

Portsmouth Town Council - Legislative Priorities 2023

The Portsmouth Town Council respectfully asks our legislators to support the following issues during the 2023 Legislative Session:

1. Reinstigate General Revenue Sharing to Cities and Towns

General revenue to Cities and Towns was cut by the Legislature in 2010 during the difficult budget years due to the crash of 2009. The past 3 years have seen budget surpluses of \$417, \$878 and Est. \$610 million over the past 3 years. Cities and Towns were forced to increase regressive property taxes to make up the reduction in State Revenue. The past Surpluses and Estimated 2023 Surplus allow the State to help relieve the burden of property taxes on the citizens.

2. Increase Funding Available to Schools

Again, with the estimated surplus in 2023, the State should be increasing the funds available to School Systems. The Pandemic has left our children behind 1-2 years where they should be in their respective learning progression. Further State Aid to schools would allow all school systems to invest in buildings, staff and most important highly effective teachers to help provide the support our children need.

3. Support for Alternative LNG Supply to Aquidneck Island

The 2019 outage showed just how fragile the LNG Supply to Aquidneck Island is. We all witnessed 2 weeks of families without heat and restaurants without gas supply to fuel their kitchens. The Legislature and Governor need to support and push for the installation of a secondary source onto the island to provide a looped system to provide a consistent supply. RI Energies current peak shaving system located in Portsmouth is not a viable or reliable long-term solution. The system on Old Mill Lane is located in a residential area and needs to be removed or relocated ASAP.

4. Prevailing Wage Law

R.I. Gen. Laws § 37-13-7 sets the threshold for paying prevailing wage at \$1000. The cost for smaller projects that can be performed by qualified individuals are excessively expensive due to the limit of \$1000. The threshold should be raised to \$100,000.

5. Broadband Service and poor service by Cox

The reliability of the Cox Broadband service was suspect at best; before the pandemic and has only gotten worse. Aquidneck Island is RI's main hospitality and defense revenue center for the State. We need better more reliable internet and Cox has not been able to provide a solution.

6. Pressure RIDOT with our issues of East Main Road, especially the intersection at Clement's and for sidewalks on Sprague Street.

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7. **Work with RIDEM to open more of Portsmouth waters to shell fishing.**
8. **Portsmouth support legislation for the creation of a Special Education Ombudsman Office.**

The bill would establish an office independent of RIDE where parents can bring their complaints when their child's rights have been violated and would begin to collect data allowing the State to see which districts are in compliance and which are not. The Special Education ombudsman bill was introduced 3 years ago by Lauren Carson and in the last session, the bill passed the Senate, but not the House due to their not being a line item in the budget for it.

9. **Enact a cannabis education to the driving school curriculum similar to what Massachusetts has done and is being supported by law enforcement**

Provide support and education for employers, particularly those in public safety roles. <https://www.mass.gov/news/massachusetts-adding-cannabis-education-to-driving-school-curriculum>

10. **Codify State rules for implementing the Financial Data Transparency Act (FDTA) of 2022**

On December 27, 2022, President Biden signed the FY2023 National Defense Authorization Act (NDAA). Title LVIII of this legislation enacted the Financial Data Transparency Act (FDTA) of 2022. The Government Finance Officers Association (GFOA) opposed this legislation due to its unnecessary burdens on states and municipalities. The GFOA's Statement on the Financial Data Transparency Act of 2022 can be found here: <https://www.gfoa.org/new-financial-reporting-requirements-proposed>. The RI General Assembly should codify standard rules for all municipalities based on this new legislation to promote consistency and proper implementation of its requirements. Funding for municipalities may also be necessary to accomplish this change.

11. **Real Estate Conveyance Tax R.I. Gen. Laws § 44-25-1**

The Municipality retains 47.83% of the Real Estate Conveyances, which is \$2.30 per \$500.00 collected. The State retains 52.17%. This is the rate for property selling prices \$800,000.00 or less. Any amount over \$800,000 the State retains 52.17%, of the \$2.30 per \$500.00 and the Municipality does not receive any additional funds. For example for a real estate purchase of \$1,000,000, the total real estate conveyance tax collected is \$4,600.00. The Municipality retains \$2,200.18 (based on the \$800,000), the State receives \$2,399.82 (based on the \$800,000) and then the State receives an additional \$920.00 for the amount over \$800,000.