

BUDGET REVIEW COMMITTEE

JUNE 9, 2021

A meeting of the Budget Review Committee was held Wednesday, June 9, 2021, at 7:00 p.m. via teleconference.

Chairman Dowd

As Chairman of the Budget Review Committee, 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: 893 5561 8849 and Passcode: 869223

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 and publicly noticed at City Hall and Nashua Public Library.

If anyone has a problem accessing the meeting via phone or Channel 16, please call 603-589-3329 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.

Alderman O'Brien 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 5 members of the Budget Review Committee present:

Alderman Richard A. Dowd, Chairman
Alderman Jan Schmidt
Alderman Ernest Jette
Alderman-at-Large Lori Wilshire
Alderman-at-Large Michael B. O'Brien, Sr.

Members not in Attendance: Alderman-at-Large Ben Clemons, Vice Chair
Alderwoman-at-Large Shoshanna Kelly

Also in Attendance: Sarah Marchant, Community Development Division Director
 William McKinney, Building Manager
 Nelson Ortega, Code Enforcement Manager
 Deb Chisholm, Environmental Scientist/Waterways Manager
 Matt Sullivan, Planning Manager
 Carrie Schena, Urban Programs Manager
 Louise Woodworth, Transit Finance Coordinator

ROLL CALL

PUBLIC COMMENT

Chairman Dowd

The first order of business for the meeting will be public comment on items to be addressed in this budget meeting. Is there anyone/members of the public that would like to speak? Seeing and hearing no one, we'll move on.

COMMUNICATIONS - None

UNFINISHED BUSINESS - None

NEW BUSINESS – RESOLUTIONS - None

NEW BUSINESS – ORDINANCES - None

TABLED IN COMMITTEE

R-20-016

Endorsers: Mayor Jim Donchess
 Alderwoman Linda Harriott-Gathright
 Alderman Thomas Lopez
 Alderman-at-Large Michael B. O'Brien, Sr.

AMENDING THE PURPOSE OF A FISCAL YEAR 2020 UNLIKE ESCROW FOR THE COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT DIVISION

(tabled at 4-20-20 mtg)

MOTION BY ALDERMAN O'BRIEN TO TAKE FROM THE TABLE R-21-142, BY ROLL CALL

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

Yea:	Alderman Schmidt, Alderman Jette, Alderman Wilshire Alderman O'Brien, Alderman Dowd	5
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Nay:		0
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MOTION CARRIED

R-21-142

Endorsers: Mayor Jim Donchess
 Alderman Linda Harriott-Gathright

RELATIVE TO THE ADOPTION OF THE FISCAL YEAR 2022 PROPOSED BUDGET FOR THE CITY OF NASHUA GENERAL, ENTERPRISE, AND SPECIAL REVENUE FUNDS

- Public hearing scheduled for 6/21/2021 at 7:00 p.m. in the Nashua High School North Auditorium

DEPARTMENTAL REVIEWS OF THE PROPOSED FY21 BUDGET FOR THE CITY OF NASHUA

<u>Dept. #</u>		<u>Revenue</u>	<u>Appropriations</u>
	<u>Community Development Division</u>		
153	Building Inspection	44	230
155	Code Enforcement		234
170	Waterways/Hydroelectric Operations	44	238
181	Community Development	44, 45	242
182	Planning & Zoning	45	245
184	Urban Programs	250	250
	Civic & Community Activities		69
	56H – Human Service Agencies		70
186	Transportation	256	256

ON THE QUESTIONChairman Dowd

R-21-142 is now back on the table. This evening we will be discussing the Community Development Division and I think before we get started Director Marchant do you want to give us an overview?

Sarah Marchant, Community Development Director

Certain. Thank you and good evening everybody. Sarah Marchant, the Community Development Division Director. I am here to introduce my team tonight that's starting out and wanted to say that the Division met the zero percent directive going forward. We also had some very significant accomplishments in FY21 that the team will talk more about. Those include reinstatement of fixed route service after COVID service in place. A \$4.7 million lead grant, a transition to new permitting inspection software, building of a landlord emergency response database, and preparation for the replacement of the Jackson Falls turbine just to name a few.

We also have two new faces in the team around the camera tonight. The first is Matt Sullivan who I think you've all had the privilege to meet already. He started with us in September. To correct the record as well, we have Camille Correa our brand new Transit Administrator who started five days ago. So we are so thankful that she's here tonight and I would like to give her the opportunity just to give a quick background on where she came from and her role in Transit. So Camille if you could introduce yourself.

Camille Correa, Transit Administrator

Good evening. I'm Camille Sterling, excuse me Camille Correa. I'm known as Camille Sterling in the State of North Carolina and had for years introduced myself as that. Here in Nashua I am Camille Correa and happy to be here. I have really enjoyed participating in the different meetings with the City of Nashua, getting to know people, and also interacting with all the different divisions and the people within the city. Thank you very much for the opportunity to be here and to run the transit system.

My experience in transit is approximately 20 years. I've been an administrator. I've also used transit myself personally when I was going to school and also as I grew up. So I'm very familiar with the ins and outs of a bus system from the user perspective and also from the administrative perspective as I've overseen both operations and the administrative side. I'm very familiar with compliance as well so I'm happy to be here with the skills that I have learned over the years and look forward to meeting all of you and hopefully seeing you on board the bus. Thank you.

Sarah Marchant, Community Development Director

Thank you Camille and welcome aboard.

So with that, that is a very short overview. I assume you want to go through agenda in the order listed and I will turn it over to the team to talk about all the great things they've done and the things we plan for the year ahead.

Chairman Dowd

Okay the first department we will address is 153 Building Inspection. The revenue is on page 44 and the appropriations are on page 230. I believe the appropriations are pretty level but I'll let – who's going to be discussing?

William McKinney, Building Manager

Thank you and good evening. Thank you Alderman Dowd and the member of the Committee. I'm Bill McKinney and I am the building official for the City of Nashua and manage the Department of Building Safety. The responsibilities of the Department of Building Safety are to administer the multiple building codes and life safety codes that are adopted by the City of Nashua and the State of New Hampshire. Our department is also responsible for conducting all the inspections for those codes and we also work very closely with our Code Enforcement Department, our Nashua Fire Rescue Department, and our Health Department to ensure a safe and resilient community for Nashua.

I would like to say that COVID has been a very difficult time for many of us and I'm very proud of my team for being able to maintain our high level of service for the community. We had some slight reductions in being able to do inspections initially but we adopted more technologies into our program including remote inspections that allowed for residents and contractors to work with tablets and any of the medias that are out there that we could use and our inspectors would guide them through that inspection remotely through either Zoom, or Webex, or whatever platform we could use. So I'm very proud that our team made that adjustment and that really increased our level of service for the community.

With that, as stated, I will go to our revenue projections on page 44 and you'll see that we are projecting some increases in revenue coming in FY22. That is based upon increased construction activity in the city, some more sizable projects that are coming to the city, and with the recent adoption of the building fees that was supported by the Board of Aldermen to increase our fees, so that will reflect in the FY22 budget. I'll entertain any questions you may have on the revenues if there are any.

Chairman Dowd

Okay I see that your revenues are pretty high through the end of March for this year. Any projection on where you'll be by the end of June?

William McKinney, Building Manager

I don't have a true projection by the end of June but currently we are roughly \$114,800 above our projections for FY21. So that's a 125 percent of what we projected.

Chairman Dowd

Good. I think the rest of everything is pretty flat. I noticed that the plumbing permits are up slightly from last year. Is there some reason that they aren't increasing as high as some of your others?

William McKinney, Building Manager

Yeah we look at our projections over a four-year average. Plumbing stays relatively level. It doesn't have the – you know in mechanical and electrical, there's a lot of repair and service work that happens that doesn't necessarily – isn't as high a dollar value with plumbing. A water heater is a certain amount whereas with mechanical and electrical, those repairs can get pretty expensive depending upon the systems that they're replacing or repairing.

Chairman Dowd

Okay. Are there any questions on revenue from the members of the committee? Seeing none, we'll jump to your appropriations on page 230.

William McKinney, Building Manager

Appropriations you'll see that our most significant increases is with salaries and benefits which we really have no control over. Those are contractual agreements between the city and our staff that are union employees. We have had a slight increase to our communications and data line and that is the only one. That is that we found during the COVID time that

we were providing better service with having our inspectors connected to cellular phone service. Prior to that, we were using two-way radios. So now we're using a combination of two-way radios, cellular phone service, texting, and tablets with direct data in the field.

Chairman Dowd

Okay are there any questions on appropriations for the building inspection? Alderman Jette.

Alderman Jette

Yes just quickly. With this increase in activity and your anticipated increase in revenue because of anticipated increase in building, are you able to keep up with your current workforce?

William McKinney, Building Manager

Yes. Our current workforce I would say is optimum right now. We are at manageable levels when everyone is in. We have someone that's out sick or has a vacation day, you know the rest of the staff works a little harder to keep up. I would say that we are at an optimum level right now and we're providing a very high level of service to the city.

Alderman Jette

And you're not getting complaints about people waiting too long to get inspections?

William McKinney, Building Manager

We are still able to provide inspections within 24 hours of any request to our department. If you call the day before, we'll get you onto our schedule and we will service.

Alderman Jette

That's great to hear. Thank you very much.

Chairman Dowd

All set Alderman Jette?

Alderman Jette

Yes I am.

Chairman Dowd

One question I have – are you going to continue to be using the laptops or the iPads when you're doing your inspections and connecting back to the office and sort of expediting things that way and signing things off electronically?

William McKinney, Building Manager

Yes. We've actually bought a new permitting and inspection software on line. We continue to bring in more modules to that software which will include a customer portal where customers can actually apply for permits and pay for permits on line. We'll be able to do all of our inspections on line and provide an e-mail to those customers as far as the results of those inspections. We will continue to offer the remote virtual inspection program. I believe strongly in that program is that is a great service to homeowners. Contractors have the ability to schedule the inspections the same day they're doing the work. They stay on the site. They do the remote virtual inspection with our inspector who is in the office, and the homeowner only has to take that one day off from work rather than the two that they would now. So it's a great service and we hope to continue it.

Chairman Dowd

Excellent. Are there any other questions for appropriations on Building Inspection? Seeing none. Thank you Bill.

William McKinney, Building Manager

Thank you very much.

Chairman Dowd

Next we'll go to Department 155 Code Enforcement. Appropriations are on page 234.

Nelson Ortega, Code Enforcement Manager

Good evening. This is Nelson Ortega, Code Enforcement Manager, for City of Nashua. Our department investigates all of Nashua housing code complaints in the city. We work closely with building safety, the Fire Marshal also, along with the Health Department. We assist other departments if they feel that they need assistance with sort of enforcement or notice to go out as long as the department outside of Community Development makes first attempt to rectify a potential violation, then we will assist them beyond that if they feel they need it.

As Sarah had mentioned, we started the program for registering landlords and property managers in the City of Nashua for rental units and not single family home owners. That's gone pretty well. We sent out close to 4,000 forms to property owners and landlords throughout the city and we've gone on to say that we got over 85 percent response from these individuals and now we are in the process of putting that information into CIVIC GOV which is our new software that we have. All code enforcement and individuals outside of our own department has assisted in trying to input that information into CIVIC GOV. We're now ready to – we actually have two training dates for the Fire and Police Departments because one of the main purpose for the function was so we can reach out to landlords and property managers after hours, especially if a first responder shows up to a property and they don't find contact information. They used to call us but now they will have the ability to have a read only link to our software where they can go in, put the address, and it will show them who the property manager is, their contact information. It will also show them who the owner is in the event that they can't get a hold of a property manager. So they're going to have access to any information that we have at their fingertips. So we have our first training on the 11th – Friday – with the Nashua PD. On the 15th, we have fire dispatchers. So we're looking forward to that and we're working with Jason from IT and it's going really great.

Chairman Dowd

Anything you'd like to tell us on appropriations? I know they're pretty flat from last year.

Nelson Ortega, Code Enforcement Manager

Ours is, again, as building safety – our biggest increase is in salaries and benefits. Other than that, everything else is right along the lines to what we needed.

Chairman Dowd

The only change I saw was mailing which went up \$500.

Nelson Ortega, Code Enforcement Manager

Yeah that went up because of the 4,000 pieces of mail we had to send out. This is something that we're probably once a year, or every other year, or as landlords move, we'll probably be able to narrow it down to those particular properties and send out a reminder e-mail or a notice if they don't have an e-mail because there are individuals that don't have e-mails. That's our way of keeping that up to date as current as we can. Our postage may go up a little bit more throughout the years but we're hoping to be able to use the e-mails a lot easier.

Chairman Dowd

Okay. Are there any other questions on appropriations for Code Enforcement? Alderman Wilshire.

Alderman Wilshire

Thank you. Nelson I see on page 232 of the budget book the trees that were cut and then restacked on top of each. That was south Nashua. I remember that. If you don't have it in front of you. Thank okay.

Nelson Ortega, Code Enforcement Manager

Okay because I'm like I don't have that page.

Alderman Wilshire

That's okay. Thank you.

Chairman Dowd

Oh yeah. Probably should have gotten Code involved in the Edgewood Cemetery too but that's another story for another day. All right, thank you. I don't think there are any additional questions from anyone so thank you Nelson.

Nelson Ortega, Code Enforcement Manager

Thank you.

Chairman Dowd

All right we'll move along to Department 170 Waterways/Hydroelectric Operations. The revenue is on page 44 and the appropriations are on page 238. Deb?

Deb Chisholm, Environmental Scientist/Waterways Manager

Yes hi. Good evening. This is Deb Chisholm Waterways Manager. I have the enviable job of trying to keep our waterways clean, accessible, safe, and I'm also responsible for overseeing the operation and maintenance of our two hydroelectric facilities. So most of what you're going to see in front of you over the next couple of minutes relative to revenue and appropriations are hydroelectric only. Director Marchant has the (inaudible) task of managing all the rest of my expenses including my labor. So that's all in Community Development budget.

Relative to the revenues for hydroelectric, one of the downsides of that trying to estimate what that revenue is going to be every year is a little bit challenging because it's very based on how much rainfall and snowfall we get over the year. So you can see that our estimate for Fiscal Year 2022 revenue is a little bit lower than this year. I will let you in on a little secret that what you're seeing for revenues through March, we've actually got some additional flows going through both of our facilities. So our revenues are really closer to about \$800,000 at this point and we've got a little bit more time during this fiscal year to be able to squeeze out a little bit more. So fingers crossed although with the amount of rain we've had both this year and last year were relatively low on rainfall. Our estimates are typically based on historical averages and so each year that we have less and less revenue, that comes into the equation when we are calculating what we think the revenues might be for future years. So that would explain why our revenue estimate is a little bit lower for Fiscal Year 2022.

Chairman Dowd

Okay. Any questions for hydroelectric operations revenue? Seeing no one, we'll move on to appropriations on page 238.

Deb Chisholm, Environmental Scientist/Waterways Manager

So as you can see, the appropriations for Fiscal Year 2022 are pretty much the same. The increase really it's about \$1,200 and it's really based on our telephone expenses. We need to keep both of those facilities – I always ask them every year but - Essex Power who is our contractor that does the actual maintenance and operation of both facilities, they tell me every year that we need to continue to have a landline. So as someone who does not have a landline at my home, it always irks me a little bit that they still need one but it's really from a safety standpoint to be able to make a phone call in an emergency as needed to have a landline available at both of those facilities. That's really where that particular slight increase is for our budget for next year. Like I said, Director Marchant is really the one responsible for covering the costs on all the other stuff that we do in the Waterways Department whether its invasive species management, hydroelectric. Some of the hydroelectric work that gets done also comes out of special revenue accounts that we have put aside. When things break out there, it becomes expensive quite quickly.

I guess really not a lot new. We've got some new equipment going in at Jackson so if you're going to be eating at Margarita's sometime later this summer, don't be surprised if you see some huge heavy equipment going on out there. For Mine Falls hydroelectric, we are in the process of renewing our license out there. So hopefully by the time the end of July rolls around, we will have submitted our final application for that and fingers crossed we can actually get started on our next 40 years of generating power there.

Chairman Dowd

So being in logistics for longer than I'd like to admit, the new generator that's going in is something that we had designed and built. It's much more maintainable. We will have spares here in case it fails and it should run a lot more efficient and probably generate more power and more electricity and more revenue hopefully. So I will be interested in following that as it goes along. Is that taking into account in your projections?

Deb Chisholm, Environmental Scientist/Waterways Manager

The money that we are using to do the install of all the new equipment at Jackson was bonded. So that's the funds that we're focusing on relative to that. We also have in our general fund operation and maintenance. We are using Essex Hydro and they have certainly played a major role in helping us to figure out what works best because they're the ones that are operating the facility on a day-to-day basis. So they're the ones that are able to give us really the firsthand knowledge on what actually is working or will work best with the new equipment.

Chairman Dowd

Okay I was just referring to the fact that I would assume maintenance costs should go down and efficiencies should increase. I guess we'll have to wait and see and judge that once it's running.

Deb Chisholm, Environmental Scientist/Waterways Manager

Well I think – you're absolutely right. If we can keep that new turbine running more often than what ended up happening with our old equipment where it was breaking down frequently, then we'll certainly be ahead of the game. But also note that some of the expenses that are included in that operating and maintenance services line item also has to do with fish passage which is a critical piece of operating hydroelectric facility at a dam.

Chairman Dowd

Okay. Thank you.

Deb Chisholm, Environmental Scientist/Waterways Manager

You're welcome.

Chairman Dowd

Any other questions for hydroelectric operations? No. Thank you very much Deb.

Next department is Community Development 181. Revenue is on page 45 and appropriations on page 242.

Sarah Marchant, Community Development Division Director

Yes good evening again. Thank you. Sarah Marchant. The Community Development Department – the Division and the Department – has been working on some major projects this year. We don't actually have revenue. The revenue is actually the same page as the Building Department and Planning and zoning so Community Development itself does not have a revenue line. The Division has worked on some major projects including the invasives that Deb was talking about and several very large grants that we have secured in partnership with other divisions, specifically the Transit Center rehab which the construction on that should be starting next month. The East Hollis Street Rail Trail which did have some setbacks due to COVID and some environmentalists but we should be under construction next spring. As of just I think two weeks ago, the lighting was completed on the Cotton Transfer Bridge if any of you have had a chance to see that beautiful bridge and now it's all light up now. Some of the lighting on the north side of the Nashua River and for the first time some of the sculptures that the city has through the International Sculpture Symposium are now lit along the trail so we can really enjoy them. So I encourage you to check those out.

In addition, the biggest project of the year has been the Imagine Nashua – the city's Master Plan. The first time in 20 years. So that's been a pretty massive project. We've actually had phenomenal turnout on several meetings. We started to have some in person sessions as well but we'll be wrapping that up this summer and bringing it to you for adoption. So we don't have anything on the revenue side but I'd be more than happy to talk to you about the appropriation side.

Chairman Dowd

Okay.

Sarah Marchant, Community Development Division Director

So the budget is the changes are based largely on just salaries and wages. To meet the directive, we did reduce the other contracted services line. That line does include less money for invasive which is where we pay for the matching funds for the aquatic invasive species that is through the Nashua River. We were awarded a larger grant this year than we have been in the past from NHDES so that was able to help us reduce our match a little bit. In addition, every other year we do the Millpond and canal and next year we will not be doing the Millpond and canal so it's a slightly smaller area. That is what has helped us to be able to meet a reduction this year.

Chairman Dowd

Okay. So are there any questions relative to Community Development Department appropriations? Alderman Jette.

Alderman Jette

Thank you Mr. Chairman. Director Marchant when you talked about reducing the other contracted services almost in half and you say you're not going to treat the Millpond or the canal. I'm concerned of the affect that that's going to have. Are we going to be okay? I mean the canal is already pretty green. I don't know what causes that whether it's an invasive, or whether it's natural, or algae, or something else. Can you talk about that?

Sarah Marchant, Community Development Division Director

I can explain. So the invasive aquatic treatments are based on the River Management Plan that has been done. The River Management Plan for the canal and Millpond only requires treatment every other year. That has been the case for a very long time. We've actually had tremendous success at reducing the aquatic invasive species in that area and that every other year is more of a maintenance than a large eradication program. Unlike the Nashua River where we are still in an eradication program, we haven't gotten to more of a maintenance stage. So the green that you see is more of a naturally occurring algae and that certainly is something concerning but it is not treatable by what we would be doing with the invasive species.

Alderman Jette

OK so you were planning on doing that this year anyway, it is not a cost-saving measure, it is part of the plan.

Director Marchant

Just got lucky.

Alderman Jette

OK good. That's good to know, thank you.

Chairman Dowd

That's it? All set Alderman Jette?

Alderman Jette

Yes, thank you.

Chairman Dowd

Anyone have any questions for the Community Development Department? Seeing none, thank you Director Marchant. Next we will go Planning & Zoning which is Department 182, Revenue on Page 45 and the Appropriations on Page 245.

Matt Sullivan, Planning Department Manager

Good Evening Mr. Chair and members of the Committee. My name is Matt Sullivan, I am the Planning Department Manager for the City. The Department is a team of 7 members, including myself and we are focused really on two primary tracks and those are supporting the Planning and Zoning functions of the City particularly through providing staff support to various Boards and Committees that are responsible for implementing the goals of the City's Master Plan, which as Director Marchant mentioned just a few moments ago is currently in the process of being updated. Specifically that manifests itself through our support to the Planning Board, the Zoning Board, Historic District Commission, the Conservation Commission and, of course, the Capital Improvement Committee which provides the capital framework for future investments in the City.

In addition to that support role we also provide technical assistance to a multitude of other community organizations, City organizations and certainly City Initiatives, Strategic and the like. I think as you probably heard from other Departments and Divisions as part of these presentations, FY 2021 was a challenging year for us and unlike any other I think that the Department had seen. And that was not only related to obviously the COVID-19 public health crisis, but also the unrelated or perhaps related development trends that we saw in the City which were frankly unprecedented, I believe, in the context of our Department and the application volume.

Despite the intense workload, frankly our biggest accomplishment of this year was keeping up with that case volume while also continuing to provide high quality customer service and frankly keep the wheels turning within our volunteer Boards & Commissions and keep the process of development review in motion. And we did so fairly effectively and continue to change as we move into a more normal world with in-person and hybrid meetings. We are really proud of that and I want to commend the team on the job that they did to support the Boards & Committees. In addition we were able to continue our investment both on a time and from a financial perspective in developing review software and coordinating with other Departments that increase the efficiency and transparency of review processing within the City. We would like to think looking at our review processes and the efficiency that we maintain throughout the year that those investments were worthwhile.

We continue to meet the sort of compliance of our planning and zoning review schedule, again, in spite of those public health issues and certainly the challenges of our virtual meetings. We are really proud of that as we move into a new year with perhaps more normal circumstances. In addition, the fruits of those labors produced things like approximately 400 housing units that were created in the City of Nashua through the development review process last year. We are seeing this trend grow and certainly we are proud of the – albeit not our work directly – the positive impact that will have in the community as we go forward.

Further substantiating those activities are the strong revenues that you see reported within our revenues in your budget packets. Currently as of year-to-date we are about 124% of the FY '21 projected revenues. We projected about \$173,000.00 and we currently at \$216,000.00, again an indication of that strong development activity. However, as we move forward in the new Fiscal Year we are not projecting or proposing an increase in revenue really for two specific reasons. 1) Unlike the Building Department we have not comprehensively updated our fees in any way, we are maintaining our fees moving forward for development review and the second is that the market is frankly quite volatile and we are not sure what to expect in our new year. We have had a very busy year and we don't know what the future holds and as a result we are stabilizing our revenues moving into the next Fiscal Year. I am happy to answer any questions about revenues at this time.

Chairman Dowd

Any questions for Mr. Sullivan on revenues? Seeing none, OK we will go on to Appropriations on Page 245.

Mr. Sullivan

Thank you Mr. Chair. Moving forward to the new year we are excited about a variety of things, obviously working to implement the Imagine Nashua Master Plan and hopefully the subsequent code update that comes with that. I know my

team is looking forward to that and certainly our appropriations at a fairly level projection will maintain our support to that effort. Additionally, we are planning to continue our investment in Civicgov and digital permit review, but again those do not impact our proposed appropriations. In other words, as a result of proposing actually a decrease in our overall appropriations moving into the new Fiscal year, we have some minor modifications particularly in the discretionary lines, lines 53428 through 71900. The primary modification therein is the modification to the cell phone stipends. We are moving towards a more dynamic access, telephone access for our employees. We have changed the way that we do business in the Department, how we are offering access to meetings and that necessitates us offering those stipends.

You will also see some underspending I think within the ... particularly the salaries, mileage, professional development and the printing lines. Those are direct results of some of the impacts of COVID on our process in the last year. However, we are continuing to level fund those or with minor decreases heading into the new year. As a result, again, this represents a \$25,000.00 decrease overall in the Planning Department Budget moving into the new Fiscal year.

Chairman Dowd

OK any questions relative to Community Development Appropriations? Alderman Schmidt, did you want to ...

Alderman Schmidt

I did. I only needed to know how many employees are in this Department.

Mr. Sullivan

So we have 7 employees including myself, so there's 6 that are sort of split between the zoning and planning tracks below me.

Alderman Schmidt

Super, that's all I needed, thanks so much.

Mr. Sullivan

Of course.

Chairman Dowd

Any other questions? I will say Mr. Sullivan that you've done a great job coming in a year of drinking out of a firehose both from the COVID issue and the amount of development that's going on. Having been involved in many of the Planning & Zoning Meetings, it is amazing that those people go to the hours of the night that they do with all the cases they have, the caseloads that people aren't aware are very intense right now. So if that keeps up, your revenues may increase, but I am not sure we have enough land left to keep that up.

Mr. Sullivan

Well Alderman Dowd I just want to say thank you. I know that our volunteers certainly appreciate that comment as our team and myself, I certainly appreciate that. Thank you.

Chairman Dowd

I did notice that, like you said, that the cellular phone went up \$3,600.00 most everything stayed about the same. Printing services went down. So some of those things that went down were a result of changing the process a little bit because of what you learned during COVID?

Mr. Sullivan

I think we are changing the way we do business. I know that's a cliché but we are learning new ways to share information both to the public and the members of our Boards & Commissions that we staff i.e. not sharing and printing digital packets all the time, not printing all of our materials. And we are realizing some savings there, but also we are recognizing that that will potentially result in modifications elsewhere, like we are seeing in the cell phone stipend.

Chairman Dowd

Having been Chair of Zoning in the past, I can remember we killed a lot of trees. So doing it digitally is a lot better. Yes Alderman Wilshire.

Alderman Wilshire

Thank you. I would like to thank you as well Mr. Sullivan, I think your presence here in Nashua has been seen and felt and it is a positive change. So thank you, thinking outside the box, bringing your budget in less than you needed to. I don't know about "needed to" or not but thank you for everything you've done and everything you continue to do. I think you've been a great addition to that Department.

Chairman Dowd

Alderman Schmidt, did you have a follow-up?

Alderman Schmidt

No sorry, I just forgot my hand was up; I apologize.

Chairman Dowd

OK. Alright are there any questions for Planning & Zoning. OK thank you Mr. Sullivan.

Mr. Sullivan

Thank you.

Chairman Dowd

Alright, next we have Urban Programs, Department 184, Revenues on Page 250, Appropriations on Page 250.

Carrie Schena, Manager of Urban Programs

Good Evening, Carrie Schena of the Urban Programs Department. Our Revenues are generally what we receive through our grant funding. So to explain Urban Programs a little bit, we are entirely funded by grant, we do not have general fund. However we do see a small portion of General Fund through the Citizen's Advisory Commission which we will talk about. Our Department takes grants from HUD typically entitlement grants, sometimes competitive grants and we roll those funds out into the community primarily to low income populations or to agencies who are serving those populations. So to sort of repeat the anthem, I know that's been said this evening, the last year was quite a strain on the Department and on the staff.

We received a lot of funding that came through various stimulus packages; the CARES Act, we saw two rounds of funding of Community Development Block Grant and then just recently we received another allocation through the ARP or the American Rescue Plan and those will be HOME dollars that we don't know a lot about just yet. So we've done quite a magnitude of work this past year and we've done it without increasing our capacity staffing-wise. You know, other communities because you can use portions of those funds for admin to have brought consultants in or part-time people and we really thought it was important to get as much of that money directly into the community and not do that since our staffing had already been covered.

So just to give you an idea between the two rounds of CARES Act Funding, the first round funded 29 entities and so about half of those were businesses owned by low income individuals and the other half were non-profits. We then received a second round and rolled that out entirely to businesses where we focused on assisting what we call disadvantaged so we think of those minority and women owned businesses and that was about 18 businesses, we've just assisted, those checks just went out. So in total that represents about 6 times more the number of entities that we deal with in a regular year. And it was just over \$1 million dollars so substantially more workload. And it was really good to see that go straight into the community.

Meanwhile we kept up all of our regular services during the pandemic. And again working with the clients that we have, and especially the direct interface through some of our programs like housing, we have the Lead Paint Program. We really had to come up with creative ways to serve the public because a lot of the population that we work with don't have the same ability, whether it be education or language to access services the way that some other residents might be able to. So we pretty much did an anything goes policy and if they could apply on-line we took it that way. If all you could do was send a picture with one page of each document to send an application in that's what we did. We certainly did home visits and picked up documents, dropped off documents. So I really want to commend our team as well. They had a lot thrown at them this year. They were running new technologies while trying to serve the public with new technologies. And everybody did it with very little complaint and we understand the importance of getting these funds out into the community. I will say in addition to the CARES Act Funding which I think was greatly important to the community in a time of crisis was the award of our new lead grant and that was the significant increase in our revenues compared to last year because it is about 2 times than what our previous grant was. That is partly because HUD had more money to roll out and it's also because we are going to be doing a lot more units. So we have already got that process going, we applied for it and we were awarded it during the pandemic. We actually applied at the very start of the pandemic, they did not extend the deadline and again the team worked great to get that done and work collaboratively remotely. The total grant is \$4.7 million dollars over 3 ½ years. We will do at least 206 units, that started in mid-December and right now we already have about 59 units underway.

We were attempting to hire a position to help with that grant because it is such a high production and it is a lot for the existing staff to do so we are working on trying to fix the capacity that way but we are getting through thankfully. We have some really motivated people that like to see their numbers and their benchmarks achieved. So I will take any questions on revenues, but that's our revenues in a nutshell.

Chairman Dowd

Are there any questions for Urban Programs Revenues? Alderman Wilshire?

Alderman Wilshire

I don't have a question. I just want to thank Director Schena for all her hard work going after these grants. I know it is a lot of work, especially the lead grant because it is such a big grant and it does so much for the housing stock here in Nashua. So thank you for all the work you do and your Department, appreciate it.

Ms. Schena

I appreciate that comment.

Chairman Dowd

OK are there any other questions? Yes, Alderman Lopez.

Alderman Lopez

So regarding your comment about finding new ways to contact and engage people, I'm not sure exactly whether this fits into this specific comment because most of what we have been talking about are the lead grants. But you've used a virtual platform to engage people with the Imagine Nashua effort, the City-wide planning. I have a suspicion that that has probably actually reached a more diverse demographic than traditional let's meet in City Hall on the 3rd floor on a school night. And only the people who find out about that get to weigh in. So I think you've taken really good advantage of the opportunities to use other platforms to reach people and I am wondering how you see your budget reflecting that and the upcoming Your Choice, Your Voice projects, will you be continuing to try to integrate those things. Are you going to have to – is funding that we have that was available for those efforts now going to be redirected?

Director Marchant

If it's OK I'll take that one.

Chairman Dowd

Director Marchant.

Director Marchant

Thank you. So yes in the 2022 year we will be restarting the Your Choice, Your Voice participatory project in the Tree Streets neighborhood, we just had a kick off. We have an escrow from actually 2020 that we couldn't use because of COVID or 2019. And so that has kicked off, we have \$40,000.00 this year. You are right, we have used technology to interact with people in so many ways and we truly believe that we have interacted with so many more people through technology; whether it is virtual inspections or building and Urban Programs to just public meetings and discussions or small group meetings or having any easy time for a mom whose sitting on her playroom floor with a kid crawling all over her to attend meetings. We have been really, really lucky with that. With participatory budgeting we do believe that we really need to be physically in the community as much as possible because there is also a language barrier there. And so I wish I could speak Spanish and my team; we do have some Spanish speaking team members this year but it does seem to us that we will do a little bit of a mix. But we are going, for that specific project, focus on in-person again. We are keeping hybrid for all of our meetings going forward. For all the Land Use Board Meetings as everybody said there has been a heavy lift, but we have had more participation at Planning Board and Zoning Board meetings than ever before.

So we fully intend, even though we will have a quorum present, to continue with a full hybrid option in the future and ongoing. And all of our future planning and community outreach and public meetings will continue to have a hybrid option.

Alderman Lopez

I am really glad to hear that because I think you mentioned the mobility access, people who can't get out of their homes as easily, the logistics people who economically speaking might have to care for kids and can't bring them to a Zoning Board thing. But then there is other needs as well, Spanish is definitely one of them but things like sign language have really come to the forefront in terms of access where the deaf community was able to interact in very different ways than in the past at least in one direction. Because when you are running things through Zoom and through apps and that kind of stuff you can run the subtitles and we don't have to have a translator right there. So there's still more to go but I am really glad that you are going to continue with the hybrid model because I think it definitely increases accessibility and it is an example of one thing we don't want to forget from 2020.

Chairman Dowd

Thank you Alderman Lopez. Are you also going to address the Civic & Community Activities and Human Service Agencies?

Ms. Schena

Yes I can. So that is the Citizen's Advisory Commission, which I don't know how long we have to refer to it this way but formerly Review & Comment. And probably about four years ago it was revamped to Citizens Advisory Commission. That is a group of 7 community individuals who are appointed as volunteers. They meet over the course of early January through March usually about 8 meetings or more if they need them. And they review about 40 applications from non-profits within Nashua who are seeking funds. That is primarily funded through General Fund of the Mayor's Budget with a little bit of CDBG that also goes into it. 15% of the CDBG Grant each year goes toward those activities as well. And so that Committee makes those recommendations and the Mayor folds it into the Budget.

Alderman Caron is the appointed elected official who sits on that Committee and again just to commend people as much as we can. They work very hard every year to review those applications. Each meeting is about 3 hours long at a minimum and they very carefully and thoroughly vet those applications and consider the greatest need. Where is the need in Nashua, what is the financial need of the agency and who are the people that people that will be served. And so, again, just to thank that group of volunteers and they did that all by Zoom this year as well.

Chairman Dowd

Has the funding that's been available through Boston Billiards and Arena taken some of the pressure off of the allocations in the Committee?

Ms. Schena

I don't know that it has taken the pressure off only because we continue to see costs rise and especially given the last year the needs of people have rose substantial.

Some of those non-profits do get to be the beneficiaries of those nights through Boston Billiards and they include that in their budgets where possible. But the gap between the need and what is available is still big. Every bit helps.

Chairman Dowd

Any questions from the Committee relative to review and comment, excuse me Advisory Board; been here a while. I don't see any. OK and the other is the Human Service Agencies on Page 70. Alright. Are there any other questions at all on Department 184? Anyone? No. OK thank you very much for presenting.

Ms. Schena

Thank you.

Chairman Dowd

The next Department is 186 Transportation; Revenues are on Page 256 as well as Appropriations.

Director Marchant

Good Evening again, Sarah Marchant. My brand new Transit Administrator Camille Correa is coming up to speed very quickly but four days is not enough to present next year so I am standing in for her this evening. I just want to thank Camille Pattison who has been the Transit Administrator for almost 6 years who has done remarkable things for that Department and brought in almost \$4 million dollars in competitive grant funding on top of regular projects. So we are actively in the process of this next year of implementing some of those grants. The biggest one which would be the Transit Center and some security and safety upgrades, those are all nationally competitive 5339 Grants and no-low grants. We have our first fully electric vehicle and we are putting in some charging stations as well. So we should also comment our amazing mechanics team who has the luck of working on diesel, CNG Hybrid Electric and now fully electric vehicles as well. And they adapt and overcome and are amazing. They have become trained in all these vehicles and just a huge shout out to them for keeping – at first a very old fleet running and now for being able to adapt to all this new technology as we embrace it as it comes forward.

So Transit is very level-funded this year, besides those larger grant project. Something to note that has risen that we can't necessarily see because of last year is that the first transit contract which was renegotiated has significant increases to remain competitive wage wise. I think you will remember I was before you I think in January over this. The School District raised school driver wages very significantly and not only do we have a massive driver shortage with COVID but we were not being competitive with wages either. And so thank you to your support this does include increases to the contracted operator, contracted services line which is our Operator First Transit to provide a competitive wage to our drivers who have been at the very front lines through COVID this whole year as well.

Overall, Transit has done an amazing job. We went from cancelling fixed route service on a moment's notice to going to all on demand service to then bringing our fixed route service back in phases and we pivoted a bit to be leaner and more efficient. So we aren't exactly the same as we were before COVID came, but we think we are leaner and more efficient and we have introduced some new on demand services which is the wave of the future. We just have to find way to do that economically. So we are excited about that in the next year and to bring back the most loved Hampton bus ride trips and the Polar Express. I know we are doing two Hampton rides and they sell out instantly and so Transit Team has worked so hard through COVID to make all of this work. So unless there's any – I would be happy to entertain questions about the Transit Budget this year.

Chairman Dowd

Are there any questions relative to transportation? I do know Director Marchant that you are very excited to get started on this transit building, that project. It's been a haul getting the grant and the money in and the project started finally and I am sure you will be over breaking a water bottle over the side of the building when it is christened. OK if there are no other questions than Alderman O'Brien?

MOTION BY ALDERMAN O'BRIEN TO TABLE R-21-142, BY ROLL CALL

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

Yea: Alderman Schmidt, Alderman Jette, Alderman Wilshire
Alderman O'Brien, Alderman Dowd

5

Nay:

0

MOTION CARRIED

GENERAL DISCUSSION

Chairman Dowd

Thank you everyone for coming in and presenting this evening. You guys have a very busy and fantastic Department for the City and provide great service so thank you very much.

PUBLIC COMMENT - None

REMARKS BY THE ALDERMEN

Chairman Dowd

I just want to put out there we had a loss today of a foreman in the Middle School Project working for Harvey Construction and it was a sad day for Harvey Construction and our thoughts and prayers go out to the family of Mike Halliday. Any other Remarks by Aldermen? Alderman O'Brien?

Alderman O'Brien

Yeah as many of the citizens know, today was another one of our stretch of probably 4 in a row of hot weather but unfortunately Nashua Fire & Rescue did have a fire on this day. It went to 3 alarms on Concord Street and they did a yeoman's job of extinguishing and keeping it within the attic area and everything. So nice job by another good City service. Thank you.

Chairman Dowd

Alright. Anyone else? Nope.

POSSIBLE NON-PUBLIC SESSION – None

ADJOURNMENT

MOTION BY ALDERMAN O'BRIENTO ADJOURN, BY ROLL CALL

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

Yea: Alderman Schmidt, Alderman Jette, Alderman Wilshire
Alderman O'Brien, Alderman Dowd 5

Nay: 0

MOTION CARRIED

The meeting was declared closed at 8:04 p.m.

Michael B. O'Brien, Sr.
Committee Clerk