

**CITY OF NASHUA
BOARD OF FIRE COMMISSIONERS
SPECIAL MEETING MINUTES
WEDNESDAY, AUGUST 23, 2023**

THE MEETING CAME TO ORDER AT 4:02 P.M.

MEMBERS PRESENT:

Kevin Burgess
Mary Ann Melizzi-Golja
John Steere

MEMBERS NOT PRESENT:

Paul Garant
Gary Lambert

STAFF PRESENT:

Chief Steve M. Buxton
Assistant Chief William B. Atkinson

STAFF NOT PRESENT:

OTHERS PRESENT:

Deputy Fire Chief Mark Wholey
Local 789 President Thomas Wholey
Local 789 Steward At Large Julian Reed

SPECIAL AGENDA NEW BUSINESS

23 88 Discussion on Assistant Chief Positions

Chief Buxton discussed the following:

- Assistant Chief Atkinson verbalized his retirement effective in October
- Time being of the essence, in conversation with Commissioner Burgess
 - Posted the positions
 - Letters of those interested are due by Monday, 08/27/2023
 - Resumes are due by Wednesday, 08/30/2023
 - In order to include them in the BOFC Packages for the September meeting
 - Those members expressing interest to move forward will be able to be interviewed at the September BOFC meeting
 - September BOFC Meeting will start at 5:00pm in order to hold interviews

Motion by Commissioner Melizzi-Golja to accept Item 23 88, oral information as presented and place on file

Seconded by Commissioner Steere

Vote 3-Yes

Motion Carries

23 89 Local 789 CBA Ratification

Chairman Burgess discussed the following:

- Everyone has had the opportunity to review the redline
- Open for any questions or discussion
- Has a question about the 3% one time that was struck on the grid
 - That is in the actual grid

Chief Buxton mentioned that in FY27 the certification levels have been removed

Chairman Burgess was part of the committee that negotiated the contract, he is good with it.

Commissioner Melizzi-Golja requested that, for the purpose of the minutes, that Chief Buxton give a summary of the major changes so they're captured in the minutes for the public to look at.

Chairman Burgess asked if Chief Buxton has highlights.

Chief Buxton discussed the following:

- Payroll Grids
 - Year One – FY24
 - Roll holidays in to base salary
 - Cancel the FLSA 5-hour rule
 - 2.5% COLA for entire labor group
 - Year Two – FY25
 - 2% Adjustment to pay grids for Suppression force and FMO for Hazard, which will be maintained moving forward
 - 2% COLA entire labor group
 - Exchange for HMO program the city had requested, Local 789 countered with a request for MERP (Medical Expenditure Reimbursement Program), MERP will be funded
 - Year Three – FY26
 - HazMat A Team Members
 - Currently Receive an hour weekly stipend
 - Will change to a 3% increase to base salary
 - Dive Team Members
 - Currently Receive an hour weekly stipend
 - Will change to a 3% increase to base salary
 - HazMat A Team Members
 - Currently Receive a half hour weekly stipend
 - Will change to a 1.25% increase to base salary
 - 2.5% COLA for entire labor group
 - Year Four – FY27 Requests
 - Payroll grids adjusted all to the Certification 3 level and will embark on an in-service training program for those that become promoted which will allow to control the ability when a member gets promoted that they achieve the certification the team wants them to have where as currently it is left up to the individual and they get the financial award if they achieve it.
 - 3% COLA for entire labor group
- Administrative side
 - Many language-updates
 - Cleanups to some language that has been in there for many years
 - Credit to both sides for the updates, there was an all-out effort to adjust that

- Incorporated four MOUs into the CBA
 - Military Leave
 - Administrative Overtime
 - Daylight Savings Time
 - Promotional Process Adjustment
- Healthcare
 - Agreement to establish a healthcare trust committee to review healthcare and potential different programs and savings that both the city and membership could realize and potentially achieve better benefits
- Establishment of language for a Captain of EMS position within the organization when able to receive funding for it
 - Will adjust some of the promotional process
 - There won't be a special test for the position, it will come directly off the captains' list as currently a special test is held
- Establishment of the In-Service Training Programs
 - Will allow for a member to be removed from the line and send to school when they get promoted to achieve the proper training. Currently this is a struggle and do not have the ability to do this.
- Overall
 - Collaborative effort
 - First time in Chief Buxton's career at NFR that have had a tentative agreement in place prior to the expiration of the previous CBA

Chief Buxton wanted to thank President Wholey, the Entire Executive Board, Commissioner Burgess, Commissioner Lambert, Deputy Wholey and Attorney Bolton for their efforts in negotiating the package. These efforts, especially the payroll grids, would not be at all possible without the support of Anne-Marie Boucher and Karen Conde.

Chairman Burgess stated, for the record, that the Local successfully ratified the contract.

President Wholey discussed the following:

- Went well
- Questions answered
- Big changes in the organization
- Promotional process for the specialty jobs
- Change of working conditions which some have to adjust to
- Find, in the chief's point of view, the streamline promotions and move up through and create job opportunities for the membership. Feel it is a proactive approach to those positions instead of stand-alone tests.
- Local 789 appreciates all the efforts.
- Can't thank Chief Buxton enough and Deputy Wholey for all their work
- Did a lot of workshops behind the scenes before going to City Hall
- Commissioner Burgess being there at City Hall as well
- Attorney Bolton, hands down it was a true negotiation of the Local wanted things and the City wanted things
- Local 789 appreciates the efforts, most importantly with healthcare.
- Local 789 did an analysis of the cost of what it would do to go to the HMO
 - It is pretty costly if you do use it.
- That was the initiative in the last contract with the HSA and driving members over there

- MERP account is going to answer a lot of recruitment and retention issues.
 - Medical Expense Reimbursement Program is through the IAFF.
 - Started out in the Northwest
 - Launched tax codes
 - Can go coast to coast with it
 - Local 789 will be the first fire department union in the Northeast to have accomplished this goal
 - MERP is just starting to get moving
 - Answering a lot of pension concerns that were changed upstate, the benefits that were stripped from all the new hires and some of the sliding scale
 - Hoping that's very attractive to help with recruiting membership coming to Nashua
- Rolling Holidays in – a way of getting a higher salary without going to COLA
- COLA is 10% over the four years so trying to keep that low, Local 789 does think of the citizens of Nashua and the tax payer, don't want to ask for too much but also trying to support families, felt this was the best way to do it.
- Loss of the FLSA 5-hour rule – takes a toll on members when working all the extra hours. It's 2023, the Local has been bargaining that down and finally achieved it to say that it's worth working the overtime to maintain the staffing to provide the safety it does for the community, not just for the citizens but the firefighters so trying to entice members to fill those shifts and make it beneficial to take away the time from their families to say there is a little bit higher monetary value.
- Hands down a great experience
- It was a pleasure working with Chief Buxton on this and Deputy Wholey.

Motion by Commissioner Steere to accept Item 23 89, the Local 789 Ratified CBA as presented and send it to the Board of Alderman for approval

Seconded by Commissioner Melizzi-Golja

Vote 3-Yes

Motion Carries

Commissioner Steere thanked everyone for participating in negotiations and thanked Local 789 for ratifying the contract.

Commissioner Melizzi-Golja thanked everyone for participating in negotiations and thanked Local 789 for ratifying the contract.

Date and Location of Next BFC Meeting:

Wednesday, September 6, 2023, at 177 Lake St Training Classroom, 5:00 pm for interviews, meeting to follow

Date, Time and Location of other Events

Thursday, September 7, 2023 at 7:00 pm
Budget Committee Meeting to discuss Local 789 Contract

Sunday, October 1, 2023, 10:00am, Memorial Sunday, at Firemen's Memorial at the intersection of Manchester and Concord Streets, breakfast to follow at the Courtyard Marriot at Southwood Drive

Adjourn

MOTION TO ADJOURN

Motion by Commissioner Steere to adjourn the meeting at 4:19 P.M.

Seconded by Commissioner Melizzi-Golja

Vote - 3

Motion Carries