

CITY OF PORTSMOUTH NH

Mayor's Blue Ribbon Committee on Sister Cities

Thursday, January 15, 2026

MEETING MINUTES

For the Zoom recording: <https://youtu.be/EhLS47Z2RWQ>

1. Old Business:

- a. **Update on Sister City Fund/ Next Steps** – Atty. Sullivan and Christine Friese are meeting with the Legal Department on January 22 to discuss the documentation supplied for setting up the fund.
- b. **Approval of minutes from December 16, 2025 meeting** – on a motion by Christine seconded by Mary Carey Foley.
- c. **Santarcangelo artwork: refer to Public Art Review Committee** – At the November meeting, Councilor Blalock reported that Mayor McEachern believes the Vaughan Mall redesign project is a logical place for the art installation and agreed that PARC should work on the project. Stephanie Seacord will forward the direction and supporting documentation to PARC.
- d. **Ordinance to establish Blue Ribbon Committee as permanent Sister City Committee** – Committee reviewed the language Councilor Blalock developed with City Attorney Susan Morrell and suggested adding the goal of Supporting the historical basis for the relationships. Councilor Blalock has included the draft in the packet for the January 20, 2026 City Council meeting and will introduce it with talking points discussed by the Committee and drafted by Seacord. The Council will consider the matter for First Reading at their February 2, 2026 meeting.

2. New Business

- a. **Explore Friendship City agreement with Halifax, Nova Scotia** – The information offered by Mayor Andy Fillmore on the Portsmouth UK Holiday call led the committee to think proposing an agreement made sense due to the parallels. Portsmouth NH does not have a Sister/Friendship City in Canada and shares both maritime/Navy considerations and history with the City. After leaving Portsmouth in 1775, Royal Governor John Wentworth wound up as Royal Governor in Halifax. Seacord will research whether Portsmouth NH was involved in the 1917 relief effort following the explosion

in Halifax Harbor on December 6. Mayor McEachern may be meeting in Boston with Mayor Fillmore in February to further trade relationships between Canada and NH – at the invitation of Senator Shaheen. The committee will supply a briefing memo on the Friendship City idea.

- b. **Boston** has deep connections with Halifax thanks to the city's relief efforts, they are not Sister Cities. Friese will explore inviting the Boston Sister City Committee for a future meeting.
- c. **Portsmouth UK choral concert participation by PHS** – Portsmouth UK has supplied the background information [<https://www.portsmouthmusichub.org/on-shining-waters>] which Seacord will share with Eric Gagnon in the PHS Music Department. Deadline for us to submit a video is June 1.
- d. **Lodging partnerships** -- Robert Conard suggested the committee explore lodging partnerships for future Sister City delegations so as to provide a more appropriate experience. Ben Van Camp will coordinate a discussion with Portsmouth lodging and transportation providers to see if we can define some options (and pricing tiers) we can share with future delegations from Portsmouth's Sister Cities.

3. Public Comment – none.

Next meeting February 19 at 5 pm.

Meeting adjourned at 5:51 pm on a motion by Van Camp seconded by Blalock.