

This City of Portsmouth Community Newsletter includes information about City-sponsored events, projects and special announcements. Visit www.cityofportsmouth.com to join the distribution list, or be removed.
– City Manager John P. Bohenko

EARLY RELEASE

Today (Dec. 12) is an early release day for Portsmouth schools.

HOLIDAY CONCERTS

The Middle School Concert is tomorrow (Dec. 13) at 7 p.m. in the Portsmouth High School auditorium (snow date Friday, Dec. 14). The All-City Concert is next Wednesday, Dec. 19, at 7 p.m. in the PHS auditorium (snow date Dec. 20). It will feature the PHS performing groups, and the elementary school choral and band groups.

FREE PARKING

Parking is free at downtown meters from now until the day after Christmas, thanks to the City Council. However, the posted time limits are enforced. For more time, consider the High-Hanover Parking Facility. Many merchants offer up to four hours of free parking at the High-Hanover garage as part of the Downtown Parking Validation Program. These merchants have a blue “P” sticker in their storefront window. Contact: 766-1440.

HELP YOUR NEIGHBORS

Every year, the Welfare Department receives requests from needy Portsmouth residents seeking help to buy holiday gifts for their children who do not qualify for other traditional holiday assistance programs. There are more requests than ever this year, but fewer donations. Please consider donating a gift card for \$5, \$10, \$15 but no more than \$25 to help these families. Contact Welfare at 610-7267 or etully@ch.cityofportsmouth.com.

HOLIDAY REMINDER

Chief Michael Magnant and the men and women of the Portsmouth Police Department remind everyone to drink responsibly, especially during the holidays. Use a designated driver, utilize public transportation, or call a cab if you drink alcohol. Even if you are not planning to drive, please be mindful that problems also occur when people drink too much even when they are not driving. The Police Department wants to make this holiday season the safest one for our community. Please help them accomplish that goal.

SNOW BAN INFO

When a storm drops two inches of snow or more, the City may declare a ban on on-street parking to facilitate snow removal. The Public Works Department announces the ban on Cable Channel 22, through a recording on the snow phone at 766-7669 (SNO-SNOW), at www.cityofportsmouth.com, in announcements in the local media and on signs at all entrances to the City. The ban’s end is announced the same way. A map of parking lots open during bans is at www.cityofportsmouth.com/transportation/snowbanparkinglots.htm or contact: 610-7229. Residents may obtain coupons to park for just \$3 at the High-Hanover Parking Facility during a snow ban or official snow removal period. Obtain the coupons now at the Parking Office at City Hall.

WRITE TO SANTA

Santa wants to hear from your children this holiday season. He will send a reply to any child who writes to him between now and Dec. 20. Letters should be sent to: Santa Claus at the North Pole, 135 Daniel Street, Portsmouth, NH, 03801. Make sure the letter includes a full name and return address so Santa can write back!

HOLIDAY EXPRESS -- UPDATED

Due to the weather predictions for Sunday (Dec. 16), the “Holiday Express” has been postponed to Sunday, Dec. 30. Tickets are on sale for \$6 at the City’s elementary schools. Buses will leave the elementary schools and Community Campus at 4 p.m. on Dec. 30 to transport children and their parents to the “North Pole,” where they will hear Chris Van Allsburg’s magical story of The Polar Express and enjoy hot chocolate and treats. Children must be accompanied by a parent, and board the “Express” at the location where their tickets are purchased. Expected return time to the schools and Community Campus is 6:30 p.m. Interested volunteers should contact Kent LaPage at 834-3083.

HOLIDAY DECORATING

Seventeen Portsmouth neighborhoods have signed up to be part of the Citywide Neighborhood Committee's annual Holiday House Decorating contest. Individual neighborhood contests will be judged by Saturday (Dec. 15) with a committee then judging the top three in each neighborhood. The citywide winners will be announced Dec. 19. Participating neighborhoods are listed at: www.cityofportsmouth.com/mayor/annualdecorating.htm but if your neighborhood isn't on the list and you'd still like to participate, contact Jim Melfi at 205-4594.

FIT GIFT

Both the Spinnaker Point Adult Recreation Center and the Indoor Pool are offering gift certificates for the holidays. Stop in at either facility and pick up gift certificates to help you and your loved ones stay fit.

CHRISTMAS CLOSINGS

City offices and the Library will be closed Dec. 24 and Dec. 25 for the Christmas holiday. Portsmouth schools are closed the week of Dec. 24 and reopen Wednesday, Jan. 2. The Connie Bean Center will be closed Dec. 24 and 25, but open the rest of the holiday week. Call 766-1483 for open court hours.

CHRISTMAS TRASH

There will be some changes to curbside collection related to the Christmas holiday. The Tuesday curbside collection of solid waste and recycling is rescheduled for Wednesday, Dec. 26. Christmas trees will be collected from the curbside from January 8 through January 19 on the same day that the trash and recyclables are collected. Residents also may bring Christmas trees to the Recycling Center for disposal. For hours and more info, see www.cityofportsmouth.com/publicworks/solidwaste-recycle-rc.htm.

VACATION BASKETBALL CAMPS

Registration is underway for the youth basketball camps for boys and girls in Grades 2 to 4 being held Dec. 27 and 28, and will continue until the camps are filled. Register at the Connie Bean Center. More info is at www.cityofportsmouth.com/recreation/programs-3.htm or call 766-1483.

PRESIDENTIAL PRIMARY INFO

Saturday, Dec. 29, is the final day to register to vote before the Jan. 8 Presidential Primary. The City Clerk's Office will take registrations from 8 a.m. until 4:30 p.m. through Friday, Dec. 28. The Board of Registrars will take registrations on Saturday, Dec. 29, 10 a.m. until noon, in City Hall Room 211. The Primary Day polls will be open from 8 a.m. to 7 p.m. Absentee ballots are expected to be available soon. Contact: 610-7245.

THURSDAY NIGHT FILMS

"Namesake," the 2006 film based on the best-selling novel by Jhumpa Lahiri about an Indian family's move from Calcutta to New York, will be shown free tomorrow night (Dec. 13) in the Library's Levenson room as part of the Thursday evening series. For more info, see www.cityofportsmouth.com/library/lib-programs-films.htm.

SWIM LESSONS

Registration is underway for January and February swim lessons at the Indoor Pool. Non-residents may register beginning Monday (Dec. 17). All levels will be offered. Most lessons are on Tuesdays and Thursdays, but some Saturday morning classes are available. Sign up at the Indoor Pool during normal pool hours. The schedule and more info are at www.cityofportsmouth.com/recreation/indoor.htm or call 427-1546.

MERCURY RECYCLING

The City is adding mercury-containing products, such as fluorescent light bulbs and thermometers, to the list of items that must be recycled due to a new State law banning their disposal in landfills and incinerators as of Jan. 1. The City has installed a box at the Recycling Center at 680 Peverly Hill Road that is specifically designed for collecting the products and safely shipping them to a recycling vendor. The new law also bans disposal of these mercury-containing products: thermostats, cell batteries, and electrical switches and relays. Contact: 427-1530.

YARD WASTE

Curbside collection of yard waste has ended for 2007 but yard waste may be taken to the Recycling Center for disposal year-round. See www.cityofportsmouth.com/publicworks/solidwaste-recycle-rc.htm for recycling

information. Also, the Tuesday extended Recycling Center hours have ended for the year. Christmas trees will be picked up curbside Jan. 8 through Jan. 19.

ISLINGTON STREET CORRIDOR

The Economic Development Commission will hold a public meeting on the Islington Street Corridor Action Plan on Jan. 15, from 6:30 to 8:30 p.m. in the Library's Levenson Room. Consultants Richardson and Associates will present options and opportunities for action items based on analysis of public and City staff input, and past corridor study recommendations. Contact: 610-7220.

BOARD OPENINGS

There are three vacancies on the Taxi Commission, two on the Building Code Board of Appeals and one opening on the Economic Development Commission. Information on the City's volunteer boards and how to apply is at www.cityofportsmouth.com/cityclerk/boardscommissions.htm.

Did you know...?

The Library offers free and discounted passes to a number of museums in the region. Museums include the Portsmouth and Portland Children's Museums, the Museum of Science and Museum of Art in Boston, and the Seacoast Science Center. To see the full list, visit www.cityofportsmouth.com/library/MuseumPasses.htm. It's a good idea to reserve passes in advance, especially for weekend and vacation-week use. Contact: 427-1540.

MEETINGS: To see a list of upcoming City-related meetings, agendas for future meetings and minutes of past meetings, always check the City's Web site, www.CityofPortsmouth.com, or the Meetings Calendar at www.cityofportsmouth.com/calendar/2007/index.htm.

HOURS: Portsmouth City Hall (431-2000) is open from 8 a.m.-4:30 p.m. The School Department Central Office (431-5080) is open from 8 a.m. until 4 p.m. Library hours are: 9 a.m.-9 p.m. Monday through Thursday; 9 a.m.-5:30 p.m. Friday; 9 a.m.-5 p.m. Saturday; and closed Sunday.

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