

073

**The Board of Fire Commissioners  
Portsmouth Fire Department**

Fire Station 2  
George Pierce Training Room  
September 10, 2024

Portsmouth, NH  
1800 hours

**I. Call to Order:**

Chairman Gamester called the meeting to order at 1800 hours.

Present were Commissioners: Richard Gamester, Jennifer Matthes and Michael Hughes; Fire Chief William McQuillen, Assistant Fire Chief Jason Gionet, Deputy Fire Chief Patrick Howe, Administrative Manager Tracy Freeman and Captain Mark Herrholz.

**II. Pledge of Allegiance with Attendance:**

Chairman Gamester led the pledge of allegiance.

**III. Approval of Minutes of Previous Meeting:**

*Motion, to approve the minutes of August 13, 2024, was made by Commissioner Matthes. Motion was seconded by Commissioner Hughes and passed unanimously.*

**IV. Public Comment Session: None.**

**V. Presentation of Written Communications:**

Chief McQuillen read thank you note received from Nancy Cassidy on behalf of Sail Portsmouth offering sincere thanks for assistance in their recent Tall Ship event.

*Motion, to accept and place on file, was made by Commissioner Matthes. Motion was seconded by Commissioner Hughes and passed unanimously.*

**VI. Reports:**

**A. Fire Chief's Reports:**

*Commissioner Matthes motioned to discuss Chief's reports 24-064 through 24-067. Motion was seconded by Commissioner Hughes.*

Report (064), 2024 Response Report for August 2024. The report shows the department responding to 3984 calls year to date. There were 451 calls for the month of August: 131 Fire Calls and 320 Ambulance Calls. Chief noted that both ambulance & Fire calls were slightly down from last month. Chief spoke briefly about some of the activities for the month noting mutual aid to Rye for an overturned kayaker offshore, mutual aid to Dover for a 3<sup>rd</sup> alarm building

fire, a water rescue by the Wentworth bridge, Ambulance 1 to USCG to deploy on their boat for a medical aid call on a party boat located 35 miles offshore and for a 1<sup>st</sup> alarm building fire at Seacoast E-Bikes at 109 Gosling Road. Safety message noted Fire Prevention Week, October 6-12, 2024, and this year's focus being on working smoke alarms and the steps to make them work for you. Report (065), Fire and EMS Call Summary Reports, shows the department responded to 131 fire calls for the month of August and EMS activity was 320 for the month with the top three responses being for abdominal pain/problems, injury to head/scalp and weakness. There were 6 drug overdose/abuse and 76 non-transports. Report (066), FY25 Budget, Chief reviewed the budget reports with FY25 budget being only a couple of months in, with a slight surplus at this time. Report (067), Overtime Analysis, provided a breakdown of how overtime was used in the month of August along with a summary of what was charged to OT-Recall for the month.

*Motion, to accept Chief's Reports 24-064 through 24-067, was made by Commissioner Matthes. Motion was seconded by Commissioner Hughes and passed unanimously.*

**B. Staff Reports:**

Assistant Chief Gionet reported on facilities and operations happening within the department noting station 2 roof project has begun and in the design phase and ENE is working on repairing a heat pump in the heating system. The new ambulance contract has been signed and sent to the manufacturer and Truck 2 is back in service after having a pump repaired. In regards to personnel, we have one person currently in the hiring process and two new employees started this past week. With an uptick in marine calls, crews have been training on Marine 1 and new personnel are being brought up to speed on marine operations. National Registry EMS recertification cycle is coming up in March and we are working on the fall education schedule to meet the requirements for the recertification.

Deputy Chief Howe reported on Fire Prevention Activity noting 42 permits issued and 64 inspections done. Prevention Officer Putney and myself attended the Fire Inspectors Breakfast in New Castle and a 2021 Code Rollout class at the NH fire Academy and Prevention Officer Wheeler attended a Public Information Officer class hosted by Portsmouth Regional Hospital and a Hilti Fire Stopping class. Currently, Prevention Bureau is wrapping up site review on 1035 Lafayette Road which includes the renovation of a smaller structure on the property, an addition to an existing building and the construction of a 4-story, 44 unit residential building. We are also in the initial stages of permit review for the construction of a 2-story pharmaceutical manufacturing facility with a footprint of approx. 132K sq.ft. and a 2-story utility building with a footprint of approx. 17K sq.ft. located at Pease Tradeport.

**VII. Old Business: None.**

**VIII. New Business:**

Chief McQuillen spoke briefly about the 1950 Mack Fire Truck that former Fire Chief LeClaire tried to get refurbished. Funding ran short and there is no money left in account to service or continue renovations nor is there room to house the unit if restored. The truck is currently stored in three different places. The Department is looking to begin the process of disposal and going through the City's process to do so. Chief believes there is some interest from collectors if we do dispose of it but need the approval of the Commission to move forward.

*Commissioner Hughes made the motion to authorize the Chief to move forward in the process of disposing of the 1950 Mack. Motion was seconded by Commissioner Matthes and passed unanimously.*

Chief McQuillen spoke of the awarding of \$324,327 by the Federal Emergency Management Agency Fire Act Grant to the City of Portsmouth Fire Department who will act as the fiscal agent for the mutual aid district, Seacoast Chief Fire Officers Association, where the grant will be used to teach the same Incident Command System program to all the Fire Chiefs and Company Officers in the 40 department catchment area. This same program is being used in Essex County MA and in the Portland ME area and we hope this tool will be utilized to create greater efficiencies on the fire ground to make it a safer operating environment. Chief added that due to the 30-day grant acceptance timeframe, the City Council was forwarded a copy of the grant award for acceptance at their September 3<sup>rd</sup> meeting however, still needed approval/acceptance by the Fire Commission to move forward.

*Motion, to accept the Fire Acts Grant award of \$324,327, was made by Commissioner Matthes. Motion was seconded by Commissioner Hughes and passed unanimously.*

Chief McQuillen spoke on the proposed Special Event or Assembly Staffing policy to establish fire department guidelines for the staffing of planned events in the City. This policy will also bring awareness of events occurring within the City to all parties, not just the fire department. The proposed policy does have the Portsmouth Fire Department determining whether there is a need for a medical and/or fire standby when considering relevant factors impacting the safety and/or wellbeing of event participants and staff. The recommended minimum event staffing follows FEMA guidelines. FEMA does not have a recommendation for events under 500 so the Fire Chief, or his designee, would have discretion on what requirements would be needed for events under 500 and would also have the authority to change the requirements for this policy at his/her discretion.

*Motion, to approve the Special Event or Assembly Staffing policy as set forth by the Fire Chief, was made by Commissioner Hughes. Motion was seconded by Commissioner Matthes. Commissioner Gamester No. Commissioners Matthes and Hughes Yes. Motion passes 2-1.*

Chief McQuillen read the thank you letter he received from Allen Hawthorne accompanying his donation of a \$100 to the department.

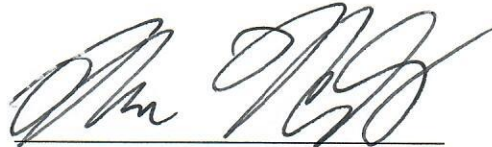
*Motion, to accept the \$100 donation from Allan Hawthorne with great appreciation, was made by Commissioner Hughes. Motion was seconded by Commissioner Matthes and passed unanimously.*

Chief McQuillen received Firefighter McKendry's letter of intent to retire on October 31, 2024. Firefighter McKendry has served the City of Portsmouth and the community for the past 32 years.

*Motion, to accept Firefighter McKendry's retirement letter with regret and thanks for a job well done, was made by Commissioner Hughes. Motion was seconded by Commissioner Matthes and passed unanimously.*

**IX. Adjournment:**

*Motion, to adjourn at 1852 hours, was made by Commissioner Matthes. Motion was seconded by Commissioner Hughes and passed unanimously.*

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Michael Hughes", written over a horizontal line.

Michael Hughes, Clerk