

City of Portsmouth, New Hampshire Mayoral Blue-Ribbon Committee
Neighborhood Outreach Forum – Ward 5 Meeting Minutes
June 8, 2022, 6:30 PM at Conference Room A, City Hall

Committee attendance: Larry Cataldo, Kathleen Boduch, Elaine Apatang, Lori Soloway, William Gatchell and City Council member John Tabor

Panelists: Mayor Deaglan McEachern, Assistant Mayor Joanna Kelley, City Manager Karen Conard, fire Chief Todd Germain, Police Lt. Seth Tondreault and Public Works Director Peter Rice.

Other public officials attending: City Councilor Kate Cook, State Representative Jackie Cali-Pitt and State Representative Kate Murray.

The forum opened at 6:30 pm with CNC Chair Larry Cataldo welcoming the attendees (about 35) and panelists. He stressed the committee's mission: "Advocate for the neighborhoods within the City of Portsmouth." He then introduced Lori Soloway, Vice-chair and moderator of this forum.

Panelists' introductory remarks: Mayor Deaglan McEachern began by stating the role of each citizen to be able to address issues and problems face-to-face with city officials.

City Manager Karen Conard noted that the city has just received a triple A bond rating which allows \$679, 000 in savings to the city. She also addressed several budget issues.

Police Lt. Tondreault noted that the police force deals with many mental health calls. These can be very challenging to the first responders. He also covered the city's school violence/active shooter responses and recent drills the team has been holding. From national statistics, he said, only a small fraction is school related. Thus, training covers a variety of scenarios. He lives in Portsmouth, he said, has to deal with these same issues on a regular basis.

Fire Chief Todd Germain also mentioned receiving a high number of mental health calls adding up to 40% of their total citywide responses. He reported receiving a new aerial truck and a fire and rescue boat. Station 2 on Lafayette Road has a new emergency operation center.

Public Works Director Peter Rice spoke with a video slide show explaining current projects in ward 5 and elsewhere. He also addressed trash pick-up problems.

Questions and answers followed the remarks from the panelist and lasted almost an hour. Here is a list of questions and concerns raised by Ward 5 residents and several from other wards.

- Mental health issues especially in schools; is there a need to fortify the entrance of any school to prevent unwanted people from entering?
- The police department deserves high marks for their professional response to a mental health incident on Hancock Street.
- City debt and budget matters

- Who is responsible for upkeep and maintenance of Portsmouth cemeteries? The Cemetery Committee
- Road conditions (congestion), potholes and construction affecting traffic.
- Speeding in neighborhoods. Lt. Tondreault said the patrol officers are writing out tickets but that is not a strong deterrent. Traffic calming techniques work and tend to slow down traffic. He noted that the city receives zero dollars for fines paid for speeding.
- Parking problems in the downtown area and the possibility of resident permit parking
 - The permit program is complicated and must be addressed in a structured way.
 - Residents wanting a program should be well organized. Problems should be addressed with the Parking & Traffic Safety Committee
 - Where is the resident parking survey on Islington Creek parking permit pilot?
- Handicap parking during and following snow storms – are the regulations counter to state laws?
- Traffic noise especially from motorcycles. Karen Conard pointed out that Portsmouth's ordinance on noise is way ahead of other cities in the area.
- One resident said she really values where she lives.
- The questioner asked about "sounds from the park" and if sound levels would be controlled and sound direction managed for the benefit of the neighbors. The city's agreement with the arts festival has strict limits on decibel levels and a "green-yellow-red" panel for the sound system operator. The levels are monitored and logged.
- Bartlett Street intersection – is it still unsafe?
- The needed new police station could cost as much as \$42 million. It is desperately needed. Mayor McEachern said that we need to begin the public process to address this situation. Our police department deserves better.

The Forum concluded at 7:45 pm.

Youtube link: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=KKDur1z_sq8

Submitted by Steve Dunfey and Larry Cataldo