

**PORTSMOUTH POLICE COMMISSION**  
**MINUTES OF THE JANUARY 18<sup>th</sup>, 2022 POLICE COMMISSION**  
**MEETING**

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

**Stefany Shaheen, Chair**  
**Buzz Scherr, Commissioner**  
**Kate Coyle, Commissioner**

- I. **CALL TO ORDER:** The January 18<sup>th</sup>, 2022 monthly Police Commission meeting was called to order at 4:06 p.m. in the Wm. Mortimer Conference 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 (a, b & c).

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

**Seconded by Commissioner Coyle.**

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

Commissioner Shaheen:	“Aye.”
Commissioner Scherr:	“Aye.”
Commissioner Coyle:	“Aye.”

The motion passed to go into non-public session at 4:06 p.m.

**The public session was called back to order at 5:32 p.m. in the Eileen Dondero Foley Council Chambers.** (An archived video of the meeting is available on the city’s website and the city’s YouTube channel.)

**The following people were present:** Commissioners Shaheen, Scherr and Coyle, Chief Mark Newport, Business Ops. Manager Karen Senecal, Exec. Assistant Jackie Burnett, members of the Department and the public.

- II. **PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE:** Commissioner Coyle’s Family led the Pledge of Allegiance.

**III. MOTION TO SUSPEND THE AGENDA:**

The Chair asked for a motion to suspend the agenda and move to item #1 under the Chief's Report, Swearing-In Ceremony.

**Action: Commissioner Coyle moved** to suspend the agenda for the purpose noted above.

**Seconded by Commissioner Scherr.**

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

Commissioner Shaheen:	"Aye."
Commissioner Scherr:	"Aye."
Commissioner Coyle:	"Aye."

**Chief's Report: #1 – Swearing-In Ceremony**

Chief Newport administered the Sworn Officer Oath to the department's newest hires, Officer Cassidy Rohde and Officer John "Jeff" Rohde.

**Following the ceremony, the Chair resumed to the standard agenda, as written.**

**IV. ACCEPTANCE OF THE MINUTES OF THE MEETING HELD**

**ON:** December 21<sup>st</sup>, 2021

**Action: Commissioner Coyle moved** to accept the minutes of the December 21<sup>st</sup>, 2021 Police Commission Meeting.

**Seconded by Commissioner Scherr.**

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

Commissioner Shaheen:	"Aye"
Commissioner Scherr:	"Aye"
Commissioner Coyle:	"Aye"

**V. PUBLIC COMMENT:** (The entire meeting can be viewed online by going to the City's website and scrolling down the home page to "Recent Meeting Broadcast", or "City YouTube Channel..." which is in the blue box just below it.)

**Stephanie Hausman, New Castle Ave.** – Ms. Hausman looks forward to hearing the Commission's update on requested police reforms. She referenced the county's mobile crisis unit and looks forward to hearing more about the collaboration between them and the Portsmouth Police Department. Stephanie also requested a progress update regarding the prosecution intern's work.

**There being no further individuals wishing to speak, the public comment session has been closed.**

**VI. UNFINISHED BUSINESS:** None.

**VII. NEW BUSINESS:**

**A. POLICE COMMISSION:**

**1. Appointment of Commission Chair and Clerk for 2022**

**Action: Commissioner Scherr moved** that Commissioner Shaheen be appointed Chair of the Commission.

**Seconded by Coyle.**

**On a Voice Vote:** The motion passed as follows:

Commissioner Shaheen: "Abstain"

Commissioner Scherr: "Aye"

Commissioner Coyle: "Aye"

**Action: Commissioner Coyle moved** to appoint Commissioner Scherr as Clerk of the Commission.

**Seconded by Chairperson Shaheen.**

**On a Voice Vote:** The motion passed as follows:

Commissioner Shaheen: "Aye"

Commissioner Scherr: "Abstain"

Commissioner Coyle: "Aye"

**2. Representation on the City Ethics Committee**

- a.** As per City Ordinance, **Commissioner Kate Coyle** was chosen by lot to serve on the City of Portsmouth Ethics Committee for 2022.

**3. Facilities Update**

- a. Chief Newport reported** that mold remediation continues throughout the police building. Right now, remediation is ongoing within the Detective's wing. Asbestos abatement is anticipated. The City is moving forward with a new HVAC system which will have a dehumidification function to hopefully prevent dangerous mold growth.

**Commissioner Scherr asked** Chief Newport for a rough timeline for these projects. **Chief Newport stated** the timeline he's hoping for would be 4-6 weeks, depending upon what they come across. From there, remediation and abatement will move to the basement, dispatch center and the court office. If all goes according to plan, it could be completed by end of April.

**Chairperson Shaheen explained** the on-going work with the CIP (Capital Improvements Plan). The police department has funds allocated within that plan for continued upgrading to the police facilities as well as assessing opportunities for a new building and things like software/technology upgrades. **Chief Newport reminded** citizens that there will be a public hearing on this tomorrow evening.

#### 4. Review of Community Engagement Recommendations

**Chairperson Shaheen** touched upon many of these reform recommendation items that are occurring in real time. Former Police Commissioner Joe Onosko had fronted this oversight in the past and now Commissioner Scherr has offered to take on that role to ensure continued oversight, progress and coordination.

**Chief Newport provided** the Commission with an update on the police department's collaboration with the Seacoast Mental Health (SMH) mobile crisis unit. Since October of 2021, the police department has been participating in a "soft opening" with the Mobile Crisis Unit to work out the kinks prior to their January 2022 roll-out. Police officials continue to meet with SMH Director, Dennis Walker, on a weekly basis to discuss the ongoing collaborative efforts. The SMH Mobile Crisis Team is working diligently on increasing their staffing to adequately serve the needs of Rockingham County and will likely be at full complement within the next month or so. **Chief Newport reported that the** police department has utilized the SMH Mobile Crisis Unit in situations in which officers feel mental health services would be appropriate and so far everything has been running smoothly.

**Commissioner Scherr plans** to work with Seacoast Mental Health Director Dennis Walker and Lt. Keaveny to publish an article in the newspaper on how this collaboration has been going and where it's headed. **The Chair feel** it would be good to highlight the type of calls for service the mobile team will be responding to and what they're comfortable responding to. **Chief Newport agrees** that there is great value in keeping the community up-to-speed on this essential collaboration.

**Chairperson Shaheen proposed** the idea of pulling together a meeting for the sole purpose of highlighting the benefits of this program and would like to hold a public information session in the near future. All parties were in agreement.

5. **Next Steps on Community Engagement Recommendations**

a. **The Commission reviewed** an outline of “Improving Police Department Practices: A Collaborative Set of Recommendations Involving a Portsmouth Resident Advocacy Group, the Police Commission, and the Police Department”. The goal was to assign out each recommendation/task as to begin to establish a timeline. **The Commission asked** for an update on the work being performed by the UNH Grad Student who is Interning in the PD’s Prosecution Office. **Chief Newport plans** to follow-up with her and her supervising officer to provide an update on this request. **The Commission requested** a final report from the intern, perhaps a presentation on her findings at the next regular Police Commission Meeting.

- **Recommendation #1 & #2 related to data sharing/gathering via CAD/RMS software:** **Chief Newport reported** that the RFP (request for proposals) should be released by the end of the month. It is anticipated that a vendor will be identified by the end of March 2022.
- **Recommendation #3 Adopt a policy prohibiting NDAs in settlement agreements:** **Commissioner Scherr volunteered** to consult with City Attorney Bob Sullivan on this matter. He will provide an overview at the February 15<sup>th</sup> Police Commission meeting. **Chairperson Shaheen added** that in some circumstances the victim requests an NDA.
- **Recommendation #4 Posting PPD documents on the website:** **Chief Newport provided** an update on posting policies to the website – most are currently public and a handful are not; some will not be made public due to officer safety issues. Lt. Keaveny is working on generating a list of unposted policies and the reason(s) why.
- **Recommendation #5 Consider reorienting Police Commission priorities/suggested volunteer resident review panel:** **Chairperson Shaheen** will take the lead on this recommendation and plans to work with the City Attorney on a possible charter review.
- **Recommendation #5 d. Assess the feasibility of Body-Worn Cameras (BWCs):** **Commissioner Scherr stated** he would like PPD to take another look at body-worn cameras. He feels members of the community are interested, too, and feels pricing has gone down on the entire package, to include

storage which is the most expensive element. The Commission will look into funding made available due to recent legislation and potential grant funding opportunities. **Commissioner Coyle offered to champion this project.** She believes she can get creative on funding options that make the total cost of a BWC program more palatable. **Chairperson Shaheen voiced her concern** that this already visited and vetted item may be prioritized over the CAD/RMS project, which is incredibly pressing.

- **Recommendation #5 b. Improve complaint process; conduct surveys in marginalized communities:** Commissioner Scherr has offered to take lead on this recommendation and is interested in revisiting a more constructive and viable way to survey marginalized communities in Portsmouth.
- **Recommendation #5 e. Review of PPD's EES decision:** **Commissioner Scherr** would like to converse with Chief Newport and the AG's Office to learn more about the current protocols. He expressed his concern that there may not be enough specified criteria for who does and does not qualify for the list. Commissioner Scherr plans to report back to the Commission at the next public meeting (February 15<sup>th</sup>).
- **Recommendation #6, #7, #8 Encounter data analysis incorporated in officer performance evaluations; collect, analyze and publish prosecution data:** **Chairperson Shaheen asked** whether PPD was capable of pulling these data reports with the current dated CAD/RMS system? **Chief explained** the current CAD/RMS system does not allow for efficient compilation of this type of data and a new system would make this request possible.
- **Recommendation #9 Review of case outcome in officer performance evaluations and use of those outcomes for training and improvement efforts:** **Chief Newport plans** to bring this to contract negotiations. Contracts don't expire until June 30<sup>th</sup> of 2023, but we're trying to get the ball rolling on negotiations ASAP. **Chief Newport explained** that case outcomes are currently a part of the current performance evaluation process and any issues in training/performance is reviewed prior to the completion of an officer's performance evaluation.

- **Recommendation #10 relates to the CAD/RMS and looks at how the police department evaluates the cost of various resources:** Chairperson Shaheen explained that this is not something we can do now. The commission and police department could potentially bring in an outside resources expert to help research this further. Without a doubt, this would require further research.
- **Recommendation #12 is similar to #10, but pertains to calls and activities related to mental health issues:** Chairperson Shaheen is hoping that with the support of Seacoast Mental Health's (SMH) crisis response team, the police department will have more data that will help inform this work. Commissioner Scherr asked whether the department is able to provide a breakdown of monthly calls? Chief Newport explained the limitations of the current CAD/RMS software, explaining that it does not breakdown call type as much as would be useful; however, a new CAD/RMS could. Commissioners Scherr and Coyle made suggestions on what type of "person-in-crisis" calls they would like to review. The Chair added that it would be helpful to have a person-in-crisis report to review, much like Chief Newport provides monthly traffic stats report at each Police Commission meeting. The Chief explained that this would be difficult with the current CAD/RMS and may not portray what the Commission/PD is hoping it would. The Commissioners batted around ideas of how and what data could be pulled from the current database.
- **Recommendation #13 & #14 fall under the Seacoast Mental Health (SMH) umbrella:** The Chair would like the commission/PD to host a public information session on how the SMH mobile crisis unit is working thus far.
- **Recommendation #15/#16 tie into the budget process:** Per the Chair, these will be covered under the budget planning process portion of this meeting.

6. **Discussion of Budget Planning**

- a. **Karen Senecal reported** that the police department is working on developing a "status quo budget" (the jumping-off point to the budget process). Police department officials will soon meet with the City Manager to find out the PD's basis increase (COLA, health insurance, leave at term) over FY22 going into FY23. She

explained that it could be anywhere from a 3-5% increase with just the basis increase from year to year. Karen suggesting a budget work session for the week of February 7<sup>th</sup>, as this would give her time to update her preliminary budgetary numbers based on the meeting with City Manager Conard. A public hearing will take place the following week.

**B. CHIEF OF POLICE:**

**1. Swearing-In Ceremony**

- a. A motion was made to suspect the agenda to move this ceremony to the beginning of the meeting – see above.

**2. Donations**

a. Donation #1

A donation in the amount of \$2,500 from Portsmouth residents Paul Gormley & Kimi Iguchi for the Portsmouth Police Department.

**Action: Commissioner Scherr moved** to accept the 2,500 from Portsmouth residents Paul Gormley and Kimi Iguchi for the Portsmouth Police Department and forward to the City Council for their action.

**Seconded by Commissioner Coyle.**

**On a unanimous roll call vote 3-0, motion passed.** The vote was as follows:

Commissioner Shaheen:	“Aye.”
Commissioner Scherr:	“Aye.”
Commissioner Coyle:	“Aye.”

b. Donation #2:

A donation in the form of a \$15 Moe’s Italian Sandwiches gift card from Libby Giordano and everyone at Make-A-Wish for Capt. Michael Maloney for his efforts with one of their events last month.

**Action: Commissioner Scherr moved** to accept the \$15 Moe’s gift card for Capt. Michael Maloney of the Portsmouth Police Department and forward to the City Council for their action.

**Seconded by Commissioner Coyle.**

**On a unanimous roll call vote 3-0, motion passed.** The vote was as follows:

Commissioner Shaheen:	“Aye.”
Commissioner Scherr:	“Aye.”
Commissioner Coyle:	“Aye.”



**3. Monthly Traffic Stats**

- a. **Chief Newport reviewed** the traffic statistics from December of 2021. Chief provided an explanation for an increase in motor vehicle stops.

**4. Financial Report – Karen Senecal**

- a. This month, the department is 2% below the cap and remains in the black. Karen has cited higher than normal recruiting costs. If the department doesn't remain in the black for the remainder of FY22, a request may be made for access to supplemental funds, which would go before the City Council for discussion/approval. **Chief Newport explained** that overtime is contingent upon the needs presented within our community each year and provided the commission an example of recent events surrounding the Seacoast Repertory Theater. **Chairperson Shaheen added** that staffing shortages are not unique to the police department and are occurring nationwide, so this is no surprise. **Commissioner Scherr asked** whether there are months that historically show higher overtime than others? **Chief stated** that summertime is typically the department's highest for overtime (events).
- b. Strategic Plan: Work in progress.
- c. Grants: The Business Office is currently working on the annual VOCA grant (Victims of Crime Act). The Victim Witness Advocate is paid by 3 sources: the VOCA grant, VAWA grant, and PPD budget funds, which do matches of both grants. **Chairperson Shaheen** took a moment to commend Karen for her efforts with the budget. **Commissioner Coyle pointed out** that the savings from previous years will make up for current budget deficit.

**VIII. PATROL DIVISION:**

- a. This report was included in the commission meeting packet.

**IX. COURT OFFICE REPORT:**

- a. This confidential report was included in the commission meeting packet.

**X. MISCELLANEOUS/OTHER BUSINESS:**

- a. Chairperson referenced the city's mask mandate and encouraged members of the public to continue to follow those guidelines.

**XI. NEXT REGULAR MEETING:**

The next commission meeting date is Tuesday, February 15<sup>th</sup>, 2022.

**XII. MOTION TO ADJOURN:**

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

**Action: Commissioner Scherr moved** the January 18<sup>th</sup>, 2022 monthly Police Commission Meeting be adjourned.

**Seconded by Commissioner Coyle.**

**On a Roll Call Vote:** The motion passed to adjourn the January 18<sup>th</sup>, 2022 monthly Police Commission Meeting at 6:43 pm. The vote was as follows:

Commissioner Shaheen:	“Aye”
Commissioner Scherr:	“Aye”
Commissioner Coyle:	“Aye”

END OF MEETING

*Jackie*

*Respectfully Submitted By Jacqueline Burnett, Executive Assistant*