

A special meeting of the Board of Aldermen was held Tuesday, March 23, 2021, at 6:30 p.m. via Zoom teleconference.

President Lori Wilshire presided; City Clerk Susan K. Lovering recorded.

Prayer was offered by City Clerk Susan K. Lovering; Alderman Ernest A. Jette led in the Pledge to the Flag.

President Wilshire

As President of the Board of Aldermen, I find that due to the State of Emergency declared by the Governor as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic and in accordance with the Governor's Emergency Order #12 pursuant to Executive Order 2020-04, this public body is authorized to meet electronically.

Please note that there is no physical location to observe and listen contemporaneously to this meeting, which was authorized pursuant to the Governor's Emergency Order. However, in accordance with the Emergency Order, I am confirming that we are:

Providing public access to the meeting by telephone, with additional access possibilities by video or other electronic means:

To access Zoom, please refer to the agenda or the City's website for the meeting link.

To join by phone dial: 1-929-205-6099 Meeting ID: 898 8851 4603 Passcode: 347707

The public may also view the meeting via Channel 16.

We previously gave notice to the public of the necessary information for accessing the meeting, through public postings. Instructions have also been provided on the City of Nashua's website at www.nashuanh.gov and publicly noticed at City Hall and the Nashua Public Library.

If anyone has a problem accessing the meeting via phone or Channel 16, please call 603-821-2049 and they will help you connect.

In the event the public is unable to access the meeting via the methods mentioned above, the meeting will be adjourned and rescheduled. Please note that all votes that are taken during this meeting shall be done by roll call vote.

Let's start the meeting by taking a roll call attendance. When each member states their presence, please also state whether there is anyone in the room with you during this meeting, which is required under the Right-To-Know Law.

City Clerk Lovering called the roll and asked them to state the reason he or she could not attend, confirmed that they could hear the proceedings, and stated who was present with him or her.

The roll call was taken with 15 members of the Board of Aldermen present: Alderman Michael B. O'Brien, Sr., Alderman Patricia Klee, Alderwoman Shoshanna Kelly, Alderman Richard A. Dowd, Alderman June M. Caron, Alderman Benjamin Clemons, Alderman Thomas Lopez (arrived after roll call), Alderman David C. Tencza, Alderwoman Elizabeth Lu, Alderman Ernest Jette, Alderman Jan Schmidt, Alderman Brandon Michael Laws, Alderman Skip Cleaver (arrived after roll call), Alderman Linda Harriott-Gathright, Alderman Wilshire.

Mayor James W. Donchess, Corporation Counsel Steven A. Bolton, and Fire Chief Brian Rhodes were also in attendance.

ROLL CALL

Alderman O'Brien

I am present, I can hear the proceedings and I am home alone.

Alderman Klee

I am home alone, I can hear the proceedings and I am present.

Alderwoman Kelly

I am here, I am alone and I can hear everyone.

Alderman Dowd

Yes, I am present, I can hear the proceedings and I am here alone.

Alderman Caron

Yes, I am here, I can hear everything and I am alone.

Alderman Clemons

I am here, I can hear everyone and I am by myself.

Alderman Tencza

I am present, I am alone and I can hear everyone.

Alderwoman Lu

I am here alone and I can hear you.

Alderman Jette

I am here alone and I can hear the proceedings.

Alderman Schmidt

I am here alone and can hear everyone.

Alderman Laws

I am here, I am alone and I can hear everyone.

Alderman Harriott-Gathright

I am present, I am in this room alone and I can hear everyone.

President Wilshire

I am here, I am alone and I am being drowned out by sirens in the background. So I don't know what that's all about and I can hear everyone. Thank you.

Susan Lovering, City Clerk

You have 13 in attendance.

President Wilshire

Thank you.

City Clerk Lovering

You're welcome.

President Wilshire

Also with us this evening is Mayor Donchess and Corporation Counsel Steve Bolton. We also have Fire Chief Brian Rhodes in attendance. Tonight we have a presentation on the Master Plan Study for Nashua Fire Rescue and I would like to recognize Fire Chief Brian Rhodes on the Master Plan Study for Nashua Fire Rescue. Chief?

PRESENTATION

Master Plan Study for Nashua Fire Rescue

President Wilshire recognized Fire Chief Brian Rhodes on the Master Plan Study for Nashua Fire Rescue.

Brian Rhodes, Nashua Fire Chief

Good evening. Thank you to all of you for taking this extra time tonight to hear the final results of this Master Plan Study. So I'd be remiss if I didn't thank you again for your support, the Board and the Mayor that allowed us to proceed with this Master Plan. It is a pretty comprehensive document that takes a couple of readings to start to understand. But I think we are very happy with the process; it took a little longer than we wanted to due to COVID. Full disclosure, when the presenters come on, they are the two principals who conducted this study, when we first talked, they asked, "Is there anything in particular you are looking for", and we said, "No, we want you to come in and I want you to tell us what is good, what is bad and what is ugly with us", because that's the only way we are going to get better.

In this report, I think there are some good things, there are some things we can do better and there's some things that we need help with. So without further ado, I think what I'll do is I'll turn this over to Stuart McCutcheon and Mary-Ellen Harper from ESCI; let them present to you. If you have any questions when this is over, I'd be glad to answer them.

Stuart McCutcheon, Director of Business Intelligence, ESCI

Alright, can everyone hear me OK?

President Wilshire

Yes.

Mr. McCutcheon

Thank you so much. My name is Stuart McCutcheon and I have with me Mary-Ellen Harper. We are here to present the final findings and a presentation of the Master Plan. In this presentation, I am going to spend some time in the beginning covering some of the Department's performance and identifying trends so then when we get to the recommendations we have some of that little bit of background and hopefully answer some questions that otherwise would be difficult to know without seeing some of that data in front of you.

So with that, let me get my screen shared. So Mary-Ellen and I work for ESCI, the Director of Business Intelligence; she's the Director of Operations. Just a little bit on ESCI, I've been in the business for over 40 years with the consulting arm of the International Association of Fire Chiefs. In addition to Master Plan, we do community risk assessments, executive searches, hiring and testing, ISO benchmarking studies which was included as a separate piece of our contract with you all and Chief Rhodes has that. And really what we are here to do is to provide data driven approach so that when we find gaps or issues that need to be addressed, we can provide you all, the elected officials, with some 2 or 3 of the most feasible options. The data behind that to back it up and support it and then allow you all to make the best decision for your community.

So here is me, Director of Business Intelligence. Prior to working for ESCI I was the Chief at (inaudible) City Fire, which interesting point of fact, I found out later that Chief Rhodes' brother lives in (inaudible) City as well as also the Chief at Auburndale and the City of Davenport in Central Florida. And next I'll turn it over to Mary-Ellen quickly so she can introduce herself.

Mary-Ellen Harper, Director of Operations ESCI

My name is Mary-Ellen Harper. I am the Director of Operations for ESCI. Prior to coming to ESCI I spent 20 years in Connecticut as the Director of Fire & Rescue Services for the town of Farmington Fire Department. I've also done some teaching for the (inaudible) Fire Academy in New Haven, Fire State Fire College. And my interesting point of interest is that my sister actually lives in Nashua and she's been there for about 5 years and she's a teacher in the next town over. So it was really nice to be able to come back and work in a community where my own sister lives.

Mr. McCutcheon

Alright so just a little background, September 13, 2019 we were contracted to do a long-range Master Plan for Nashua. And as Chief Rhodes mentioned, we had a few months' hiatus there in the middle trying to figure out how to get the process back up and going again. But the main purpose for this was to evaluate the current operational service delivery, identify future service delivery and then to provide some recommendations for approving service delivery.

So this is just a quick snapshot of the call volume year-to-year from 2014 to 2019. If you look at the EMS you will see a spike there in the middle and that was due to the way that burn permits were being issued and also running additional calls that were not emergency in nature. After a couple of years of trying that the Department decided to go back to the way they were originally doing it and that returned that call volume back. But overall, call volume is gradually increasing year-over-year. About 60% of what the Fire Department does are emergency medical service responses. And then you see on the other side where we have fire it is about 2%, false alarms, good intent and service calls; those are all non-emergency calls to the Fire Department in addition to a lot of EMS. They also respond to a lot of incidents that are not emergency calls but they are still responses that they have to go to.

This is a quick map just showing you where incidents occur. So we took the incident locations, you are seeing a scale so dark green there was only 1 call within that 10 acre hexagon; red there are more than 250 calls. So you can see that in this downtown area is where the majority of your calls occur. But in addition to that, at the bottom right to the east of Station 3, there's quite a bit of call activity on the other side of the interstate as well as on the northside of the airport, there are pockets there were incident activity is greater than the surrounding areas. This is a hot spot map, it's just a different way of looking at the same information and it is showing that the majority for call concentration is happening downtown in-between stations 1, 2 and 4. And so this is what you would want to see that your stations are centered around where your activity is located so that way you can get your firefighters to the scene.

This is an estimates 4 and 8 minute travel time, NFPA 1710 is the industry standard for career fire department performance. So this is measuring or a model of how Nashua compared to that. So as you can see it is about maybe not quite 50% yellow and then the rest green. There are a few areas in the City of Nashua where travel times would be in excess of 8 minutes but they are either at the northwest or the southwest portions of the City.

This is part of ISO, the Insurance Services Organization, this is a different way to measure the same thing, but this is grabbing road miles within 1 ½ miles of your fire stations and comparing that to the overall road base. And so with your current deployment, you are at about 50% coverage and they are trying to estimate that same format of travel time.

This is an overview of your effective response force so you know a lot of times with fires, we might probably only need one engine or maybe two engines to pump water, the rest of it we need people. For a normal fire, around 17 to 18 to be able to conduct all the different tasks and operations that are going on simultaneously. And so in this, your dark colored area are the areas where you are getting between 20 and into 30 fire fighters to the scene, your very light areas you get 4 to 7 there within an 8 minute response. So while it's better to be able to get someone there than not at all, there are some areas particularly in the southwest part of the City where coverage is pretty light as far as the number of fire fighters you can get there.

Lastly, I am going to cover some of the Department's performance and this is, again, NFPA 1710, in New Hampshire when you call 911 all the calls go to the State Processing point to be then disseminated back to the cities. And so what I am going to show you would be sort of going through the data is the impact that that has on your performance. So this is the New Hampshire Emergency Communications Center. This is how long it takes them to process calls. The Industry Standard is 60 seconds for fire and EMS processing and overall at the State they are at 3 minutes, 11 seconds at the 90th percentile. So the reason we are using percentiles and not averages; averages are subject to outliers and can really sway one direction or another with a few outliers. The percentile performance is we are lining it up from the smallest to the largest times and then taking 90% of that. So they will perform at 3 minutes, 11 seconds for 90% of the calls and better and then the other 10% is going to be in excess of 3 minutes and 11 seconds.

Nashua, once they receive the call is processing the call within 1 minute and 3 seconds overall and so the NFPA 1710 calls for 60 seconds, 12 21 which is the one that's referenced from that is 64 seconds; so really once the City gets this information, they are doing an outstanding job. But we've got to keep in mind for the callers experiencing this, probably about 4 minutes has elapsed before that first unit is ever notified. Here is our total call processing time; 3 minutes and 32 seconds from the time it goes to New Hampshire until the time that Nashua is able to dispatch it. And then the next metric we are looking at is turnout time, this is we have received the notification, and how long does it take for the firefighters to get into the unit and begin to actually respond. So the standard is 60 seconds for EMS, 80 seconds for Fire and Special Operations. So at 3 minutes and 13 seconds, there is some good improvement that could be done. Anecdotally if you travel across the country, the fastest Departments we see are at about a minute and a half so really at 2 13 it is not that bad but it could be improved upon. And it's not just the Fire Fighters being slow getting to the vehicles, things like station design, the way the apparatus is staffed and a couple of other factors can effect these turn out times.

Next is travel time so this is from the time they get in the apparatus and begin responding until they get on scene. Overall it is 4 minutes and 48 seconds, the standard calls for 4 minutes, so I mean overall this is very good performance, you know, among the best we see. So I think this is a difficult measure to improve upon because you can only get there just so fast but what it does show is that your current deployment model is doing a pretty good job of meeting your demand. If in the future we begin to see this lag out and there's 5 minute travel time or 6 minutes, that would be something, again, to keep track of because what that is showing you is, is there's probably not enough units to service those calls or that the place where they are occurring there's not a station close enough to service that demand.

Here is a graphic of showing what your travel times look like overall just for a visual. So most of your incident demand is happening downtown and downtown you have very good travel time where we are seeing problems is between stations 3 and 4 down in the southeast and then north above the airport and then along the western border towards the south where travel times are beginning to reg out, mostly due to the location of the stations and the amount of travel they are doing to get there. Here's response time performance, I'll quickly breeze through a couple of these, this is turnout and travel. So 6 minutes, 47 seconds, again that's really pretty good performance. Total response times, this is just for Nashua so when you call 911 90% of the time or better, Nashua unit is going to arrive in 7 minutes and 15 seconds from the time that the Nashua dispatch center receives the call. When you factor in the state piece now we are at 9 minutes, 45 seconds. And so for folks to wait 10 minutes or more for the first unit to arrive shouldn't be a surprise because we are picking up around 3 minutes just before Nashua ever has the opportunity to do anything with the call to begin with. And so with that, I'll go ahead and turn it over to Mary-Ellen so she can present the summaries of the plan findings and cover the rest of the report. Mary-Ellen?

Ms. Harper

Thank you, Stuart. Good evening. I am going to try to move through this; it is a 175 page Master Plan, I want to be respectful of your time; I am going to hit the major points but certainly would be happy to take any questions about anything in the report when we are done. The first thing that I would like to say is that it was absolutely a pleasure to work with Nashua Fire Rescue. We do these projects all over the country and the level of engagement and the people that had thoughtful questions and were just willing to be part of a process for betterment of the system – you guys are second to none. You really have a good group of people that are doing good work and we would be remiss if we didn't mention that.

At the end of the day, Nashua is a very proud and very traditional New England Fire Department. Operationally, you are meeting most of the standards through the Provision of Fire Rescue Services. But as Stuart said a little while ago, that's right here and right now and today. You are going to need to monitor that going forward. You are a growing community, the demand for services is changing, the places people live and the kind of services they need is changing. You are going to need to monitor that going forward to make sure that what you have is still adequate because all indications are that at some point in the not-too-distant future you are going to need to add additional resources in the system just to maintain the service that you are giving right now.

That said, right now here and today, there are quite a few administrative and support functions that are woefully understaffed and we are going to spend a little time just showing you what those areas are and where there is absolutely room for improvement. The other thing I'd like to get on your radar is that the facilities for the Fire Department are absolutely going to require a financial investment in the very near future and we will talk about those as well.

So the first thing we want to talk about is Community Risk Reduction. Community Risk Reduction which include fire prevention but is above and beyond fire prevention. It's not just fires, it is medical calls and other types of emergencies, it is really the most vital non-emergency function in the fire service. And the reason for that is the safest emergency is the one that is prevented. So we can do anything as a community to help our residents not to get hurt, not to get injured, not to have property damage; that's what we owe them. We owe them the opportunity to try to prevent those damages before they happen. And we can do that in 5 major ways.

Emergency Response obviously is one of them. If something happens that you respond and try to fix it. But on the front end, there's plenty of opportunities with educating the public how to not get themselves in trouble, how to not cause problems. Engineering – things that we can do to build buildings safer so that when things do happen they are not as catastrophic. And then Code Enforcement and Economic Incentives, you can always reach somebody with Economic Incentives and having Codes and building procedures are absolutely a way that you are going to want to enforce things to keep them going. So with that in mind, we looked at the Nashua Fire Marshall's Division. They are primarily charged with the managing of this. Quite honestly, this Division is challenged in many different ways. They have coverage gaps within the amount of staffing they have and the hours they can cover. They have a lack of ability to perform inspections just because they don't have the staff that is required to deal with the workload that is on their plate. Staffing in general is a challenge at a Division where people promote in and then promote out; workload because you are a vibrant city, you are growing and moving forward things are happening which is a wonderful thing. But for every building that comes in there's plan reviews and inspections that happen in each division so all of this good work that's happening is creating additional work for this already overburdened area. And then, obviously, funding is a challenge; they need additional staff but that comes with a price.

At the present time, the Fire Marshall's Division here in Nashua is staffed by an Administrator, a Fire Marshall and two Inspectors. So there's somebody giving administrative support, the Fire Marshall is in charge and there's two inspectors who are helping to do investigations. During the year 2019 they did 3,170 inspections and/or investigative activities. The Fire Marshall and the two inspectors conducted an average of more than 1,000 activities each; 5 per work day. Just consider, you know, an 8 hour work day for the normal person, everything they do requires significant documentation. So they are not only out there inspecting, they have to come and write reports and look at codes and look thing up. They are really working at a very fast pace to try to get as much done as they are actually getting done. In addition to all of that plan review is required for all fire protection systems, new construction – that is required by the New Hampshire State Code. And in 2019 there were an additional 1,200 and those had to happen on top of all the other work that was in that office.

So what does that mean? What that means is when we look at your office right now, it is staffed Monday through Friday from 7:00 a.m. to 5:00 p.m. There's no on-call coverage for after-business hours, so if we are outside of those hours, there's nobody assigned or available that can automatically help with those issues. What happens after hours is that they go look for somebody and about 50% of the time they can find somebody that can help with those things after hours. The other 50% of the time, whatever the issue is, complaint, code enforcement, investigation they are not followed up on until the next day because there's just nobody there to deal with it. So that's a gap in coverage that you should be aware of and when we are looking for places that we can improve, having the ability to hire people, put them on call or make them otherwise available would really go a long way to providing more consistent coverage to the community. But with the number of people you have now, they can't work 24/7, they are already overwhelmed, we can't put them in on nights and weekends, we need to find a way to kind of spread that workload out.

Beyond that, the current staffing does not allow for regular inspections to be completed at your target hazards. And target hazards are places where there is a significant life safety issues; there's hazardous materials, there's other things that make that something more dangerous than the areas around them; things like apartment complexes, multi-family dwellings. Ideally you want to do regular inspections, you want to make sure that those places are safe and if something were to happen that we can mitigate that with as little risk to life safety as possible. Nashua just does not have the capacity to do that right now because that office is just not staffed to that ability. Right now, these places are only being inspected if somebody calls and makes a complaint because that is the best they can do.

So when we look at Community Risk Reduction here in Nashua we have a couple of recommendations. The first one is that you really need a formal Community Risk Reduction Program and it needs to be reinstated in tandem with the Public Educator that was eliminated back in 2006. There are so many

opportunities to help people prevent things from happening, somebody needs to be assigned to that function and back in 2006 and before, you had somebody that was charged with that responsibility but budget constraints made that position go away and that position just never got picked up anywhere else. So right now, there's not an established Fire Prevention or Community Risk Reduction Program in place. The Firefighters do the best they can day to day, if something comes up they try to deal with it. The Fire Marshall gets a request for something they'll do it, but there's not any proactive plan that says, "Look, these are the risks in Nashua and these are the ways that we are going to try to deal with that".

As we went through the process, we identified some areas that were just blatant to us that are a fantastic opportunity for Community Risk Reduction. The first one is disabilities, when we looked at your population right now, you've got 8,922 of your households, which is about 24%, have 1 or more members with a disability living at that home. And we understand that people with disabilities have more difficulty getting themselves out of emergency situations and that they are more difficult to protect so the best thing that we can do is on the front end provide education; be aware of where they are, find out how we can help and make sure they are aware of how they can help themselves. So that is a fantastic opportunity to create specific messages and educational programs for disabled people and the people that live with so that they can be the first people to help those people before the Fire Department arrives.

Another one that is really, kind of came out to us, is that your population has been growing and changing and it has been doing that for a while but when we stop and look now where you are currently in Nashua, 21.7% of your population speaks a language other than English which is really important to know when you have got (audio cuts out) to know that almost a quarter of your population doesn't speak English we should be creating messaging opportunities in the languages that they do speak so that (audio cuts out) learn these lessons in their native language. And if we are not doing that, we are missing before we even start these programs, almost a quarter of your population. So it is important to be sensitive to what is in the community, who is in the community, what their needs are, and how we can meet them in a way that meets their needs.

So with that, when we look at industry standards and best practices, NFPA 1730 is what we would look at and that talks about staffing levels for inspectors and Fire Marshalls. The present staffing level does not allow for the regular inspections that they recommend and the only way you are going to be able to do that is to add additional people to that office. I would tell you, you are probably, when we look at the numbers to use 3; if we could get 1 or 2 in there now it would still be a huge step forward but that's the kind of thing we want to plan for. We all understand that these things require money and that money requires planning; start small, add 1 a year, build up to it, knowing though that as you are adding people to this process to try to balance it out, your community is still growing, so not only are you going to be adding people but you may need to add more people to meet that future need that is still coming forward.

Beyond that, there may be other ways to look at it, ways such as plan review component as part of the workload in that office. The problem with line firefighters is they promote in, they promote out; some stay for a while, some don't want to be there. So there's a level of change that is going on within that area. A civilian plans reviewer is somebody who is hired to come in and just perform that function and not have an opportunity to leave or not promote to the line might give you the opportunity to create stability, somebody that was consistently looking at all of the new plans coming in making sure they were held to the same standard and was there for a number of years to create a significant consistent baseline. So that may be an opportunity where you can remove some of the work from the other Fire Marshalls and inspectors, give somebody else their job of civilian planning reviewer, create some stability in that office and still be able to perform more Community Risk Reduction and inspection opportunities.

So the next big area we wanted to hit on was the Facilities within Nashua Fire Rescue. You have 6 fire stations, plus you have a fire alarm headquarter building and a training facility with the burn building. What we did is we came through on this process, is we met with the firefighters and spoke with them but we also visited all the fire stations. And we created a rating system where every building was rated as excellent, good, fair, or poor. Fair and poor obviously being the areas you should be aware of. A "fair" building is one that is structurally sound but there are some non-structural defects, the interior has got wear and tear, there

are some mechanical systems that are working but probably need some work on them. And the important part here is the building design and construction may not match the building's purposes. So that happens especially in New England, you've got a lot of buildings that were built many, many years ago. The role of the Fire Department has changed in the last 100 years. What we do has changed and in many cases where the people in our community live has changed. So we may have buildings that were built many years ago that may not be necessarily in the best locations now. So I say that because when we look at these buildings and they are getting older, they are going to have additional needs for maintenance and the question now becomes do we repair them or do we look at relocating them?

So a "fair" building is one of those that you can start looking at; when we got the "poor" area, we've already passed the time that we should have taken some action and these are areas we need to address pretty quickly. (No audio).

Alderman Clemons

I think you are on mute.

Ms. Harper

How about now?

Alderman Clemons

Now you're good.

Ms. Harper

OK. When we look at some of these buildings, for instance, the Amherst Street Station, Station 1, you know, turn out times, things where we are looking at how quickly a firefighter can get into a fire truck and respond, these buildings were built in a different time and they weren't necessarily built with that in mind. So newer facilities are specifically designed with ease of access to get the firefighters out to the trucks and out the door as quickly to respond. There are ways we can improve their turnout times by creating environments that are specifically set up for that. So as we are looking at making changes, those are the kinds of things we want to keep in mind. So Station 1 should definitely be on the radar, it is a "fair" building, it is not in "poor" condition yet but "fair" means you've got to start planning because you are going to be in a poor situation very quickly if you don't plan to address it sooner than later.

When we look at your station 2 it was built in 1998 it is in good condition, it is good for now, but again things change and life happens and buildings get older as we move forward and you are going to need a plan, not necessarily imminently but a little bit further out just to maintain that building and keep it in good working order. The next one that was a concern was Station 3 on Spit Brook Road which is also in fair condition. The building was built in 1977, it has got some antiquated facilities and there are absolutely areas that need to be addressed sooner than later in that building. Station 4 built in 2005 is also in good condition, but again, it is already more than 15 years old so keeping in mind while it is good today, you are going to need to do work in the near future to keep it in good condition. Looking out at Station 5, that's another one that is in fair condition, it was built in 1961, it is an older building. It definitely has got some facility systems that need to be updated and/or renovated and the same goes for Station 6 on Conant Road, it's now in fair condition. Fire Alarm Headquarters is good and your training facility is brand new, it is in absolute excellent condition.

So what I want to summarize is the facilities and the message I'd like to leave you with is that the infrastructure is going to require significant financial investment in the coming years. So we tell you that now so you can plan and start coming up with a plan that your community can afford and the build into the overall plan for your City. Four of your six fire stations are more than 40 years old, they are in fair condition, they are going to need work. Many of these stations have outlived their useful life, some are no

longer located in the optimal locations and as you look through the service part of this report, you are going to see which stations are still in ideal locations and probably need to be renovated and there's some stations that it might make sense just to rebuild in a different location. So that's part of this planning process, is to have those discussions now and see how it fits into your overall capital plan and to make decisions that will get you to where you need to be when it is time to be there.

So with that in mind, as you are looking at these stations and talking about renovations and relocations, some of the things that you really just want to think about building into stations now that may not have been done back when some of the stations were built are things like drive through bays. You want the ability for the firefighters to drive in forward and to leave forward. A lot of our accidents happen when you are backing up so right now you have drive through bays in some of the stations, the problem is you have so many apparatus, they can't drive through because there's things in the way. So even though you have drive through bays, you are not getting the benefits of it and you are still requiring people to back up. Backing up is dangerous, accidents happen, people get hurt, and if we can avoid backing up a large fire apparatus, it is always a better idea to do that.

Another issue is cancer in the fire service. Your turnout gear goes into fires with firefighters, they are washing it, they are making every effort they can but at the end of the day there is still going to be a process of off gassing following a fire where the gas is coming off of the turnout gear and now the firefighter is in that fire station or exposed to that off gas that happened in a fire long after the fire is over. So modern practices are to create well ventilated, separate rooms where turnout gear is stored so that as that process happens, those contaminants are removed and the firefighters aren't there breathing it again. So these are all things that you would want to consider as you are making renovations and rebuilding fire stations in the future. All of that helps for the safety of your firefighters.

So just to kind of summarize the process we went through, we had 22 virtual and in-person interviews, meetings and facility tours as part of this process. We tried not to do this in a vacuum, the pandemic certainly gave us some challenges but we wanted to talk to anybody that would talk to us. We wanted to hear what was going on and see how your system was working. Knowing that we couldn't meet with everybody in person or virtually, we also did a 20 question on-line survey of the Nashua firefighter's numbers in the community of the fire service. And the reason for that was we wanted to give them an opportunity to have an anonymous chance to give their input, their thoughts and to give their ratings. So I will tell you, we had some pretty good responses out of that 20 question on-line service for the fire department. 94 members of the department did complete the survey which is about 54% of your members. So it is considered representative of the majority of the Fire Department.

What those surveys told us was very much the same as what we heard during all of the meetings with the fire fighters in the stations. First and foremost, your firefighters are proud to be members of Nashua Fire Rescue. They are proud to be part of this organization, they are proud of the work that they do, they are proud to serve the City, they are just very proud of the work they do. I think that's important because there is a level of pride that comes with that that you can't create, it just happens from within and that is a tribute to you for the resources that the Chiefs and the Aldermen have provided as far as training and equipment and their ability to do their job well. And they are proud of that, so kudos to all of you for being part of that process.

Beyond that, they all felt that the people that make up the Department are by far the Department's biggest strength. They talked about the number of people, the manpower, the aggressive firefighting, again they are proud of the service they provide, they are proud of the level of training they have. They do a good job and they are proud of it. So I think it's important to recognize that. Because as we go through this process there's always room for improvement, but you have a lot of good things going and a lot of good people doing that work and it is really important to give credit where credit is due. And that's absolutely where they good deeds are happening.

So I am going to move to the next thing which is morale. Far and wide we heard in all the meetings and the interviews showed us that there is a morale problem with Nashua Fire Rescue. Members felt very strongly that communication or lack thereof, was the biggest Department issue. People just weren't getting information they needed, it wasn't consistent and that makes people uneasy, people want to know what to expect, they want to have a level of expectation of where they sit in the system. If they don't have that information they get unsettled and that leads to bad morale. So there is a morale problem in Nashua Fire Rescue; the good news it is absolutely fixable with a little bit of time and resources.

We did hear repeatedly throughout all of our meetings, members want to see a more consistent accountability system with the Nashua Fire Rescue. They want to see Chief Officers holding members accountable from the top down, they also wanted to see their own union holding their members accountable from the bottom up. They felt by and large that not everybody was treated the same way in certain circumstances and part of that is just the communication. There may be circumstances that required different responses, there may be people that are being treated the same but they don't have that understanding because they don't have the information. So some of that is creating more of a transparent process, understanding that not every detail of every situation can be shared, but there should be a baseline expectation of what can be shared and people should know what they can understand here, again knowing where they fall in that system and how they fit in.

The fifth big issue that came up was training and members across the board repeatedly identified that training is truly one of the biggest weaknesses within Nashua Fire Rescue. We are going to talk about some ways that that can be fixed, because it is absolutely fixable. So we gave you dozens of recommendations and the important thing is that while all of those need to be addressed and looked at going forward, you have to look at the morale, the communication, the accountability and the training before any of the other things can matter. We need to do all of it but it is almost like triaging a patient, it doesn't matter if their big toe is broken, if you don't get them breathing it is not going to matter. So the focus really initially needs to be on your morale, your communication, your accountability and your firefighter training.

ESCI suggests the most effective way and the immediate way to address all of these issues is really to look at restructuring the Administrative Division to include an Assistant Chief of Uniform Professional Standards. And this Chief would report to the Chief of the Department. And the reason we recommend this are that they would have the ability to investigate all the internal affairs type activities. So right now, that's additional work on top of the current Chief and Assistant Chief. And they have got their plates full. You've got a very lean staff administrative division, they are trying to do a whole multitude of things and when all of these internal affairs things come in it is just more work on top of what they are doing and there are only so many hours in the day. So now they've got to make decisions about what are they going to do and what are they not going to do to get those things done. So if we could create that third position and take all of those internal affairs issues off of their plates, what we are creating is that level of consistency that the members are looking for. We have one point of contact between the Fire Department and Human Resources, one person that is addressing it, one person that knows past practice, one person that is making sure that there is a consistent metric that is being applied across the Board.

This position could also help develop the Management and Communications Plan. You know, again, people want to know, especially in this day and age, where they fit in the system, what to expect, what is going to happen and that is a critical weakness right now. You've got those two people – the Chief and the Assistant Chief – they are trying to get as much done as they can during the day. They don't have (inaudible) to sit down and have a planned out mitigations program where they can go ahead and get that information out to them. What I would tell you is that issue is going to continue to fester, unless we can find a way to deal with it and get that information out to them.

The other big issue is the recruitment of new firefighters. Right now the Training & Safety Division is spending a significant amount of time recruiting and vetting out new firefighters and getting them on line. Honestly they have bigger issues and the bigger issue really should be focusing on training your firefighters. You should be getting these trained instructors out there training your firefighters and perhaps reassigning this recruitment duty to this Assistant Chief who can then make sure that that happens but

allow the Training Division to focus their efforts on training the firefighters which would address the issue of the training deficiency that was brought up by the membership.

And then again the training program in general, if we put this Assistant Chief over that and take off the workload from recruitment and retention, now we have somebody that is going to manage the training and safety division, help them achieve SMART goals that are smart, measurable, reasonable and will be done in an appropriate amount of time and we have accountability there. So the person is overseeing it, we've taken some workload off the Training Division and now the Training Division can be focused in on really getting firefighters trained to the level that they need to be.

Then the fifth issue is the professional development program. You know, you've got people moving up through the ranks, but they are taking classes here and there and there's not a systematic program to move people from where they are now to where they want to get. So we could create a formal career development program and show people career paths, if you want to do this job, these are the programs you need to do. If you want to do that job, this is what you need to do and give them something to look forward to in the future. People want to see that there's hope and that they are going to move up and that they can promote and they want to know how to do that and how to prepare themselves for it.

So in summary the communication, the accountability, the training and the morale – those are your big issues. I would tell you that in 2001 Municipal Resources Inc. came in and completed a similar organizational assessment and at that time, they had the same results. They felt that the morale, the communication and the accountability were issues. So here we are 20 years later and those issues are still unresolved and not only are they unresolved but they are going to get worse if we don't start doing something to address them. And we need to put some resources towards giving you the people that can focus their efforts on dealing with those issues specifically so that they don't continue to fester and get worse.

I guess the last thing I would review is, again, there is dozens of recommendations in this Master Plan. You don't have to like them all, you don't have to do them all and that's designed into the process. The most important thing out of this is to agree that all of this is important and needs to be looked at and then to move into the strategic planning process. And that's what comes next ideally in a good situation. What you want to see now is the strategic planning process is going to be your 1 to 3 year plan; the Master Plan was just a look ahead. Now we looked at all the issues that we could see on the horizon for 15 years, but ideally you would want to engage in strategic planning next and that is bringing the Nashua Stakeholders, through all different levels of the organization and say, "OK out of all these recommendations what are our priorities here in Nashua, what do we want to do and what do we want to do first". And we want to see everybody from elected officials to Chief Officers to new firefighters to get all of you in on the same page and say, "Ok this is what we are going to do in the first year or the first three years" and to do that.

And I would tell you that if you don't engage in that strategic planning process and you don't make a plan of how you are going to start addressing things, what often happens is these Master Plans become a report on a shelf and that's absolutely not what you want to do. You have a lot of people that were engaged in their process and gave their opinion and were looking to see change happen and the best way to do that is to bring them back and to do this strategic planning process to figure out where do you as an agency want to start and what are you going to do.

In conclusion, your successful strategic planning process would get you an ability to systematically implement the recommendations that are in this report in a way that is good for you and your stakeholders. And with that, I'd open the floor for any questions?

President Wilshire

Thank you, Mary-Ellen, does anyone on this Board have questions? I don't see any hands up. Alderwoman Lu?

Alderwoman Lu

Thank you. Ms. McCutcheon how did you learn to talk so fast.

Ms. Harper

(Inaudible).

Alderwoman Lu

No, it was great. Thank you. That was really incredible it all made sense, so thank you for getting so much information out in such a short period of time.

Ms. Harper

You're welcome.

President Wilshire

Alderman Jette?

Alderman Jette

Thank you, Madam President. And thank you for that report. Obviously as fast as you talked, you covered a lot. But it is up to us to all go and look at this report and study it. I tried to read through it before tonight but I am looking forward to going back and looking at it in more detail. But while you are here, one of the things that struck me was that chart where you showed, I don't know if I have the number correctly, it was a small number, was it 2% of all calls are related to fire? Is that typical of fire departments? Is that typical is that what we should be expecting or should we look, you know, a lot of those calls are emergency medical calls. We do have an ambulance service that we are contracted with. Do other Departments handle those medical calls like we do or do they contract out the medical part and concentrate on the more emergency, you know, the fire calls and those types of things?

Mr. McCutcheon

Those are good questions. So the answer is typically if you are a Department that runs EMS, that your call volume for fire-related calls are going to be somewhere in or around 3%. So whether we are looking at Florida, New Hampshire, New York, Colorado, they are all about the same. The reason for that is the introduction of Fire Codes. And with the introduction with Fire Codes the buildings that we are building and are renovating are much less likely to have a fire to begin with and much better suppression detection capabilities as well. So the number of fires we have are less. With that being said, the only way to get that accomplished is through strong fire prevention. But for Nashua, that's one of the areas where you are really struggling because your prevention folks are really overwhelmed now.

As far as the EMS, the reason for Fire Departments responding to EMS calls is because typically they are going to be within an area and they can get their faster and they can provide that First Responder tier to someone to help stabilize them for when the ambulance gets there. So I would be a proponent of continuing to maintain EMS response to emergencies. One of the first slides I showed where there was a spike in EMS and it went back down, that's where the Department expanded the EMS calls they were going to but then reigned it back in because it was just getting to be a little bit much for what they had going.

But in Departments that run no EMS you are still probably only looking at 12%, give or take a little bit and that's simply because with the EMS gone all the other components get more representative. But the number of fires is simply not what they were 10, 15, 30 years ago. Does that answer your question?

Alderman Jette

Yes, it does. Thank you very much.

President Wilshire

Does anyone else have any questions for either Mr. McCutcheon or Ms. Harper? Alderman Klee?

Alderman Klee

Thank you Madam President. I guess my question, you probably don't even have these numbers, but you mentioned that the Fire Marshall and so on, that only 50% of those that happen after hours we can reach someone to get out there immediately and that obviously the other 50% we have to wait to at least the next day or next business day because you said it was a Monday through Friday type of thing. Do we have numbers to those percentages? So how many of those incidents, the Fire Marshall, needing to get someone out there, doesn't happen for a few days?

Ms. Harper

We absolutely do. The 50% number came from the Nashua Fire Marshall's Division and they have a spread sheet that showed exactly how many calls came in, how many people responded and which calls had the holdover so that number is readily available from the Fire Marshall's Division. I don't have it here with me right now, I'm sorry.

Alderman Klee

From the Fire Marshall's Division, OK. That's OK. The reason that I had asked is I guess my question would be as far as being able to do a proper investigation, I guess we would say, you would probably want to have that happen as soon as possible and to delay it by a day or a couple days, if it is a weekend thing could contaminate and hurt the process. Is that correct?

Ms. Harper

You are absolutely correct. And the chain of evidence is a concern as well. You want things to be left intact to remain the way they were. And to your point, every day or two is going to lessen that and now we are losing our ability to accurately identify what caused the issue and to get the correct answers out of that situation.

President Wilshire

Are you all set Alderman Klee?

Alderman Klee

Yes I am.

President Wilshire

Alderman Lopez.

Alderman Lopez

Just two questions I guess, first in relation to other Fire Departments because this kept coming up when we were talking about the Union contracts. How did you find our compensation level? And in looking at

potentially getting additional inspectors, what are your recommendations regarding having other agencies or other Departments of the City cross trained to support the Fire Department in doing inspections.

Ms. Harper

So it wasn't specifically a staffing study but as we walk through the process I would tell you that we did not get complaints about the compensation level. You know there were concerns at the time we were there because the contract had not been ratified. I think there was an overwhelming feeling that through contractual bargaining that they were pretty satisfied with the benefits. So I didn't see that as being an issue that we see in many places that we go. And when it comes to cross training, there is absolutely an opportunity to do that to think outside of the box. But you need to be able to manage that. There's no value in having people do these inspections if you are not bringing them back into the main system, managing them, making sure the correct data is getting into the right place and that it is being used widespread. So if you had the resources and you've added somebody to the office that could oversee that program and make sure it was being done accurately and consistently it would absolutely be one way that you could fix that situation.

President Wilshire

Chief, did you want to weigh in on this?

Fire Chief Rhodes

Thank you. To Alderman Klee's point, there's a lot of these things that by State RSA that we must investigate, the Fire Marshall's Office. We must investigate deaths, we must investigate serious injury, we must investigate carbon monoxide calls. Also, if I may to answer part of Alderman Jette's question that the EMS calls, those also encompass motor vehicle accidents which we probably have 5 to 10 of those a day that we go to. Nashua is a very busy City. Carbon Monoxide calls are in there under hazardous conditions so there are probably oh my goodness, 50 different codes that we could use in the National Fire Incident Reporting System but they were broken down into ESCI's chart into more broader terms.

The whole thing about response time is, so 20 years ago you had 17 minutes to get out of a building. Today, it is fact, you have about 3 minutes to get out of the building and as witnessed by those poor individuals last night in New York at that senior living facility. That is something we don't want to have. We live in New England, we have a lot of old buildings. Yes we have a lot of retro-fitted buildings. But when you look at all of the new construction they are putting up in our community now, it is light weight, wood construction. We are not building the robust ordinary construction which is block and concrete walls. We are not building timber framed buildings which are our mill buildings along the riverfront that have been converted to housing units. So it's looking at the 2% number, it takes a lot of a deeper dive, there's a lot more variables that come into play for that.

President Wilshire

Thank you. Alderman Clemons?

Alderman Clemons

Thank you, I appreciate it. So my question is related to I guess response time as well and I noticed that you kind of, during the presentation you kind of danced around the issue of whether or not we need a new fire station or not. I guess my question would be does your report say anywhere where in the future we may need an additional fire station or do you think that with the – or would you recommend rather that we relocate a couple of them to more strategic locations and that 6 stations could be good for the next, I don't know, 20 or 30 years let's say?

Mr. McCutcheon

That's another good question. We did address that, and so what I'll tell you is right now the coverage is sufficient to provide the demand that you have. However, over time as you begin to develop more along the Riverfront, get bigger sub-divisions or multi-level buildings there north of the airport or out in the southwest that there could be a need. We did an optimization, your stations are pretty well sided today so probably anything, you know, relocations would be additional stations. So what I would say is that station location optimization is only one piece of the puzzle. You need land, you need it to be zoned in the right way and grade and highway access and all that stuff. So there's several other factors, so what I would suggest is when you reach a point where you can see your performance beginning to deteriorate or there's just an area that you simply can't service to the same level as the rest of the community, so at that point evaluate those factors and the other factors you think are important and make the best decision with the data that you have at the time. Does that answer your question?

Alderman Clemons

It does. You don't think we are at that point yet where we should be planning ahead for that, based on where we know the growth of the City is going to go or things like that? Or is that something that should be purely data driven?

Mr. McCutcheon

I think being data driven helps take a lot of the emotion out of the argument because the data is what the data is. But at the same time, you've got travel time overall that is just slightly above industry standards and the goal for industry standard. Your turnout performance I think is as much as anything effected by building design and your stations absolutely need a whole of TLC. And so before for me, if it was my decision, before I invested \$2 to \$3 million dollars into a station I would want to make very certain that configuration was going to meet my needs, that it was in the right location for what we have for our demand today and that when we invest that money we are going to see it pay off on the back end for that investment.

Alderman Clemons

I appreciate that answer, thank you.

President Wilshire

Alderwoman Kelly?

Alderwoman Kelly

Thank you. I was surprised, I was like, "Oh am I next"? My question was around the percentage of people in our community who are either disabled or speak another language. And I just thought that was sort of striking and I was wondering if that's a typical number or if that's fairly high?

Ms. Harper

It's actually indicative of what I've seen in a number of the communities that we've done in the recent months, about 25% give or take. You are on the higher side of that but I think to us what the bigger issue is the fact that you have such a significant population of people that don't speak English but I didn't see any evidence of programming to address that. You know, we go to a lot of communities that have that kind of numbers but they have got multi-language community risk production programs. They've got people that are on the fire departments that speak those languages that are going out into those areas. And I think that's really the disconnect in Nashua is that the population has changed, you have got these people that don't speak the language and you are not meeting them in their native tongue.

Alderwoman Kelly

If I could follow up?

President Wilshire

Yes.

Alderwoman Kelly

So I know there's a large report to dive into and maybe you answered it in there, but what does a multi-language program look like. Is that having a person, a translator, is it more translating documents. What does that look like?

Ms. Harper

It could be all of those. If you dig into the risks and look at it and we have seen communities that hire multi-lingual people to work in the office. It may be a matter of having somebody in your office work with somebody on the outside that can translate fire prevention materials into other languages and disseminate those in a way specific to areas that you know that they are going to be better received in a language other than English. So it doesn't have to be one size fits all. It could be a combination of all of those. Videos are another great way to teach people lessons, you know, delivering them in their first language is always easier lesson for them to learn than trying to translate it into a language that they predominantly speak.

Alderwoman Kelly

Thank you, I really appreciate that.

President Wilshire

Thank you. Alderman Harriott-Gathright.

Alderman Harriott-Gathright

My question was on the staffing and you call it the relief factor. I just wanted to make sure that you were speaking that they would need like 25 full-time employees? Was that correct.

Mr. McCutcheon

I lost you a little bit on the front end so I just want to make sure I have the question correct. So you are asking about the 1.25 relief factor and are those numbers correct. So there's two ways to approach staffing because people are going to take vacation time, they are going to call out sick and they are going to get hurt at some point and be out on injury leave. So one option would be that we use overtime to fill all of those positions and that's pretty much you are doing now. The other option is that you calculate how much are you spending in overtime and then you compare that to how much it would cost with salary and fringe benefit of hiring enough folks to cover what your calculated daily absentee rate is.

And so 25% is kind of in the middle. There are Departments that are closer to maybe 20% and to be honest with you there are a lot of Departments that are closer to 50%. But what that does is it provides enough folks out there in the field so you are not constantly hiring overtime or pulling people across districts and things of that nature. There are already people there in place, but then additionally that frees up folks for things like better training, more concentration on those items because there's a few more people in the system. And either way isn't necessarily right or wrong, but they are two different approaches that solve the same problem.

Alderman Harriott-Gathright

Thank you.

President Wilshire

Thank you. Alderman Dowd?

Alderman Dowd

Just real quickly and Chief Rhodes, the City does have two pieces of land earmarked for Fire Stations in the City. The one issue we had was out on Amherst Street with a lot of commercial buildings is the fire station that addresses that is the airport fire station, correct me if I'm wrong. If, for any reason, there was an accident on Amherst Street or Sharon Avenue or there was a train across the tracks, you can't respond. You'd have to wait for the station from Amherst Street to get up there which would be a delay. But in the future we do have a parcel of land.

Fire Chief Rhodes

Horton Road.

Alderman Dowd

Horton Road, thank you, which could be earmarked for at least the single engine truck initially that could respond immediately. But I just thought you might want to address that.

Fire Chief Rhodes

Yes, thank you Alderman Dowd. So when you look at the data and just a point of clarification, all of the data that Stuart and Mary-Ellen are speaking of was from our fire dispatch and from our City GIS ESRV. So that is all 100% Nashua data, that is not made up. So you bring up the airport fire station, you know, back in the day, I don't know I wasn't around that long. I haven't been around that long. But urban legend tells me they put the fire station there because they didn't know which road was going to build up – Amherst Street or Broad Street. So you put it in the middle. Well lo and behold. Amherst Street builds up and now that fire station is kind of on an island. As you alluded to, Alderman Dowd, yes the station who backs them up is the Amherst Street Station which also covers the north end of the City and in that section of the City where they showed the population density is. So that creates response time lags to get out there.

The other part, and all of this data is in this report, you can see the travel times, the southwest part of the City is in the same boat. Right now, it is covered by Engine 6 at the Conant Road Station. But if Engine 6 is busy, the next vehicle to come is from the Lake Street Fire station or the Spit Brook Road Fire Station. So now we are getting into those protracted response times of 8 to 10 minutes to get out there. As Stuart alluded to, this is all data driven. And they are throwing ideas out there for us. But one of the things we have been talking about for a while is what do we do with the airport fire station and where could we put that because we can't just move that airport fire station, although I know it's your Ward, we can't move it out there to Ward 2 and then leave everybody on Ward 1 without fire protection and EMS coverage. So that's kind of the dilemma we are in but I think the data that is in this report bears out a lot of answers for us going forward.

President Wilshire

Are you all set Alderman Dowd?

Alderman Dowd

All set.

President Wilshire

Alderman O'Brien?

Alderman O'Brien

Thank you, Madam President. And Chief Rhodes I am glad you mentioned the apparatus location, there is one thing I didn't see in the report is the amount of time it takes the cavalry to get there to rescue the first new engine company and particularly a lot of the areas. When I used to work that was one of my fears like I used to tell the guys, it could 8 minutes for the cavalry to arrive in some of our location. But my question to Stuart and Mary-Ellen, Mary-Ellen mentioned to start looking at stations, rehabbing stations and everything else and consider relocation. And I found that interesting because it seems to be by the City's Master Plan we are increasing the density to downtown. And what I mean by the downtown, the companies that traditionally protect that area are Stations 1, 2 and 4. And so therefore with the call volume as what you showed on the hot map basically is going to exist for a very long time.

We have built Loft 34, we have taken many other old existing mills and turned them into apartments. We have new developments down on Harbor Ave; also down by the Riverside and there's yet to be more to come, an additional buildings on Sanders Street. So basically those downtown companies, well my thing is, I would like you to address the needs within the density and those companies may not be able to be relocated.

Mr. McCutcheon

I think I understand your question. So the effective response force math is where we took, and this is basically the best case scenarios, everybody is in quarter, everybody is available and we are using ESRY's historic road based network to calculate how far we think they can get within 8 minutes and then overlaying all of those people on top of each other. So then along with that, we look at our call concurrency rates which are how often are single calls, two calls, three calls or more happening at the same time because that's all taking away from that dedication area ERS. And then the final piece would be to use our utilization as units exceed 10% utilization rates, that means if we are measuring you know 90% of the time – 10% of the time we are not there, there is very little margin for error and mistakes in other areas, companies are going to be out of place where they come in.

So I think the way you use that is you look and say, we are building these significant structures what is our ERF in that area. And let's say it is on the boundary line of being sufficient. The next thing I would look at is our call concurrency rate, how often are multiple calls occurring? Are you calling multiple units in and then what is the unit hour utilization rate and what the helps to dictate to me is are we going to be able to field sufficient numbers of firefighters? I think as kind of like I said earlier, I think right now you are OK. But maybe 2 or 3 years from now you won't be. So it is something that we just want to have it on your radar to monitor and keep track of as growth and development continues to occur.

Alderman O'Brien

Very good. Thank you. Thank you, Madam President.

President Wilshire

You're welcome. Alderman Schmidt?

Alderman Schmidt

Thank you, Madam President and thank you very much for keeping number 5 in Ward 1. We rely on them quite a bit and we are very grateful that they are there. I only wanted to know if you feel that there was anything that would have changed your report if it hadn't been done in the year of COVID.

Mr. McCutcheon

I don't think so. It mostly slowed it down, because between March through June basically it was lost time. We were at the point we were ready to start rocking and rolling and then just everything stopped. So that slowed it down some but otherwise I think it is pretty much there. The problems with the communication, I think you can't help but see when you spend time with those offices. There's only just so much any one or two people can do and when you are overwhelmed it hard to be proactive and communicating. Same goes for the Fire Prevention Division. I think operationally you are pretty good today but those major issues were identified 20 years ago and since that time, the Administration and Fire Prevention has gotten leaner, while the workload has continually increased. So I think if you just do a comparison between the two, the end results are very similar. I think now it is just as Mary-Ellen mentioned earlier is doing a strategic plan identifying what can we do? Are there some areas where possibly we can supplement with existing staff from other departments or is there another way we can do this to make it as cost effective as possible but at the same time recognizing that if you don't do anything about the problem it's not going to get anything done.

Alderman Schmidt

Thank you. This is a tremendous tool for us to use going forward. Thank you very much.

President Wilshire

Alderman Lopez?

Alderman Lopez

I guess that the one good thing about 2020 was that we all used virtual offices a lot more. Sometimes it can seem like we are in the same virtual office. So are there opportunities there to maybe increase the availability for on-call staff in a different way than having them on-site at a fire station or is it better to have somebody manning the fire station and providing additional staffing capacity more for those administrative calls that you were talking about.

Mr. McCutcheon

Your CVA is going to dictate a lot of that stuff. So, for example, with Fire Prevention, folks come in because it's the first open position and they roll out as soon as they get the opportunity; they want to be back in operations. So that creates a bit of a vacuum in your prevention because there's just not that consistency there. Where if you have, say. Civilian plan reviewer, they wouldn't necessarily be subject to that CVA and those processes and it probably would be a most cost effective option. Without me diving too deep and violating Brian's CVA with the union, but I think there's a thing to do is we've identified the issues, we've provided a couple different ideas of ways to correct it. But then look and based on the revenue you have available, the highest priority for you and then what's the most cost effective option to get the job done. I think those are the decisions that need to be made at this point.

President Wilshire

Are you all set, Alderman Lopez? Alderman Klee?

Alderman Klee

Madam President, I think Chief Rhodes had a comment first, I saw his hand go up but then I'd like to ask a question.

President Wilshire

Chief Rhodes?

Fire Chief Rhodes

Thank you, I'll be brief. So I have a saying that I like to use at work, and that saying is very simple, "We are only as good and we can only provide the services for the people we have on duty". Our City is not conducive to having volunteers, it is not conducive to have people at home working remotely. Through this entire pandemic, I am very proud of our organization because every single person came to work every day. We did not have the ability to work remotely.

The City is just too big, it's too busy and it's continued to grow. So it's a great question Alderman Lopez. We are always looking at ways to leverage technology, but as far as providing a service to our citizens, if you are not there and working, we cannot provide timely service to you.

President Wilshire

Alderman Klee?

Alderman Klee

Thank you Madam President. Actually mine is more of a comment than a question. Since I've lived in my home here for the past 17/18 years, my neighborhood has changed and it has gone from being a very elderly neighborhood to young neighborhood back to kind of getting a little older too. And one of the things that I notice is when the lights go off in the middle of the night and we hear those alarms going off, the first person on site is our Fire Department here, our Nashua Fire & Rescue, long before even the ambulance gets there.

Our Fire & Rescue are in the door helping whoever that person is and then I see the ambulance pull up. So kudos to our Fire & Rescue and I really appreciate that and I know that sometimes we look at those times and say if we could just get there a minute sooner, I agree. If we could get there a minute sooner but we are getting there even before the ambulances are getting there. So thank you very much for that.

President Wilshire

Thank you. I am going to look for a motion. First I want to thank you Mr. McCutcheon, Miss Harper, Fire Commissioners, Fire Department, all of you for this good meeting, interesting, informative and we will see what we can do in the future. Thank you all very much.

ADJOURNMENT

MOTION BY ALDERMAN O'BRIEN THAT THE MARCH 23, 2021, SPECIAL MEETING OF THE BOARD OF ALDERMEN BE ADJOURNED BY ROLL CALL

A viva voce roll call was taken to adjourn the Board of Aldermen meeting which resulted as follows:

Yea: Alderman O'Brien, Alderman Klee, Alderwoman Kelly, Alderman Dowd, Alderman Caron, Alderman Clemons, Alderman Lopez, Alderman Tencza, Alderwoman Lu, Alderman Jette, Alderman Schmidt, Alderman Laws, Alderman Cleaver, Alderman Harriott-Gathright, Alderman Wilshire	15
Nay:	0

MOTION CARRIED

The meeting was declared adjourned at 7:46 p.m.

Attest: Susan K. Lovering, City Clerk