should be at this point (good). Covid will likely net the department a surplus at the end of this fiscal year, which we'll be able to return to the City (good). Currently working to finish up the last quarter projection, which will be reported at the next regular Commission meeting - *anticipated projection.

a. Strategic Plan

In progress – currently working on updating the plan.

b. Grant Applications Update

The PD received a grant application for the VOCA grant. This pays partial funding for the Victim Witness Advocate's salary and benefits. The grant is due in April

c. Facilities Report

Air Quality Specialists have been monitoring throughout the mold remediation project.

VII. PATROL DIVISION:

A. This report was included in the 2-23-21 commission meeting packet.

VIII. COURT OFFICE REPORT:

A. This confidential report was included in the 2-23-21 commission meeting packet.

IX. MISCELLANEOUS/OTHER BUSINESS: None.

X. NEXT REGULAR MEETING:

The next regular commission meeting is scheduled for Tuesday, March 23rd, 2021 via Zoom, with the public session beginning at 5:30 p.m. An additional community forum progress update will be provided at that meeting.

The Commission provided closing remarks to thank Capt. Peracchi and Lt. Aubin for their willingness to lead in their new roles; for Kathe's 22 years of dedicated service to the department; and to commemorate the life of John Connors.

XI. MOTION TO ADJOURN:

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

Action: Commissioner Hart moved to adjourn the meeting at 6:16pm.
Seconded by Commissioner Onosko.
On a unanimous roll call vote 3-0, motion passed.

Special thanks to Jackie Burnett for her efforts thus far in her new role as
Exec. Asst.

END OF MEETING

Jackie

Respectfully Submitted By Jacqueline Burnett, Executive Assistant

Reviewed By Commissioner Harte, Clerk of the Commission

Tom Hart