

PORTSMOUTH TOWN COUNCIL MEETING
FEBRUARY 25, 2026 (Wednesday)
MINUTES
(Rescheduled from February 23, 2025 due to Blizzard)

6:30 PM – Town Council Chambers, Portsmouth Town Hall, 2200 East Main Road

MEMBERS PRESENT: David M. Gleason, Sondra Blank, Keith E. Hamilton, Mary A. McDowell, Sharlene Patton, Juan Carlos Payero, and David Reise

Time: 6:37 PM

EXECUTIVE SESSION – Motion to go into Executive Session under RIGL 42-46-5(a)(2) made by Mr. Gleason, seconded by Mr. Payero. Motion passed unanimously.

1. RIGL §42-46-5(a)(2) Sessions pertaining to collective bargaining or litigation, or work sessions pertaining to collective bargaining or litigation – Arruda v. Town of Portsmouth, NC-2025-0542
2. RIGL §42-46-5(a)(2) Sessions pertaining to collective bargaining or litigation, or work sessions pertaining to collective bargaining or litigation – Clarke v. Town of Portsmouth, NC-2025-0538 – One vote taken, passed unanimously in the affirmative.

ADJOURN – Motion to seal the minutes and return to open session made by Mr. Gleason, seconded by Mr. Payero. Motion passed unanimously.

Time: 6:50 PM

7:00 PM – Town Council Chambers, Portsmouth Town Hall, 2200 East Main Road

Time: 7:00

EMERGENCY EVACUATION PLAN

PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE

SITTING AS THE PORTSMOUTH TOWN COUNCIL

1. Roll Call

PRESIDENT'S EXECUTIVE SUMMARY – There was an executive session held under RIGL §42-46-5(a)(2), one vote was taken, passed unanimously in the affirmative.

CONSENT AGENDA – Motion to approve as presented made by Mr. Gleason, seconded by Mr. Payero. Motion passed unanimously.

Directions to view licensing applications: 1) Click [OpenGov](#), 2) Click Search, 3) Click Records, and then type in the record number listed on the agenda, 4) Click on the highlighted record to view the application.

1. Bills

Payment Voucher #1326 on 2/5/26 in the amount of \$137,298.48 as approved by the Finance Director

Payment Voucher #1333 on 2/12/26 in the amount of \$280,829.03 as approved by the Finance Director

2. Committee Minutes:

[Prudence Island Planning Commission 1/15/26](#)

[Portsmouth Conservation Commission 11/20/25](#)

[Portsmouth Board of Canvassers 1/20/26](#)

[Portsmouth Board of Canvassers 2/13/26](#)

3. Notice – Rhode Island Dept. of Environmental Management
DEM Freshwater Wetlands Program has under consideration the application (No. 7115) of Aquidneck Country Club, Inc., of 125 Corys Lane, Portsmouth, RI requesting permission to alter freshwater wetlands in the Town of Portsmouth. Notice period ends March 23, 2026.

MINUTES – Motion to approve 2/9/26 minutes as presented and update page 14 of audit presentation to website made by Mr. Gleason, seconded by Mr. Payero. Motion passed unanimously. Motion to approve 2/9/26 Executive minutes as presented made by Mr. Gleason, seconded by Mr. Payero. Motion passed unanimously.
2/9/26 & Exec.

TOWN ADMINISTRATOR’S REPORT

1. Budget update – Due to the storm, the bid response due date for auditing services for the Town has been extended to Monday, March 2nd. Bids are due by noon and will be opened at 12:30. We will start a second review of Town department budgets over the next two weeks. The School Committee held its first budget meeting on February 10th. The second meeting scheduled this week was canceled due to the storm. Their next meeting will be March 10th. Overall, the process is on schedule, and we plan to distribute the proposed budget March 27th.
2. Cities4Cities Initiative – I have been approached by representatives of an organization called Cities4Cities, which facilitates professional partnerships between U.S. municipalities and municipalities in Ukraine for the purpose of sharing best practices in local governance, emergency response, and community resilience. At this point, this is simply an introductory conversation. There is no proposed agreement, no financial commitment, and no policy role associated with it. My intent is to stay engaged at an informational level and to keep the Council advised should anything more formal ever be presented for your consideration.
3. March 6th Founders Day-Portsmouth Compact Ceremony – On Friday, March 6, from 11:00 a.m. to 1:00 p.m., the original Portsmouth Compact of 1638 will be here in Town on display. As you know, the Compact is the document that established our community and is widely recognized as one of the earliest examples of self-governance in what would become the United States. We are also expecting the Rhode Island Secretary of State to attend.
4. Rhode Island League of Cities and Towns Annual Convention – The RILCT Annual Convention is coming up on Thursday, March 19. There will be several training workshops on municipal issues, and it’s probably the best opportunity all year to connect with colleagues from other communities and with the state agencies and vendors we work with on a regular basis. Registration is open now, so if any Council members are interested in attending, just let me know.

Additionally, we appreciate everybody’s patience and support as we complete storm recovery operations. All roads are expected to be passable by the end of tonight. Tomorrow, Public Works will focus on snow removal to ensure road lanes are widened. From there, the department will focus on sidewalks. Our priority will be areas near the schools first. Out of an abundance of caution for the safety of students and buses, schools will be virtual tomorrow and Friday. The transfer station was opened today and will resume its normal weekly schedule tomorrow. Curbside collection will be one day delayed for Thursday and Friday routes. The Monday through Wednesday routes will resume next week.

Lastly, I would just like to take a moment to recognize the passing of our Town Historian, Jim Garman. Jim was one of those people who quietly made an enormous difference in this community. His knowledge of Portsmouth’s history was unmatched, but more importantly, he cared deeply about preserving it and sharing it with all of us. He was a valued partner to the Town, a tremendous resource to our boards and volunteers, and a true gentleman. On behalf of the administration, I want to extend our sincere condolences to Jim’s family and to everyone in the historical community who worked so closely with him. He will be greatly missed.

RESIGNATIONS AND APPOINTMENTS

1. Appointments:

Conservation Commission – Motion to reappoint Jeff Reise made by Mr. Gleason, seconded by Mr. Payero. Motion passed unanimously.

Planning Board – Motion to nominate Frank Rego made by Mr. Reise, seconded by Mr. Gleason. Motion to approve appointment made by Mr. Reise, seconded by Mr. Gleason. Motion passed 4-3. Mr. Hamilton, Ms. Blank and Mr. Payero in dissent.

Solid Waste Recycling Committee – Motion to appoint Peter Roberts made by Mr. Gleason, seconded by Mr. Payero. Motion passed unanimously.

OLD BUSINESS (Discussion/Action)

1. Request approval of legislative priority resolutions.

a. RhodeWorks Restore – Motion to approve made by Mr. Gleason, seconded by Mr. Payero. Motion passed unanimously.

TOWN OF PORTSMOUTH, RHODE ISLAND
RESOLUTION #2026-02-25 A

RESOLUTION REQUESTING CONTINUED FUNDING OF THE
RHODERESTORE PROGRAM IN THE STATE BUDGET

WHEREAS, the RhodeRestore Program was established in 2024 with the support of the Governor and the Rhode Island General Assembly to provide financial assistance to municipalities for local infrastructure improvements; and

WHEREAS, all thirty-nine (39) municipalities within the State of Rhode Island are eligible to voluntarily participate in the program, which provides a state funding match for municipal road, sidewalk, and bridge projects; and

WHEREAS, since its inception, the RhodeRestore Program has received continued support through the Governor’s annual budget proposals and legislative authorization; and

WHEREAS, the program enables municipalities to address critical infrastructure maintenance and rehabilitation needs that might otherwise be delayed due to local fiscal constraints; and

WHEREAS, sustained investment in municipal infrastructure promotes public safety, enhances resiliency, supports economic stability, and provides long-term cost efficiency for taxpayers.

NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED, that the Town Council of the Town of Portsmouth respectfully requests that the Governor include in the proposed Fiscal Year 2027 State Budget sufficient funding to continue the RhodeRestore Program; and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that the Town Council respectfully urges the Rhode Island General Assembly to reauthorize and appropriate the funding necessary to ensure the continuation of the RhodeRestore Program; and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that the Town Clerk is hereby directed to transmit certified copies of this Resolution to the Governor, the members of the Town’s Legislative Delegation, all municipalities within the State of Rhode Island, and the Rhode Island League of Cities and Towns, requesting their support and action during the 2026 Session of the Rhode Island General Assembly.

READ AND PASSED by the Town Council of the Town of Portsmouth this 25th day of February, 2026.

Keith E. Hamilton, Town Council President

ATTEST: _____
Jennifer M. West, CMC, Town Clerk

b. Public Boating Access Infrastructure – Motion to approve made by Mr. Gleason, seconded by Mr. Payero. Motion passed unanimously.

TOWN OF PORTSMOUTH, RHODE ISLAND
RESOLUTION #2026-02-25 B

RESOLUTION REQUESTING LEGISLATIVE ACTION TO CLARIFY AND
REAFFIRM STATE RESPONSIBILITY FOR PUBLIC BOATING ACCESS
INFRASTRUCTURE

WHEREAS, the Town of Portsmouth supports the preservation and enhancement of public access to Narragansett Bay through the reconstruction of the Weaver Cove Boat Ramp and associated dock facilities; and

WHEREAS, the Weaver Cove Boat Ramp serves residents of Portsmouth and the State of Rhode Island and includes public parking accommodations consisting of fifteen (15) trailer-designated spaces, twenty (20) additional vehicle spaces, and one (1) ADA-accessible van space; and

WHEREAS, the proposed reconstruction would reduce the angle of the existing ramp to improve safety and usability and reconfigure the dock to allow for safer loading and unloading of trailered vessels and access for non-motorized users, including kayakers and canoeists; and

WHEREAS, the Rhode Island Department of Environmental Management (“RIDEM”) retains responsibility for maintaining and repairing the ramp and dock pursuant to a recorded 1993 facility agreement; and

WHEREAS, municipalities across Rhode Island operate RIDEM-funded boat launch facilities yet frequently lack the financial capacity to absorb major capital repairs to ramps, piers, and in-water structures; and

WHEREAS, the absence of a consistent and reliable state funding mechanism for such repairs creates uncertainty, delays necessary improvements, and shifts financial burdens to municipalities for infrastructure serving regional and statewide public access needs.

NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED, that the Town Council of the Town of Portsmouth respectfully requests that the Rhode Island General Assembly enact legislation reaffirming and strengthening the State’s responsibility to maintain and repair public boating access infrastructure, including boat ramps, docks, piers, and related in-water structures where the State retains ownership or contractual responsibility; and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that the Town Council requests that the General Assembly clarify and standardize statewide the division of ownership, maintenance, and repair responsibilities between municipalities and RIDEM for public boat launch facilities; and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that the Town Council requests the establishment or reinstatement of a dedicated and sustainable state funding mechanism to support capital repairs and long-term stewardship of public boating access infrastructure; and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that clearly defined responsibilities and reliable funding are necessary to protect public access, preserve Rhode Island’s coastal recreation assets, and prevent the unintended shifting of major capital repair costs to municipalities; and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that the Town Clerk is hereby directed to transmit certified copies of this Resolution to the members of the Town’s Legislative Delegation, to all municipalities within the State of Rhode Island, and to the Rhode Island League of Cities and Towns, requesting their support and action during the 2026 Session of the Rhode Island General Assembly.

APPROVED BY TOWN COUNCIL ACTION ON this 25th day of February 2026.

Keith E. Hamilton, President
Portsmouth Town Council

ATTEST: _____
Jennifer M. West, CMC, Town Clerk

2. Discussion and adoption of the proposed policy establishing a consistent process for appointments and reappointments to decision-making boards: Planning Board, Zoning Board of Review, and Design Review Board. – Motion to approve as amended made by Mr. Gleason, seconded by Mr. Payero. Motion passed unanimously.
3. Monthly Finance Report. – Motion to receive and place on file made by Mr. Gleason, seconded by Mr. Payero. Motion passed unanimously.

NEW BUSINESS (Discussion/Action)

1. Request to renew Potter League Contract. – Motion to table until a future meeting made by Mr. Payero, seconded by Mr. Gleason. Motion passed unanimously.
2. Request approval of the Bike & Pedestrian Advisory Committee bylaws. – Motion to table until a future meeting and send back to the committee made by Mr. Payero, seconded by Mr. Gleason. Motion passed unanimously.
3. Request permission to sample stocked trout deployed in Upper Melville Pond over an 8 week period to quantify the rate of accumulation of PFAS. – Motion to approve made by Mr. Gleason, seconded by Mr. Payero. Motion passed unanimously.
4. Request to advertise for a public hearing for a sound variance to allow for live amplified music at Ragged Island Brewing Co, 54 Bristol Ferry Rd, through the summer. (OpenGov #9357 & 9358). – Motion to approve for public hearing on March 23, 2026, made by Mr. Gleason, seconded by Mr. Payero. Motion passed unanimously.
5. Request approval of a resolution in support of Rhode Island House Bill H7224 (2026 – An Act Relating to Towns and Cities – Award Of Municipal Contracts). – Motion to approve made by Mr. Gleason, seconded by Mr. Payero. Motion passed unanimously.

TOWN OF PORTSMOUTH
RESOLUTION #2026-02-25 C

RESOLUTION IN SUPPORT OF RHODE ISLAND HOUSE BILL H7224
(2026 – AN ACT RELATING TO TOWNS AND CITIES – AWARD OF
MUNICIPAL CONTRACTS)

WHEREAS, the Rhode Island General Assembly has introduced House Bill H7224 during the 2026 legislative session, entitled “An Act Relating to Towns and Cities – Award of Municipal Contracts,” which proposes amendments to statutory small purchase limits applicable to municipal procurement; and

WHEREAS, pursuant to current law, municipalities are limited to a maximum small purchase threshold of ten thousand dollars (\$10,000) for construction-related projects and five thousand dollars (\$5,000) for all other municipal purchases; and

WHEREAS, House Bill H7224 would increase such thresholds to twenty-five thousand dollars (\$25,000) for construction projects and ten thousand dollars (\$10,000) for non-construction municipal purchases; and

WHEREAS, adjustment of these thresholds reflects contemporary market costs and inflationary conditions and would better align statutory limits with present-day municipal purchasing realities; and

WHEREAS, increasing the small purchase limits would reduce administrative burdens, promote operational efficiency, expedite procurement processes, and allow municipalities to respond more effectively to public needs while maintaining appropriate internal controls and fiscal oversight; and

WHEREAS, the Town Council finds that statutory modifications that enhance local government

efficiency and flexibility, while preserving transparency and accountability, are in the best interests of the residents of the Town;

NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED that the Town Council of the Town of Portsmouth hereby expresses its support for House Bill H7224 (2026) and respectfully urges the Rhode Island General Assembly to enact said legislation; and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that this Resolution shall be made a part of the permanent records of the Town and shall be transmitted to the Town's members of the Rhode Island General Assembly, the Rhode Island League of Cities and Towns, and to all Rhode Island city and town councils.

WITNESS our hands and seal this 25th day of February, 2026.

Keith E. Hamilton
Portsmouth Town Council President

ATTEST: _____
Jennifer M. West, CMC, Town Clerk

6. Request support to declare any written and/or declarations from the past regarding any type of exclusivity by any/all Sports Groups to be null and void. – Motion to declare null and void and to direct the Administration to send a letter to all organizations telling them they must reserve fields through the Parks & Rec Dept. made by Mr. Gleason, seconded by Ms. Patton. Motion passed unanimously.

CORRESPONDENCE – Motion to receive and place on file made by Mr. Gleason, seconded by Mr. Payero. Motion passed unanimously.

1. Monthly RIRRC Report. / Rhode Island Resource Recovery Corp.
2. Resolution related to low and moderate income housing. / Tiverton Town Council
3. Resolution in support of Senate Bill S2275 & House Bill H7447 relating to low- and moderate-income housing – comprehensive permits. / West Greenwich Town Council
4. Resolution in support of House Bill 2026-H7127, section 6, enactment of R.I. General Laws 42-17.1-47 transfer of management of Big River Reservoir Lands to the Rhode Island Department of Environmental Management for use as open space. / West Greenwich Town Council
5. EFSB Docket No. SB-2021-04 Notice of LNG facility at Old Mill Lane provided additional natural gas supply to Aquidneck Island's natural gas distribution system on Feb. 8 & 9, 2026. / The Narragansett Electric Company d/b/a Rhode Island Energy
6. Resolution in opposition to Senate Bill 2026 – S 2389 and House Bill 2026 – H 7305 Relating to the Access to Public Records Act. / Burrillville Town Council
7. Resolution in support of Rhode Island House Bill 7356 and Senate Bill 2216 “School Employee Background Checks.” / Foster Town Council

FUTURE MEETINGS

- Mar 9 7:00 PM – Town Council Meeting
Mar 16 7:00 PM – Town Council Meeting – Public Hearing Sign Ordinance
Mar 23 7:00 PM – Town Council Meeting

ADJOURN – Motion to adjourn made by Mr. Gleason, seconded by Mr. Payero. Motion passed unanimously.

Time: 8:39 PM

Jennifer M. West, CMC, Town Clerk