

Prudence Island Planning Commission

Minutes from January 15, 2026

The regular meeting of the Prudence Island Planning Commission was held on January 15, 2026 at 7:00PM at the Hope Brown Center. Community attendance was available in person and via the electronic Zoom platform. The chair presided. Lisa Eagan recorded minutes.

The meeting was called to order by Chair John Spadaro at 7:00PM.

Roll call:

Present – John Spadaro, Lisa Eagan, Linda O’Brien and Pat Rossi.

Not Present - Henry Peter

Quorum was met. Public audience at Hope Brown Center: 4, Zoom audience: 22

Approval of Minutes: The minutes of the November meeting were approved

Chair’s Report

- Report on Town Council decision on PI Planning Commission bylaws:
 - New PIPC bylaws were approved at the January 12, 2026 Portsmouth Town Council Meeting with changes:
 - Section 3B- Appointment - PIPC draft included language that the PIPC would submit recommendations to the Town Council. This was struck as this is not the procedure used by the clerk’s office for all other Boards, Committees and Commissions.
 - Renumbering for clarity.
 - Article 1
 - Section 1.A

The new bylaws have been posted to the PI Planning Commission page on the town website.

- Appointments to fill PI Planning Commission vacancies to be made at January 26 Town Council meeting.

Following the standard process, the recent departures (Ray Naughton and Laurie Greaney) were formally accepted with regret by the Portsmouth Town Council at their January 12, 2026 meeting. In order to provide broad notice of the vacancy, standard practice they hold appointment of new members to the following meeting on January 26.

If anyone would like to fill out an application, you can find the form on the PortsmouthRI.gov website. Applications must be received at the town clerk's office in hard copy or via email no later than Noon on Tuesday 1/20/2026

- Update on the sign board at the ferry
We have received formal approval from the Homestead Plat Improvement Association to place a sign board announcing meetings, etc. on HPIA land adjacent to the ferry parking lot. I have a VERY rough first draft. If anyone with more talent than me for graphic design (ie ANYONE) wants to help make it look better, please let me know.... Email to PIPC@PIPlanningCommission.org

Officers' Reports-

Linda O'Brien - Vice Chair

- State received 156M over 5 years from federal Rural Health Transformation Program
- Portsmouth will receive funding due to Prudence and Hog Islands' classification as rural communities. PIVFD has been working with RI DOH on Mobile Integrated Health since last March - Community Health Program on island. Hope to build on existing program with new grant funds

Working Group Reports

- None

Community Updates

Portsmouth DPW - Paul Rodrigues Director, Portsmouth DPW

- Broadway paving - DPW has almost finished reviewing the plans to be returned to engineer to do next step of design
- Mill Creek - Scope of work with DEM for approval
- Cracks on Narragansett - Company selected for quotes to inspect the roadway and determine whether it will be a simple crack sealing or whether they will need to seal the entire roadway. Assessment to take place this winter. Work to take place this spring

Internet for All - via email from Daniela Fairchild - RI Commerce

- Process is moving forward. Working on agreements with subrecipients -

- TruAccess won the bid for Prudence. Over the air microwave link from mainland to the island - to fiber connections to each home. To be installed at no cost to the homeowner. Monthly cost \$45/month. Will service all residences on the island.
- There will be an option for Starlink with a monthly cost comparable to TruAccess rate. Upfront costs will be covered. Opting for Starlink will not preclude installation of a wired connection.
- Subawards to be completed by June. Installation work could begin as early as fall, otherwise work expected to start next spring.
- As soon as subawards work is complete, RI Commerce will hold a workshop for island residents

PIVFD - via email from Chief LePere

Our Mobile Integrated Health (MIH) Program has recently launched a new community-focused initiative: a weekly senior coffee social held on Tuesday mornings. This informal gathering is intended to reduce isolation, encourage wellness, and provide an opportunity for light health check-ins and conversation. Early feedback has been very positive.

From an operations standpoint, we are currently coordinating with the Rhode Island Department of Environmental Management (DEM) on a planned, weeklong prescribed burn on state-owned property. PIVFD will be supporting DEM with local coordination, safety oversight, and readiness should conditions require response. We will share public notifications once dates and conditions are finalized.

Additional items of note:

- Continued participation in community health outreach through scheduled MIH visits.
- Ongoing training for members to maintain operational readiness, particularly given the island's geographic isolation.
- Early planning efforts for the upcoming seasonal population increase to ensure adequate EMS and fire coverage.

NBNERR - Jon Mitchell NBNERR Stewardship Coordinator

- 1.2M grant for Mill Creek project was granted to DEM - Caitlin Chaffee (NBNERR Reserve Manager) has processed subaward paperwork and as reported by DPW this is now with the Town of Portsmouth

- NBNERR has identified work to be done on the TWharf. Will require new plans to be drawn up as existing plans are more than 10 years old. Hopefully will be able get to planning by the end of this calendar year and identify funding to do the actual work. Will go to public for feedback
- Maureen Dewire's (NBNERR Education Coordinator) Education programs operate year-round for school groups, community groups and the general public. In the past year there have been 87 programs with 850 participants. Notifications are primarily sent through Heard Around the Dock Facebook group
- New Telemetry station has been installed at Potter Cove dock - Water quality, temperature, pH, ... View the data from the NBNERR monitoring stations at the links below. Data has ~1 hour delay from 'real-time'.
 - Water quality at Potter Cove:
 - <https://cdmo.baruch.sc.edu/pwa/index.html?stationCode=NARPCWQ.html>
 - Water quality at T-Wharf =
 - <https://cdmo.baruch.sc.edu/PWA/index.html?stationCode=NARTBWQ.html>
 - Weather near Potter Cove =
 - <https://cdmo.baruch.sc.edu/pwa/index.html?stationCode=NARPCMET.html>
- New tidal monitor installed in Nag Creek - recording water levels
- If you've seen Wildlife cameras around - Kenny Raposa (NBNERR Research Coordinator) just published a paper with 25 other NERRs
- Forest Health Projects under way
 - Pine Barrens
 - Southern pine beetle
 - Thinning of pine barren forest for barren health
 - Funding from US Forest Service, DEM, Green bond passed by RI voters
 - Huge number of pine wood chips available
 - Pine barren work being done in the Desert and the south end
 - Oak forest by the school house - felling and removing dead oak killed by the spongy moth (gypsy moth) - Firewood available. Signed waiver required - see NBNERR site
 - Work in heritage property to continue through March 15
 - Took care of hazard trees on Broadway - Thanks from DPW
- Prescribed burns for a week some time in March - 2 full crews - all burns on South end.

Discussion:

Pat Rossi: Overwash on Neck Farm Rd. - Is this on NBNERR radar -

Jon Mitchell: no specific plans as yet.

John Spadaro - Paul, is the town doing anything on this

Paul Rodrigues - No

John Spadaro - PIPC needs to start working on this as this problem is getting worse.

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Old Business

Transfer Station Permits –

At our last meeting we discussed a proposal for a split 6 month permit - July-October, then May-June.

Town Council President Hamilton introduced the possibility of a flat \$150 fee for all PI residences for annual permit.

Updates since our last meeting:

- At the December 9 Portsmouth Town Council Meeting the Council requested additional information which was provided for the January 12, 2026 Town Council meeting.
- At the January 12, 2026 Town Council meeting Councilor Mary McDowell expressed concern about looming deficits in operations for ALL 3 Portsmouth trash programs (Curbside, Hedly St. Transfer Station, Prudence Island Transfer Station).
- The Council established an *ad hoc* committee to examine costs and expenses across all solid waste operations with representation from Town Council, DPW, Portsmouth Solid Waste/Recycling Committee and PIPC. Report due back to Town Council by 4/1.
- Thanks to Pat and Karen Stevenson for speaking at the January 12, 2026 Town Council meeting in support of the proposal to change current practice

Keith Hamilton - Fair warning... that the Council may want PI residents to cover full cost of operating the Transfer Station. As a result, the total cost may be closer to \$300 per household.

Spadaro - The *ad hoc* committee is seeking to understand total income and expense for all programs.

New Business –

Elections of PI Planning Commission Officers

Motion by Pat Rossi, second by Linda O'Brien: Hold off election of PI Planning Commission officers to the April 16, 2026 meeting when commission vacancies will have been filled. Motion was unanimously approved.

Next Meeting Dates – All meetings are at 7:00 pm at the Hope Brown Center and via Zoom

April 16, 2026
July 16, 2026
October 15, 2026

Motion to Adjourn made by Pat Rossi, seconded by Linda O'Brien.

Question by Pat Rossi regarding timing of report from Ad hoc committee.

Due by 4/1, though it will hopefully come sooner to be included in the town budget building process.

PIPC may want to call a special meeting when this report comes out in order to advise the Town Council.

Budget hearings (where the budget is formally approved by the Town Council) are during the last week of April. The PIPC meeting on April 16th will be in time to provide input to the budget process.

JSp: encourage participation in town council meetings. You can sign up on the town website to receive the agendas in advance. Meetings are Monday, agendas come out Wednesday afternoon

Motion to adjourn was unanimously approved. Meeting was adjourned at 7:44PM

Public Forum - An opportunity to discuss items of community interest that did not make the formal agenda.

No items raised for discussion

Minutes submitted by John Spadaro and Lisa Eagan - 2/8/2026