



City of Portsmouth, NH Illuminated Holiday Parade

2026 PARADE RULES & REGS

Saturday, December 5, 2026

GENERAL PARADE RULES

- This is a large registration packet – please review the entire document.
- Walking, driving, bike riding, skate boarding, dancing, and general merriment allowed.
- Smoking, alcoholic beverages, controlled substances, firearms, mopeds, scooters, mini-bikes, segways, and 4-wheelers are prohibited.
- Bicyclists & scooters must wear a helmet and have lights and/or reflective materials on the bicycle for safety.
- Equestrian units must be illuminated, may not be left unattended, and must be followed by a clean up crew.
- Children must have adult supervision before, during and at the end of the parade. State law also requires there be at least one adult for every four children riding on a float.
- All vehicle operators must possess a valid driver's license and registration for the vehicle.
- Each entry application has a maximum of 3 vehicles (unless special permission is granted).

ILLUMINATION

This is an illuminated parade. It takes place in the dark. All units are required to have some form of illumination. The more festive, the better!

FLOATS & SPECIAL FLOAT RULES

- Floats defined as: Extra-large vehicles, vehicles pulling a trailer or a specialized vehicle, **MUST RECEIVE APPROVAL FROM PARADE COORDINATOR.**
- Float units are required to submit photos of trailer and platform for float. Must show wheels/platform relationship. *See rules about no protruding wheels.
- Returning units must confirm "same trailer from last year" or submit new photos.
- **No floats or towed trailers with wheels protruding beyond the footprint of the float platform will be allowed.** No exposed wheels. Fenders are not sufficient. Float platform must extend out farther than the wheels.
- Towed float trailers can be no longer than 23 feet long and flatbed trailers no longer than 29 feet. Floats shall be no more than 13 feet high from the ground and 9 feet wide.
- Participants SHALL NOT get on or off moving floats and walking participants SHALL NOT retrieve articles from floats.
- Portable generators must be securely mounted. Floats should be constructed with fire-retardant materials and must carry an all-purpose type ABC, 5-lb. fire extinguisher within reach of the driver. No open flames are permitted.
- At least one adult, other than the driver, must supervise children riding on vehicles and have a reasonable means of immediate communication with the driver. There "shall not be less than one adult per every 4 children and sufficient to ensure each child is visible to a supervising adult," per RSA 265:108-a.
- All participants on floats must be seated with a substantial barrier in front of them; sitting on the edge of the vehicle/float with arms and legs hanging off is prohibited.
- Standing participants must wear a safety belt to prevent falls from the float or vehicle.
- The name of the float-sponsoring organization or individual must be visible to the crowd. Commercially sponsored floats must promote the parade theme and not emphasize commerce.
- **FLOAT PARTICIPATION REQUIREMENTS:**
 - ☑ 1. Pictures or schematics of float (if pulling a trailer-- photos must show that wheels are not exposed).
 - ☑ 2. Proof of registration & insurance for trailer.
 - ☑ 3. Copy of the driver's license of the driver of the float unit. All drivers will be re-checked on parade night.

THEME

TBD

CANDY

Units may hand out candy and souvenirs along parade route but **NO ONE MAY TOSS OR THROW ANYTHING INTO THE CROWD. Violators will be removed from the parade.** These rules are in place to keep children from running into the parade route trying to chase some miss-tossed candy or from spectators being hit with thrown objects.

RAIN DATE

In the event of inclement weather, the parade will decide the best course of action.

All weather-related notices will be posted at www.CityofPortsmouth.com, Facebook at "Portsmouth NH Holiday Parade" and by calling 603.767.2697.

If the weather looks iffy, we scrutinize the forecast and radar. If rain and/or snow are predicted and cancelation/postponement is required for safety's sake, we will make the call on Friday, Dec 5. We have several marching bands with students, parents and school buses which require notification well ahead of time.

WITHDRAWAL FROM PARADE

Please be courteous and call, text or email to let us know: 603.767.2697 | bsullivan@portsmouthnh.gov

While last-minute cancellations are frowned upon, we would rather know - So text us if you can't make it.

PARADE SOCIAL MEDIA – FOLLOW FOR UPDATES

Facebook: Portsmouth NH Holiday Parade & Tree Lighting

Website: www.portsmouthnh.gov

AWARDS

Judging for the awards is done at the line up/staging area of the parade. Winners will be announced as they proceed through Market Square.

- ♦ Best Community Entry
- ♦ Most Creative Use of Illumination
- ♦ Mayor's Award
- ♦ Best Commercial Float
- ♦ Best Non-Profit Entry

DEADLINES FOR PARADE REGISTRATION

- **Mon, November 23 at 12:00pm** Deadline for all entries.
- No entries will be allowed following Monday, November 24. This is a parade with a specific line up and late entries logistically cannot be added.
 - *Float Units are advised to not wait until the last minute to register – there is a longer approval process.*
 - *Bands, we would love to see your registrations sooner rather than later.*

BEST PARADE EVER!

- The Portsmouth Illuminated Holiday Parade is the best parade thanks to YOUR participation. We typically host 70 groups which represents 110 units and 1,200 individuals. There are apx 10,000 spectators lining the route of the parade. We take the safety of the parade very seriously but also want it to be fun and enjoyable for the participants. Thank you for helping to make this parade the best yet!
- Always ask if you have a question. The parade coordinator is here to help.
- Be nice to street captains & volunteers!
- The parade coordinator works in Market Square on Parade night. She wears a crown and will be waving you into the Square.

ROUTE FOR PARTICIPANTS

For parade participants, the line up locations will be on the side streets along Islington Street between Plaza 800, CVS & Goodwin Park. Approximately one-week prior to the parade, all participants will be notified of their exact street line up location and arrival time. The line up list is why the parade registration deadline is so very important.

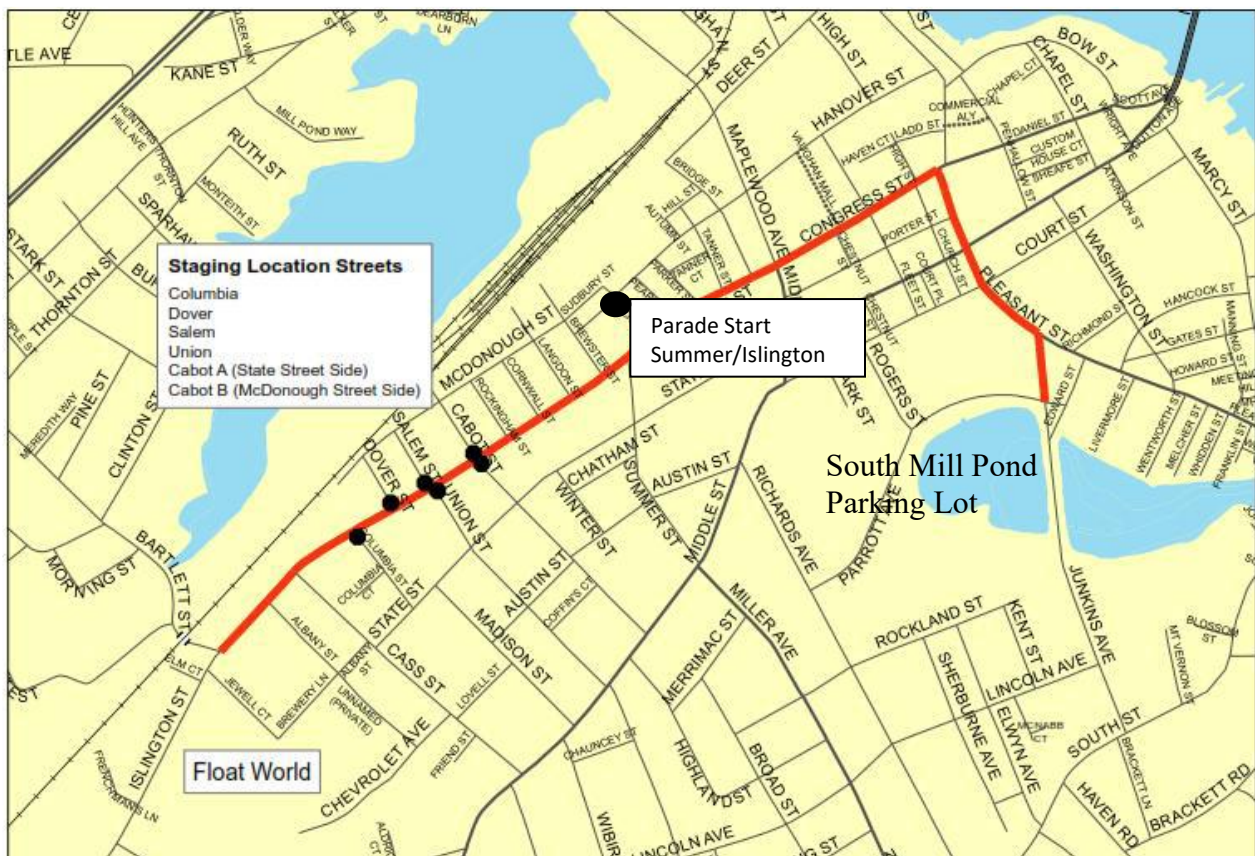
- The parade route officially begins at Summer St./Islington St and proceeds across Maplewood Ave and down Congress Street towards Market Square. The procession turns right onto Pleasant Street and right again onto Junkins Ave.
- Vehicles are not allowed to park along the parade route and will be towed at the owner's expense. Spectators line the route to watch the parade. Please note that the parade is most congested in Market Square and to take extra caution.

BEGINNING & END

- **BEGINNING:** Everyone must be in place by 5:30pm! Parade Units line up at their assigned side streets at an assigned time along Islington starting at Jewell Court (near CVS). Units will be fed into the parade at appropriate times from the unit's assigned side street. Parade volunteers, called Street Captains, are on-site to direct you.
 - 1) All entries must check in with staff wearing "Event Staff" jackets. Each street has a "Captain" wearing a jacket.
 - 2) No float or vehicle may be left unattended while waiting for the parade to begin.
 - 3) The award judging will take place prior to the start of the parade.
 - 4) All vehicle operators must possess valid driver's license and registration for the vehicle.
- **END:** The South Mill Pond Parking Lot has been designated as the end of parade for units to breakdown and arrange for pick ups. Additional space is available at the Lower City Hall Parking Lot across the street.

***PLEASE NOTE – It is best to map your line up location or do a drive by ahead of time.**

**On the night of parade, the parade coordinator is not on-call to help you find parking or your line up street.
Plan ahead for your group's parking at the beginning and the end of the parade.**





HOLIDAY PARADE REGISTRATION 2026

RETURN TO:

City of Portsmouth Holiday Parade - Attn: Brinn Sullivan

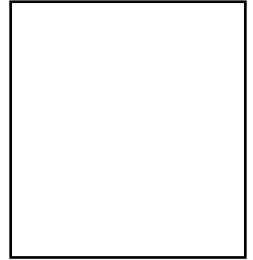
Mail or Drop-off:

Community Campus

100 Campus Drive

Portsmouth, NH 03801

bsullivan@portsmouthnh.gov | Cell: 603.767.2697



Person/Group/Organization Name: _____

Address: _____

Contact Person: _____ Email: _____

Phone: _____ Cell phone for Parade Day: _____

Website of Company (if applicable): _____

Socials: _____

TYPE OF ENTRY

☐ Walking Unit

☐ Band

☐ Float (any vehicle pulling a trailer)*

☐ Vehicle (how many): _____

☐ Equestrian

☐ Other (Describe): _____

*All float units must be pre-approved by parade coordinator

CATEGORY & FEES

☐ Non-Profit

☐ Community Organization/Group

☐ Commercial/Business

- **No fee:** Nonprofit, community organization, community group, family, student or neighborhood group
- **Entry Fee of \$45.00:** Corporate or commercial entry. Check payable to "City of Portsmouth"
- Deadline for registration form is November 23. No late entries will be accepted

LINE UP LOCATION

Do you need to be lined up next to a specific unit? Which one? _____

PHOTO CONSENT

☒ I hereby grant the City of Portsmouth permission to use my likeness in a photograph, video, or other digital media without payment or other consideration. I understand and agree that all photos will become the property of the City.

DESCRIPTION OF ENTRY

- Approximately how many people will participate in your entry? _____
- Will there be children riding on the vehicle/float? ☐ YES ☐ NO How many? _____
- How will your entry be illuminated?
- Sound? ☐ YES ☐ NO Describe any sound associated with your entry: _____
- Handing out items? ☐ YES ☐ NO Please describe items: _____ *no tossing of candy or items. Everything must be "handed out".
- Please note: No Santa Clause costumes allowed in the parade.

ANNOUNCEMENT OF ENTRY

- ☐ 2-3 sentences for the DJ to read as you process through Market Square. Use space below or type into email.
- ☐ Every unit must be announced. If you do not send a description, parade coordinator makes one up for you.

PARADE WAIVER – LIABILITY RELEASE

Applicants assume all responsibility for any loss or damage in connection with their participation in the parade. The City of Portsmouth will not be liable for any damage, theft, loss of property, or injury. The ultimate responsibility for safety lies with each parade participant. Participants must comply with these rules and follow all other applicable government laws and regulations, safety codes, manufacturer's recommendations, and similar standards necessary to safely operate vehicles, floats and equipment.

The City of Portsmouth reserves the right to remove any entry where safety measures are, in the opinion of City staff, inadequate and the right to disqualify any entry for failure to abide by safety regulations.

☒ Sign below to signify that your entry will follow the Parade Rules and Conditions per NH RSA 265:108a and Portsmouth Parade Committee requirements, as detailed on Pages 1 -5 of this form. *I have read and accept the terms set forth in the parade rules. By signing this application, I, for myself, my heirs, executors and administrators, release and hold harmless the City of Portsmouth, and its officials, employees and agents from and against any and all losses, claims, damages, injury or death arising out of or relating to any negligence as a result of my participation in the parade.*

Signature on behalf of the parade entry: _____ **Date:** _____

The City of Portsmouth is committed to offering a safe and enjoyable parade.
If you have any questions, please contact the Parade Coordinator, Brinn Sullivan.

603.767.2697 | bsullivan@portsmouthnh.gov

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- ☐ 2-3 sentences for the DJ to read as you process through Market Square.