



PORTSMOUTH CITYWIDE NEIGHBORHOOD COMMITTEE
CONFERENCE ROOM A, CITY HALL
MEETING MINUTES
OCTOBER 19, 2023

Elaine Apatang, Co-chair, called the meeting to order at 6:32

In attendance: Elaine Apatang, Peter Somssich - Co-chair, Kathleen Boduch -Secretary, Will Gatchell, Lori Soloway, and Councilor John Tabor; visitors from the community, including Joan Hamblet, representative from Ward 3.

SUGGESTION ABOUT HOLIDAY TREE LIGHTS – BUREAU FAMILY

To open the meeting, the Co-chair recognized the Bureau family that has suggested that the city change the white colored lights to multi-colored on the holiday tree in Market Square. They have spoken to officials of the city and begun collecting signatures and fund raising to cover the cost of the change. They are aiming to raise \$5,000 and collect 2,000 signatures. They intend to donate any extra funds raised to two charities, I Got Bridged and Smile Train. Their appearance at this meeting is a part of their effort to promote their idea. To sign the petition, visit www.change.org/p/bring-colored-christmas-lights-to-portsmouth-s-market-square.

VOTING INFORMATION - KELLI BARNABY & JUNE PHILBROOK, CITY CLERK'S OFFICE

Ms. Barnaby attended the meeting to remind residents that election day is Tuesday, November 7, 2023. Those eligible to vote must be 18 years of age and have proof of identity, ward residence and or citizenship. Polling places in the city are organized by ward. Voting hours are from 8 a.m. until 7 p.m.

Ward 1 residents vote at the New Franklin School, 1 Franklin Drive

Ward 2 residents vote at the Portsmouth Middle School, 155 Parrot Avenue

Ward 3 residents vote at the Portsmouth Senior Center, 125 Cottage

Ward 4 residents vote at the Dondero School, 32 Van Buren Avenue

Ward 5 residents vote at the Little Harbor School, 50 Clough Drive

If you need an absentee ballot, you may contact the clerk's office. Reasons for using an absentee ballot are: 1. Absent from the city that day, 2. Individual is incarcerated for misdemeanor or awaiting trial, 3. Claim observance of a religious commitment, 4. A disability, and 5. Employment obligation, to include the care of children and infirmed adults with or without compensation.

No date has been set yet for the Presidential Primary. To vote in the primary, you must have declared a party. The last day to change your party designation prior to the primary has passed. It was October 6th. Undeclared voters are permitted to vote in the presidential primary and must declare party affiliation at the polling location. Undeclared voters must visit the switchback table after casting their ballot to revert back to undeclared status, or they are required to stay with the party affiliation which they voted for in the primary election.

Students who are not registered may pick up a packet, fill out the forms. They may register on Election Day. Full details about voting can be found on the Portsmouth City web page under Departments/City Clerk. If you have questions, you may contact the office at 603-610-7207 or stop by City Hall, 1 Junkins Avenue, Portsmouth.

ABSENTEE BALLOTS FOR ELDERLY VOTERS—REP. JOAN HAMBLET

Joan has been asked to submit a bill to the legislature that would allow 85-90 and older voters to automatically qualify for absentee ballots. It is difficult for some of those residents to get to the polls and to go through the process for applying for an absentee ballot.

NATIONAL NIGHT OUT (NNO) SUMMARY—DETECTIVE SERGEANT BRIAN HOUDE

Sgt. Houde reported that NNO was considered a success by all participating departments. He created a visiting schedule that was shared with fire, public works, and city officials. Elaine calculated that approximately 1,119 residents attended the event and were joined by city staff with their equipment, including police cars, motorcycles, crime scene vans, the new comfort dog, drones, fire trucks and rescue vans, etc. It was an exciting day for all.

Neighborhood representatives suggested that the 5 p.m. starting time be adjusted to 5:30 to accommodate workers and children in daycare.

Congratulations were extended to Sgt. Houde for his recently receiving the NH Association of Chiefs of Police Community Involvement Award. Well done, Sgt. Houde!

CNC WARD 5 FORUM

Lori Soloway reported that the forum, although it addressed a smaller audience, was successful, with residents seeking answers to questions and information about current events in the ward. The next forum will be for Ward 2 in February 2024. Time and place will be announced.

CNC SPECIAL MEETING ON THE NEW HAMPSHIRE HOUSING SHORTAGE

Lecture with Natch Greyes, Government Affairs Counsel with the New Hampshire Municipal Association, regarding the status of the housing situation in NH and nationwide. Questions and discussion centered around what is driving this shortage: the effect of zoning, inflation, seasonal jobs, interest rates, the shortage of housing/building materials, rising costs, stagnant wages, lengthy process in obtaining permits, etc. It was mentioned that the backlog on housing in NH is currently 25,000 units and may rise as high as 60,000 by 2030. Additional needs were identified such as better transportation and public parking for workers.

HOLIDAY LIGHTS CONTEST & PARADE

Contest plans will be announced. The city will provide the prizes. Some CNC members will march in the Holiday Parade on December 2nd. Elaine will ask if any neighborhoods would like to join in.

IDEAS TO PROMOTE BETTER TRANSPORTATION

Peter Somssich has been talking with transportation experts and they are considering new ideas, including transportation loops, within the city. The discussion will continue.

GUEST SPEAKERS

Will Gatchell will ask those involved with the Skate Park and Rail Trail to speak at an upcoming CNC meeting.

The next Citywide Neighborhood Meeting will be held on Thursday, December 14th at 6:30 at Portsmouth City Hall in conference room A.

There being no further business, the meeting was adjourned at 7:45 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,
Kathleen Boduch, Secretary