



**CITY OF PORTSMOUTH, NEW HAMPSHIRE  
GOVERNANCE COMMITTEE  
MEETING MINUTES  
MONDAY, OCTOBER 31, 2022 – 10:00 a.m.  
Conference Room A  
City Hall Complex, 1 Junkins Avenue  
Portsmouth, NH 03801**

- 1. Welcome and Call to Order at 10:05 am**
- 2. Roll Call:** Councilor John Tabor, Councilor Vincent Lombardi and Councilor Kate Cook present. Also present was the Deputy City Manager / Deputy City Attorney Suzanne M. Woodland (by zoom) and City Attorney Susan Morrell.

- 3. Minutes**

Motion by Councilor Tabor to approve the October 17, 2022 minutes, seconded by Councilor Lombardi, all in favor.

- 4. Old Business**

- a. Parks and Green Spaces –**

Councilor Cook briefly explained that the Governance Committee has been discussing parks and green spaces and which committee, or committees might have oversight. Councilor Cook further explained that Eric Eby, the City's Transportation Engineer had been invited to the Governance Committee meeting to provide background and perspective on bike and pedestrian paths and spaces in the City.

Eric Eby discussed the 2014 Bicycle and Pedestrian Plan and the various projects that the City has underway, such as the Peverly Hill Road bicycle lane and multi-use path and sidewalk project and the implementation of traffic calming measures and bicycle facilities on Middle Road. The City Engineer stated that they are looking at projects that will increase connectivity between roads and paths.

Councilor Lombardi asked how to best take advantage of all the spaces that the City owns for low impact passive recreational use while also preserving nature and still providing access. Mr. Eby talked a bit of the rail trail and the green spaces that may be

access by that. Also explained that the City works to get links to other parcels and conservation areas through redevelopment and master planning.

Councilor Tabor stated that that bike infrastructure is being built slowly according to the input of the public such as on Peverly Hill Road and Maplewood Avenue. Further discussion of the master plan process, the Mayor's bike trip to showcase bike lanes/travel routes, and increasing awareness of the paths the City has. Mr. Eby indicated that it may be good to have a SABER representative on Parking Traffic and Safety.

Councilor Cook brought up that there is no committee dedicated specifically to green space and parks that do not have to do with recreation or conservation. Councilors discussed that there have been discussions of creating a parks committee or finding a mechanism to have more governance oversight. Mr. Eby provided some additional background on the role of the Technical Advisory Committee during the planning process. Councilor Lombardi pointed out that while the recreation board is a great asset, it is focused on spaces and programs that are more for organized sports activities. Discussion of active and passive uses of parks and how to increase parks and green spaces.

Maybe bring a representative of SABER and/or a member of Parking Traffic and Safety to the Committee for further discussion.

#### **b. Committees/Ordinances Review**

Councilor Tabor reviewed changes she made to the draft ordinance relative to shifting the timeline for appointments to various boards and commissions as well as updating outdated language to make it gender neutral. Also added language relative to alternates and to adjust length of terms "as permitted by law."

Additional comments by Councilors on the proposed changes to current draft. Councilor Lombardi emphasized the importance of strictly following term lengths regardless of how long or short people have been in the position (caution around appointments when there are vacancies).

Councilor Cook would like the input of former mayors and the New Hampshire Municipal Association along with the Legal Department.

## 5. New Business

### a. Donations Policy

Councilor Cook provided a summary of the questions and concerns that have arisen from time-time-time regarding the City's acceptance of donations and the City Council's process around those donations. She indicated that the Finance Director, Judie Belanger had been invited to attend the meeting to talk about the City's practices. Councilor Cook outlined the different types of donations received by the City. Some donations go straight into trusts. Other donations are monies that have stipulations or are directed to specific activities. Some donations are currently accepted by other bodies such as the School Board accepting donations on behalf of school related matters. Library Trustees accept their own donations. There are donations of physical items versus monies.

Councilor Cook outlined the various aspects that could be addressed by a donation policy: should the City Council still review and approve every donation that doesn't go before another elected body or should there be a dollar threshold; should there be a mechanism/set of standards to refuse donations (example given regarding the Sackler family gifts that are being returned from some institutions. Discussion of conflicts of interest.

Finance Director discussed the City of Dover's practice. She also referenced NH RSA 31:95-E which is applicable to towns but Dover has decided to follow (donations over \$5,000 must be approved by governing body).

Discussed best practices for fundraising for city projects and how to best handle fundraising events given the amount of cash that is donated.

Councilor Lombardi inquired whether there is a way to vote on donations as a group of donations rather than individually. Finance Director described several different ways in which the City Council could vote on multiple donations simultaneously.

Discussion Councilor Tabor expressed that he believes that donations should be visible to the public and that it is important for the City to be able to turn down donations.

Councilor Cook stated that she will collect donation policies from other departments such as police, school and library and that the committee will continue to stay in touch with the Finance Director.

## **b. Upcoming Committee Topics**

Councilor Cook pointed out that there are still several issues for discussion by the committee including the sidewalk policy and the conflict-of-interest language in Chapter 1.

Discussed whether Councilor Bagley should present his raised issues regarding Rule 43a at the Governance Committee or whether it should be left to City Council. Councilor Lombardi and Councilor Tabor indicated that it seems that discussion should continue at the City Council unless referred to the Governance Committee.

## **6. Public Comment**

Rick Becksted (commission and board appointments, terms and Planning Board membership)

Petra Huda (comments on draft ordinance regarding appointments for boards and commissions, dates of terms should be specified, residency and donations)

Paige Trace (transparency and trust)

Sue Sterry (cemetery ordinances and compliance and committee membership)

Brief response by the Deputy City Manager/Deputy City Attorney on several matters related to donation policies and practices, cemetery committee matters, and appointments to mayor's blue ribbon committees.

## **7. Adjournment**

Councilor Lombardi moved to adjourn, seconded by Councilor Tabor. All in favor, the meeting adjourned at 11:26 a.m.

Meeting Minutes prepared by  
Rueben Panderiot, Legal Department Intern, and  
Suzanne M. Woodland, Deputy City Manager / Deputy City Attorney

Approved by Governance Committee on: December 12, 2022