

## BUDGET REVIEW COMMITTEE

OCTOBER 6, 2021

A meeting of the Budget Review Committee was held Wednesday, October 6, 2021, at 7:00 p.m. in the Aldermanic Chamber and via Zoom which meeting link can be found on the agenda.

Alderman Richard A. Dowd, Chairman, Chairman, presided.

Members of Committee present: Alderman Richard A. Dowd, Chairman  
Alderman-at-Large Ben Clemons, Vice Chair (via Zoom)  
Alderman-at-Large Lori Wilshire  
Alderman-at-Large Michael B. O'Brien, Sr.  
Alderwoman-at-Large Shoshanna Kelly (via Zoom)  
Alderman Jan Schmidt (via Zoom)  
Alderman Ernest Jette

Members not in Attendance:

Also in Attendance: Alderwoman Elizabeth Lu  
Alderman Linda Harriott-Gathright  
Mayor Jim Donchess  
John Griffin, CFO  
Kim Kleiner, Administrative Services Director  
Dan Donovan, Chief Operating Officer for the Nashua School District  
Tim Cummings, Economic Development Director

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### ROLL CALL

### PUBLIC COMMENT

#### Chairman Dowd

Is there anyone that would like to have public comment on any item on the agenda this evening? I don't see anyone.

### COMMUNICATIONS - None

### UNFINISHED BUSINESS - None

### NEW BUSINESS – RESOLUTIONS

#### **R-21-173**

Endorsers: Mayor Jim Donchess  
Alderman-at-Large Michael B. O'Brien, Sr.  
Alderman Richard A. Dowd  
Alderman Thomas Lopez  
Alderman Linda Harriott-Gathright  
Alderman-at-Large Brandon Michael Laws  
Alderman Skip Cleaver  
Alderwoman-at-Large Shoshanna Kelly  
Alderman-at-Large Lori Wilshire

**APPROVING THE COST ITEMS OF A COLLECTIVE BARGAINING AGREEMENT BETWEEN THE NASHUA BOARD OF EDUCATION AND THE NASHUA TEACHERS' UNION, LOCAL #1044 AFT, AFL-CIO, UNIT B PARA-EDUCATORS FROM JULY 1, 2020 THROUGH JUNE 30, 2022 AND RELATED TRANSFERS**

**MOTION BY ALDERMAN O'BRIEN TO RECOMMEND FINAL PASSAGE, BY ROLL CALL**

ON THE QUESTION

Chairman Dowd

Is there anyone here from the School District to explain the overall contract?

Daniel Donovan, Chief Operating Officer for School District

Daniel Donovan the Chief Operating Officer for the School District. As Alderman O'Brien had mentioned, it's a two-year contract for July 1, 2020 through June 30, 2022. So basically one year is already over. It will be retroactive. Its two years with an increase of 2.1 percent with steps. This contract has many steps in it. So the total cost with steps of the salaries is 3.2 percent for both years. It rounds to 3.2 for both years.

Other than that as far as financial items, we did give an increase for those paras that have worked more than 30 years in the District. God bless them. They are getting an increase of \$500 in their longevity. There's about 14 of them at this point. Total it's about \$8,000 in total.

The other small cost item is that we have increased – when paras. cover for teachers when teachers are out either for an hour, or two, or potentially for a day, they get extra pay. It used to be \$5.00 for the first 30 minutes up to a maximum of \$38 a day. It is now \$6.00 for the first half hour up to a max of \$50 a day.

Other than that, they did accept the new language on the health insurance. Their slightly different in that the city pays 80 percent of a single plan. It does not pay 80 percent of a two person or family plan. There are limits. There are caps on those. The caps were decreased slightly in the negotiation but the new HMO language is intact as requested by the new plan.

Chairman Dowd

So looks like in FY21 there was a total increase in dollars on the contract of \$297,111. In FY22, it's less than that. It's \$287,777. I assume that's because of the health care costs went down.

Daniel Donovan, Chief Operating Officer for School District

Exactly.

Chairman Dowd

The question I always ask particularly in school contracts is that you had more than that amount put aside in contingency for contracts to cover this?

Daniel Donovan, Chief Operating Officer for School District

Actually we don't have contingency to cover the full amount of the salary but we do have open positions that will cover that.

Chairman Dowd

Okay. All right. Are there any questions for Mr. Donovan?

Alderman Jette

Thank you. I'm under the impression that our para-educators are underpaid. I don't know if that's true or not. Do you have any idea how our para-educators pay compares to para-educators in other districts in the State

or in the northern Massachusetts?

Daniel Donovan, Chief Operating Officer for School District

Typically we don't compare to Massachusetts. Most salaries in Massachusetts for public people are just higher in MA than they are in New Hampshire. We're right on the border so that complicates it slightly but trying to compare it to MA salaries, we're always typically well below MA salaries. I would suggest our para-educators are far from being overpaid. The starting salary even with this contract is a little less for a first year person with no experience a little less than \$15 an hour. So they're certainly not highly paid. I have not done an analysis compared to other districts in the area. I would point more towards underpaid than overpaid for sure.

Alderman Jette

Okay thank you.

Chairman Dowd

All set Alderman Jette?

Alderman Jette

Yes.

Chairman Dowd

I would point out that people working at McDonalds now make more than a para.

Alderman Jette

That's what I was afraid of.

Alderwoman Lu

Are you fully staffed on your paras?

Daniel Donovan, Chief Operating Officer for School District

No. At this point in time, probably 80 something paras understaffed versus what we have in the budget. It's been very difficult time finding paras.

Alderwoman Lu

Follow up please? What percentage is that?

Daniel Donovan, Chief Operating Officer for School District

I would say that's about 15 – 18 percent.

Alderwoman Lu

You mean we have 15 percent of what we feel we need?

Daniel Donovan, Chief Operating Officer for School District

What's budgeted, what we would like to have yes.

Alderwoman Lu

Thank you.

Daniel Donovan, Chief Operating Officer for School District

We have lots of – paras is the largest group but we have openings everywhere in the District. COVID has wreaked havoc on the workforce in the District.

Chairman Dowd

Follow up?

Alderwoman Lu

Just a thought. We are competing with – people we're hiring if they're in New Hampshire they're choosing to work in New Hampshire or in MA. I wonder if it's possible to do a comparison working in the factors of what additional taxes – what part of their income working in MA and living in NH takes away from your bottom line and that kind of thing. If we're short 85 percent of our workforce need, especially in the schools, I would hope that we've got a plan. Thank you.

Chairman Dowd

And this will be coming back before us again after they negotiate with the Board of Education midyear, right? This only goes until July?

Daniel Donovan, Chief Operating Officer for School District

Yes. This carries us through this school year and then we'll begin to negotiate again.

Chairman Dowd

Okay. Are there any other questions?

Mayor Donchess

I think this is a very good contract. These people work very hard. A great value for the city for the School District. We do have these paras. that worked for 35 years and they don't make much money. I think we should approve this and begin negotiating for the next contract.

Daniel Donovan, Chief Operating Officer for School District

Thank you.

Chairman Dowd

All right if there are no other questions, the motion on the floor is to recommend to the full Board final passage of R-21-173 Approving the Cost Items of a Collective Bargaining Agreement Between the Nashua Board of Education and the Nashua Teachers' Union, Local #1044 Aft, AFL-CIO, Unit B Para-Educators from July 1, 2020 through June 30, 2022 and Related Transfers.

A viva voce roll call was taken which resulted as follows:

Yea: Alderman Clemons, Alderman Schmidt, Alderman Jette, Alderman Wilshire Alderman O'Brien, Alderwoman Kelly, Alderman Dowd	7
Nay:	0

## **MOTION CARRIED**

NEW BUSINESS – ORDINANCES - None

TABLED IN COMMITTEE - None

GENERAL DISCUSSION - None

## PUBLIC COMMENT

Adam Marcoux

Good evening. My name is Adam Marcoux. I live at 4 Jolori Lane. I am President of the Nashua Teachers Union. I would like to thank the Committee for recommending final passage. I agree with a lot of things said here tonight about the paras. who do so much and work so hard for our District. The question was about comparisons with other Districts. The problem with that is it's not similar to teacher contracts across the State. Para contracts are very unique. For example in Hudson, the majority of those paras are part-time and have a different structure than our paras here in Nashua. So you're not always getting apples to apples in that sense.

Their health insurance continues to be a serious roadblock for us in maintaining paras when they are hired. Some of our paras even with the changes today when this goes into effect will still have to pay out of pocket additional expenses for their health insurance that is not covered in their paycheck. They are the only unit that I'm aware of in the City that does not have the same 80/20 split across that the teachers, food service, and secretaries have currently in other units in the City. So is there always work to be done? Yes. Is this the best contract ever? No but it is a fair deal that we worked out with the District and the Board.

We had a lot of obstacles negotiating this contract. We started this in 2019. There was no such thing as COVID-19 protocol. We got held up with that. We had some other major delays including the death of the chief negotiator for our side of the table which held things up a little bit, and some changes at central office, and then brought on Doctor McKinney and Mr. Donovan to close things up quickly. Thanked them for their participation in the process because when they came on board, things moved much quicker to get this settled. So we will be back hopefully before June to bring a new contract that's longer than a two-year deal but that's part of negotiating and we look forward to that process. Thank you.

Chairman Dowd

Thank you. Any other public comment? Seeing none.

## REMARKS BY THE ALDERMEN

Alderman O'Brien

Thank you Mr. Chairman. As many of you know in years past, my wife Diane did work as a para up at Broad Street School in the Special Education Department. This was within the pre-school program. Part of her job was to assist in getting the special needs children potty trained. These are kids that had some medical issues and everything. I just have to say in general to all the paras – some of them I know personally and everything – that they do yeoman work. Education in this city could not go on if teachers could not teach if they didn't have the structure of the para program to assist them. This is one of the first para contracts since I've been

on the Board that I could vote for because being a member of the Board with my wife employed as a para, I could not. I am excited that I could have my vote counted this evening for the yeoman work that this group has done to assist educating children in the City of Nashua. So thank you Mr. Chairman.

POSSIBLE NON-PUBLIC SESSION - None

ADJOURNMENT

**MOTION BY ALDERMAN O'BRIEN TO ADJOURN BY ROLL CALL**

A viva voce roll call was taken which resulted as follows:

Yea:	Alderman Clemons, Alderman Schmidt, Alderman Jette, Alderman Wilshire Alderman O'Brien, Alderwoman Kelly, Alderman Dowd	7
Nay:		0

**MOTION CARRIED**

The meeting was declared closed at 7:17 p.m.

Michael B. O'Brien, Sr., Committee Clerk