

A special meeting of the Board of Aldermen was held Tuesday, October 4, 2022, at 7:00 p.m. in the aldermanic chamber.

President Lori Wilshire presided; City Clerk Dan Healey recorded.

Prayer was offered by City Clerk Dan Healey; Alderman Ernest A. Jette led in the Pledge to the Flag.

Let's start the meeting by taking a roll call attendance. When each member states their presence, please indicate if participating via Zoom state why you are not meeting in person and whether there is anyone in the room with you during this meeting which is required under the Right-To-Know Law.

City Clerk Healey called the roll.

The roll call was taken with 10 members of the Board of Aldermen present: Alderman O'Brien, Alderman Sullivan, Alderman Klee, Alderman Moran, Alderman Jette, Alderwoman Kelly, Alderman Dowd, Alderman Gouveia, Alderman Caron, Alderman Wilshire.

Alderman Lopez, Alderman Clemons, Alderman Comeau, Alderman Thibeault, Alderwoman Timmons were recorded absent.

Mayor James W. Donchess, Corporation Counsel Steven A. Bolton were also in attendance.

President Wilshire to turn the meeting over to Chairman of Budget Review Committee Richard A. Dowd.

### **PUBLIC HEARING**

**R-22-063**

### **RELATIVE TO THE RE-APPROPRIATION OF FISCAL YEAR FY2023 ESCROWS**

#### **Chairman Dowd**

Good evening. This evening we're going to have a public hearing on R-22-063 Relative to the Reappropriation of Fiscal Year FY2023 escrows. Just so we can discuss the process in a minute, I'm going to have the Mayor come up and describe his selection. Then after that, we're going to be having the different division directors come up, explain about what they're requesting, and why, and then if the Aldermen are clear on what's being requested, you can ask a clarifying question. But if you're going to ask any more detailed question, we'll do that during the budget hearing. The Mayor has indicated at the division directors will stay and answer any more specific questions. So having said that, I will ask the Mayor to give us an overview

#### **Mayor Donchess**

Well thank you very much, Mr. Chair. So I thought it would be helpful if we began by talking about the precedent, the procedure we've used for many years now to deal with funds that are available at the end of the year. This is a process that we've really had for really decades, I think. Money is available at the end of the year from two basic sources. First of all, revenue which exceeds the amount of revenue projected in the budget; and number two, appropriations money which remains unspent in various department budgets. Every year we approach this exercise by trying to decide how to allocate that money against various needs that we have. We balance the need to continue to and I will address this a little more detail - the need to continue to have a strong assigned and unassigned fund balance to make sure that we retain our two AAA bond rating, which is a very rare distinction among communities in New Hampshire, money to the tax rate, and then to various needs that the departments have expressed.

So what the ordinance calls for on this public hearing is for the administration to make a presentation to the Board during the public hearing then, of course, the public can comment. Our presentation will consist of the, you know, my introduction here, as well as remarks from department heads. I think we will bring them up to address the various issues in the escrow proposal and that is R-22-063. The order, I believe, is going to be Chief Rourke of the Police Department, Chief Buxton of the Fire Department, John Griffin, the CFO, Matt Sullivan from Community Development, Shawn Nelson from PAL, Tim Cummings, Economic Development and Acting Administrative Services Director, Brian Conant from the Parks Department in the Department of Public Works. Lisa Fauteux wanted to be here but she was

stranded as she is still stranded as a result of the storm and could not make it back to New Hampshire in time, and Dan Donovan from the School Department. I want to thank all of our department heads for coming.

So first, I want to give you an overview of the money that was available in some of the major uses that we are proposing with respect to those funds. We have developed this bar graph to show you the relative size of some of these uses and the needs that we're seeking to address as a result of this escrow process. As you see from the bar graph on the left, the largest amount of funds - \$5.9 million would go to the fund balance. Now that we made a previous presentation to the Budget Committee and the Board regarding this. The fund balance consists of assigned and unassigned. Assigned is for risks that we either anticipate or don't but want to be prepared in case unanticipated problems come up. The effort here is to grow the fund balance every year, which is what the rating agencies like to see - the financial community in order to maintain our AAA bond ratings. They've said specifically that growth of the fund balance is very important and that any decline in the value in the amount of the fund balance would be problematic. In fact, we do even have an ordinance that says that at least 10% of the city budget needs to be retained in the unassigned fund balance. That percentage will be 11.2%, which is typical for us. We're usually above the 10.

So as you see from the bar chart, \$5.9 million would go to the fund balance, \$3.6 million to the assigned, and \$2.3 million to the unassigned. Now we have gone over the details of this in the context of previously approving a \$4 million allocation to offset the tax rate. But just as a brief review, we need to replace the \$3.6 million of assigned fund balance just to maintain the assigned fund balance level because on three occasions, we needed to go to the assigned fund balance this year and use it for various needs. So this would replace that money. As you see in the note on the left, we drew down on a reserve for abatements which had been in place for quite some time. So we're proposing that \$1.5 million be directed to that abatement reserve to replace the money that was used to meet basically COVID related abatements that have been granted over the past year.

The second time we used assigned fund balance was to fund the first year of the teacher's contract - the four year teacher's contract. That was a \$1.3 million draw down. The issue there was that the teachers in the city agreed to a change in the HMO plan which will save more than \$2 million a year but that could not be implemented until year two of the contract. So we needed \$1.3 million in year one to make sure that the city's obligations under the contract could be met.

The third source of funds that we use from the assigned fund balance was the Fire Department incurred expenses over and above its budgeted amount. We have here \$800,000. The reason for that was explained by them at the time but it had to do with overtime and vacations that had not been used as a result of COVID and all of the disruption that arose from people not taking vacations and having to respond with continuing to respond, of course, to the needs of the Fire Department in the community while a lot of people were out and people could not take vacations. So we allocated \$800,000 for use by the Fire Department to meet those obligations. Again, we used that from the assigned fund balance. So 3.6 million would go back into the assigned fund balance to replace those funds that we had used during the course of the year.

We're also proposing that we grow the unassigned fund balance as we typically do. When we went over this with the Budget Committee and the Board, you saw the chart where the fund balance grows consistently year after year. So we are we are proposing that \$2.3 million go to the unassigned portion of the fund balance for a total of \$5.9 million into the fund balance use.

Number two, biggest use you see in the second bar graph, is the \$4 million that the Board of Aldermen voted to use to offset the tax rate. That was voted on and resolved I think at the last meeting of the Board of Aldermen. The third bar graph is the CERF account. Now some people might not know what CERF refers to. That means the "capital equipment reserve fund". What that that fund is used to do is to buy equipment for departments throughout the city. In the budget that was passed in June of this year, there was no money budgeted for equipment purchase. No money allocated to CERF. Now the city has a very well detailed and a plan regarding which pieces of equipment need to be replaced in any one year and that projection goes out a quite a few years. If the city were not to buy equipment, it wouldn't take very long for operations to be compromised. There was a time some will remember it in the city when the snowplows were in such bad shape we could barely plow the streets. We certainly don't want to get back to that. But what am I talking about when I say equipment, police cars, plow trucks, parks trucks, other trucks and equipment that Public Works needs, sometimes the Fire Department has - these do not include huge pieces of equipment like the fire engines, but the Fire Department has other needs and vehicles need to be replaced. So typically we've done this

and this has been a number of years we've taken money at this time during the year during the escrows and assigned them allocated it, appropriated it towards equipment purchases. That's CERF.

The bar on the graph is the School Department. They have requested \$1.5 million be used for various needs that they will explain. My approach here is that the School Department ran a \$2.5 million surplus meaning they did not spend \$2.5 million which we appropriated them during Fiscal Year '22. Given their budgetary autonomy, they probably could reallocate as much of that money as they wanted and spend it on school needs without really asking us but in a spirit of cooperation, they have said well they're willing to return \$2.5 million of surplus. They've asked and Dan Donovan from the School Department will explain how this money would be used but they've asked that they be allowed to use \$1.5 million of their surplus. At least my approach towards this is if we want to encourage them to continue to come up with a surplus at the end of the year, we need to allow them to use some of that for their own needs otherwise maybe we won't have a surplus the next year.

The fifth bar is the DPW. Brian Conant from Parks. Lisa was going to be here as I said – Lisa Fauteux but Brian Conant will explain what they're proposing for Parks.

Next is city buildings. There is a city building fund and I believe Tim Cummings is going to address this. We just reserved money every year into the city building account to make sure that when needs arise, repairs to city buildings can be accomplished. For example just within the last few weeks, the boiler at the Hunt building broke and needed to be replaced on an emergency basis if we want to get through the winter. That was \$90,000 or \$100,000. Things like that can happen with a number of buildings around the city. So that would go into a reserve fund to be spent, if needed, and if approved by the Board of Aldermen.

Finally, the next largest item is \$300,000 in legal fees. That is caused by the fact that the city was recently sued in two lawsuits. The city met various individuals, employees of the Police Department, two different individuals - employees of the Police Department, the lawyers, a whole bunch of people were sued. We cannot use the city Legal Department because they're being sued individually. So we have to engage outside lawyers which we've undertaken to do. Those engagements were approved by the Finance Committee in a non-public session.

So those are the major needs that we're proposing. Now there are some smaller things which the various department heads will discuss as they come forward. As you indicated Mr. Chair, they're available to answer clarifying questions if you wish now but they've all indicated, I think everyone has indicated that they are more than willing to stay for the Budget Committee deliberations so they could answer questions from the Aldermen at that time. So with that, I think I've given you an overview of the situation. If you have questions for me, of course I'm available too.

I think the first but let me address two specific things that come up first. The Police Department believes that - and you'll hear this from the Chief that they need to more officers to meet needs that they are seeing arise as a result of the growth of population, the increase in calls, and the growth of some of the businesses in the city like the gaming business. We are noted to be a very safe community and in order to maintain that reality and reputation, I think we need to work with the Police Department on this and help them add those officers which would bring them to from, I believe, 179 to 181.

And another new position, and that's why I'm addressing this specially, is going to be discussed by Chief Buxton of the Fire Department. You will remember that in this year's budget or in the current year's budget, we did not fund the Emergency Management Director in an effort to save money. Justin Cates left some time during the last fiscal year so there was a period of vacancy there and then we did not fund it this year, again, in an effort to save money. But over the course of the last couple of months, Chief Rourke, Chief Buxton, Bobbie Bagley of the Community Health, and I think others have approached me and said that they really think we need a an Emergency Management Director that the city holds public events. And of course as we look around and we see what's happened in the country over the last few years with rising violence and we pray and believe this will not happen in Nashua but who knows, you never know. So they've persuaded me that I think we need to budget the expense for an Emergency Management Director. So we have an assistant working but not at the level that we should have. So within the budget is money for pay and benefits for an Emergency Management Director. We did post the position. There was an interview team - the two Chiefs as well as - well I can tell you who was on the interview team, but they interviewed several people or they looked at several resumes and came up with an interview with a very strong applicant who's familiar in the city and have recommended a particular applicant, which I expect we will move forward to engage if you approve this part of

the escrows. Chief Buxton and maybe Chief Rourke will address those issues. Anyway, I think I've talked long enough, Mr. Chair so I will ask Chief Rourke to come up and talk about the Police Department.

Chairman Dowd

And as he's coming up, are there any questions from the Board of Aldermen to the Mayor at this time? Seeing none, Chief. Okay. Chief will you discuss some of the requests that you have?

Kevin Rourke, Police Chief

Sure. Good evening and thank you for allowing me to speak tonight on matters that address the escrow funds of the Police Department. We are looking for approval to purchase three different equipment items and the approval of one to two officers.

First I'll talk about the equipment in regards to the first item - helmets. The Department is seeking to acquire 50 additional crowd control helmets to add to our current inventory of approximately 25. These helmets will assist the Department in complying with the nuclear standards for officer training and crowd control. Additionally with the recent emergence of domestic direct terrorism and civil disturbances, the Department will be adequately equipped to properly respond to and deter these occurrences. Responding to such incidents require significant manpower and crowd control equipment, which we are lacking at the moment. This will give us a step in the right direction. The older helmets that we have now are not as protective as the new ones we're looking to purchase.

Second item is laser aiming devices. We are looking to purchase six of these. We currently have six in our inventory. In an effort to maximize their ability to safely resolve critical incidents such as barricaded subjects, hostage rescues, or wooded searches the SWAT team has been in the process of acquiring laser aiming devices for each operator. Laser aiming devices mounted to the top of the rifle and an invisible infrared laser that can only be seen by someone using a night vision device such as goggles or handheld monocular. While you may hear the term "laser aiming device" and related to shooting in the dark, that is not the device's primary purpose for Nashua SWAT officers who use them to observe, mark, and navigate in low light or no light situations. By being able to emit a laser that is invisible to everyone besides SWAT officers, they are able to communicate in silence by marking buildings, doors, windows, or terrain features with a pointer rather than having to talk to say that needs to get checked or when they need to go. Furthermore, these laser aiming devices are also capable of emitting a broad infrared beam which has the effect of a flashlight to someone using a night vision device. This allows our SWAT officers to search areas in the dark as if they were using a flashlight but there is no visible light for the subject to see. So the officers are able to advance through a structure or woods under the cover of darkness which greatly enhances officer safety but not giving away their position.

The third item is rifle shields. We are looking to purchase one. Ballistic shields are used by officers when dealing with an unknown threat or in the face of expected or actual armed resistance. The Department currently has an inventory of ballistic shields that are ready to stop most pistol and rifle rounds that may be may be fired at officers in the course of their duties. However, the shields are more than five years old which is important for a few reasons. The first is that while the shields were the state of art at the time, they are built using data technology and materials which means they are much heavier than shields available today with the same level of ballistic protection. The weight of our current shields makes them difficult to use safely and officers tire quickly while carrying them. Each shield weighs approximately 19 pounds.

The second reason the age of our shield is important is because they are at the end of their life. Our shields are kept in the back of each patrol vehicle and are used by plainclothes officers, specialty units to include our problem oriented policing unit, and our SWAT team. They do get a lot of use and some are actually starting to peel apart at the edges. Furthermore, our shield warranties have expired which means the manufacturer will no longer guarantee the level of ballistic protection that matches the rating. While our shields may continue to stop pistol and rifle rounds, it is a fact that their ballistic protection degrades with time and use and it is important that we begin processing the rotation of the shields.

In addition to replacing our shields due to that weight and age, we are also looking forward to a significant tactical advantage afforded by the new ones. Our current shields are solid ballistic panel with no viewport. This means that officers have to look around the shield, or to move through a structure, or maintain situational awareness during a critical incident. The shields we are hoping to purchase offer the same level ballistic protection but have a viewport which allows officers to search for subjects or maintain situational awareness without exposing themselves to gunfire.

Last, I'll speak about the additional officers. My plan is to ask for funding for one to two offices, pay, and benefits. The Nashua Police Department is a nationally accredited law enforcement agency as you all know. The Department recently completed the workload assessment in an effort to determine if our current staffing is adequate to handle our annual call volume while providing a level of service to citizens of Nashua need and deserve. Currently the Nashua Police Department has a budgeted authorized sworn strength of 179 police officers. This sworn strength has increased by two offices over the past 10 years. In July 2021, first time in my career, we're at full staff of 179 police officers. Unfortunately this only lasted a couple of weeks. We are currently down 13 police officers. A review of all our calls was determined that the average time an officer spends on a call for service is 51 ½ minutes.

According to the International Association of Chiefs of Police, the average motor vehicle stop lasts 10 minutes. The International Association of Chiefs of Police provides formulas for determining recommended staffing. The Nashua Police Department - we applied our own data to these formulas to complete the calculations which were used to develop recommended staffing for each of the three patrol division shifts. This formula according to IACP recommends that we should have 92 spots right now currently in the Patrol Division. Right now, we have 80 allotted spots in Patrol. We currently have only 64 of those spots filled. Our daily minimum staffing consists of just police officers. First shift, we have 13 officers. Second shift, 13, and third shift, 10.

In the past five years, we have lost 55 officers. Twenty-seven of those have retired. Those people had 20 plus years of service. 28 have resigned. That ranges from a one year patrolman to a gentleman who had 15 years on the job. Eleven of those 20 that have resigned have gone to other law enforcement agencies – MA State Police or federal agencies. Seventeen have totally left the profession and into the private sector. This is quite alarming. If I could point to one reason that I keep hearing in the building, it's because of the changes in the retirement system. Obviously, we have no control over that but that is one reason that I keep hearing day in and day out. The other reason I hear is the negativity towards the police. Many officers have left for that reason. Over the past several years, we've also had to place officers into new units and add to existing units because of the workload. We have also had to create new units because of the ways policing has changed and the technology. For example, we have had one officer to the Legal Bureau because of the case load. Our Legal Bureau right now has over 1,800 cases that they are working on. We have added one officer to the Firearms Training Unit. That's because of the demands and training with the State. We had one officer to a recruiting position to help with hiring. We've had one officer to evidence where we previously had a part timer retire. We added the computer forensic unit a couple of years ago where we have two officers assigned to that unit. Again with the technology and policing. We also have the Computer Crimes Unit and have two officers assigned there. That's a children against crimes unit.

This assessment was conducted, not including the new housing development in the city. We have had many housing development started and completed within the past year. We're having some built as we speak. To name a few - High Street, Marshall Street, Bronstein, Front Street, Concord Street, Franklin Street. There's many more I haven't mentioned. There's also talk of housing going in at Camp Doucette. Also a full time casino going in at Exit 1. We have one officer that covers that area down at Exit 1. That also would be covering that casino and the Pheasant Lane Mall. This requires more resources. As Chief of Police, I'm telling you that we need more officers in our Department to be able to deal with this. For a comparison, the City of Manchester - a little bigger than us, they have 267 officers. Lowell another surrounding city a little bigger than us, they have 250 officers. From the Mayor to the Board of Aldermen, you have all showed great support for our Police Department and we really appreciate that. Tonight, I'm asking you to support my plan.

Chairman Dowd

Thank you Chief. Are there any clarifying questions for the request that they have? Seeing none. Thank you Chief. Thank you Karen.

Mayor Donchess

Thank you. Now Chief Buxton if you could come up to address the emergency management situation. That would be very helpful.

Steve Buxton, Fire Chief

Good evening. Steve Buxton – Nashua Fire Rescue. Thank you for the opportunity to speak to you tonight regarding the Emergency Management Director. So there's four phases of a comprehensive emergency management plan: mitigation, preparedness, response, and recovery. Most jurisdictions only focus on the EMD with the resources to focus on the response. This reactive approach does not allow them to prepare their community appropriately for crisis situations. The Emergency Management Director prepares the plans and procedures for responding to natural hazards, accidents, and intentional emergencies. During the event, they helped lead the response and have a coordinator with the public safety stakeholders and officials within the community.

Throughout history, Nashua has assigned these functions to the Fire Department, the Police Department, even at one point in time the School Department. In the mid to late '90s, 2000s they assigned some of these duties to a co-chair type position of a share between fire and police. While these models got by, the individuals performing them were always handcuffed to two because they're attempting to serve two masters. In 2011, then Mayor Lozeau, hired a full time emergency management director named Justin Cates. In his ten years as the Emergency Management Director for Nashua, Justin stood up too many programs for me to actually run through a list for you here today. He participated in just as many coordinated responses. A short review of a few highlights and some things you may have heard of in our community - he built a robust search program, organized special events in planning operations such as the Fourth of July, Holiday Stroll, the development of the active threat standard operating guideline, and many associated trainings for stakeholders involved in that, pursue funding for active threat response kits. Most importantly, he became a student and gained an understanding of Nashua's critical infrastructure which most important the challenge of cascading consequences from infrastructure failures within our community can be devastating. An example of this would be if we had a power loss within our community that shut down the pumps that move water and sewerage throughout our community. These are just to name a few of the highlights that he accomplished in his time here.

The Emergency Management Director brings coordination to the table at which all of the leaders in the community sit. There truly is no better example than the city's coordinated effort in response to the COVID pandemic. While the major event showed how unprepared we actually were for a pandemic, it also showed how far ahead Nashua was of other communities, even the State of New Hampshire when it came to planning and coordination. The ability to respond to the pandemic was not something that just occurred. The foundation was in place for that response due to the work the Emergency Management Director had done not only in response planning but in a relationship building with all the stakeholders of our community. In addition to the response planning and coordination, the Emergency Management Director has been instrumental in providing the required education for our responders in the area of incident command. Much of this education and training is needed within our organizations to qualify for grant funding opportunities at both the State and federal level.

While we're speaking of grants, we should note that the Emergency Management Director has a unique understanding of the grant funding process and Nashua has realized a significant level of success and benefit from the efforts of this position. An argument can certainly be made that the grant funding in education alone far exceeds the cost of the position and the benefits the city will see. Between 2011 and 2021, the Office of Emergency Management for the City of Nashua was able to achieve \$1.2 million in preparedness grants and another \$1.7 million in recovery grants.

In closing in my 26 years at NFR, I've witnessed all models that I've mentioned previously in response to the Emergency Management Director within the City of Nashua. Chief Rourke, Director Bagley, and myself agree that this position is best suited to serve the City of Nashua through its own office and not under the umbrella of one of our own departments. Nashua invests heavily in public safety and I would ask you to continue to do so by providing funding for this position. Thank you.

Chairman Dowd

Does anyone have any clarifying questions for Chief Buxton on the Emergency Preparedness Director? Seeing none,

thank you Chief Buxton.

Steve Buxton, Fire Chief

Thank you.

Mayor Donchess

Yes thanks Mr. Chair. So now, CFO Griffin will come up to address various other items within the Resolution.

John Griffin, CFO/Treasurer/Tax Collector

Thank you Mr. Mayor, and Mr. Chairman, and members of the Board of Aldermen. My name is John Griffin, CFO/Treasurer/Tax Collector. My comments at this particular time are going to be brief. I really support the Mayor and his efforts to try to fund the CERF - the capital equipment reserve fund - at that \$3 million level. As you may recall through the last few budgets, we've appropriated or approved between \$2.2 and \$2.5 million annually. I'd like to thank the Police Department, Fire Department, Board of Public Works team for what I would say deferring capital items. They looked at their fleet, their equipment, and they really decided whether they absolutely needed to purchase that and that's helped us.

What that's caused is moving those items just to the right in the next fiscal year, we have about \$5.5 million worth of vehicles. We have because you folks allowed us to appropriate \$3 million last year, we have about \$1,000,007 left in the CERF balance to which we're going to add this \$3 million and set the stage for the Fiscal '22 budget. We've talked about CERF. I know Alderman Dowd has kind of thought that there's a different way to skin the cat but the reality is, we need this money to provide our teams with the right equipment at the right time and not go down the hole of maintenance overtaking properly taking care of the vehicles and buying them at the right time. We've seen that prices are going up, the availability of equipment is slow with the supply chain issues but the CERF is in good hands, relatively speaking, and I wholeheartedly support the \$3 million to put into CERF as the Mayor suggested.

I have two items left. The next one is basically we've tried to make some enhancements with budgeting and planning software. What I'm requesting at this time is \$110,000 to provide for the payment of the subscriptions that we have with Workday Adaptive Planning, ClearGov, and we're going to introduce another solution called "Debt Book" that's going to allow us to more effectively track our bonding and our leasing going forward.

Then the final item is we've tracked the expenses that we get on hydrants. As you recall, that number is about \$3.4 million annually for that service. Pennichuck has recently notified us that they're going in for a rate increase. So the tariffs of hydrants is a Public Utility Commission approved rate structure. We're well covered in the city with a myriad of hydrants in the right spots but that bill is going to go up about \$200,000 in Fiscal '23 so we need the \$200,000 to make sure we can pay all those bills. Thank you.

Chairman Dowd

Okay. Are there any clarifying questions for Mr. Griffin?

Alderman Sullivan

Thank you, Mr. Chairman. Mr. Griffin I'm referring back to the budget that we approved back in June. My questions go back to tying off the capital equipment reserve fund, also known as the CERF. In the budget book that we looked at, the balance as of 3/31/22 was \$4.186 million and a total replacement cost of \$3.567 million. I believe you just said that our balance in that is now 1.5 and our replacement costs have gone up to 5.1? What's changed?

John Griffin, CFO/Treasurer/Tax Collector

Definitely a great question. If you bear with me a bit, I can explain. So what you're looking at - that large balance in CERF, that is the balance that hasn't been used by the equipment pieces that haven't been purchased yet. So if you look at it, we're kind of in arrears. So Fiscal '21, Fiscal '22 budget book approvals, as I mentioned, on the general fund draw it's between 2.2 - 2.5. So what we have to do in our heads is even though that's in the balance, the departments and divisions have every right to come before the Finance Committee and buy those. That's why it's troubling when you look at the balance because those purchases haven't been made. You see them on the Finance Committee. You see them as the teams go out, get the bids, and bring them before Finance for approval.

The 1.7 - the 1.5 balance that I'm aware of is an Excel spreadsheet that says you take the balance in the funding and subtract out the appropriations that are in the budget book. There's about \$2.2 million purchase. I'm not sure which pages you're looking at but...

Alderman Sullivan

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John Griffin, CFO/Treasurer/Tax Collector

306. So that has three columns. That has the general fund purchases, it has the amounts for bonding, and then it has the grant funding. So the CERF is all general fund. When those purchases are made, the funding is in the CERF fund.

Just to add some more clarity, we've already have enough money for what you approved in June. What this helps us do is when we plan Fiscal '24, we'll be able to buy with bonafide money what's in the fund. So we're really through an escrow process, we're like we're a year ahead of the game as far as funding. As the Mayor said, we've traditionally not been able to put in monies during the budget for CERF because of the other needs of the city, and the needs to balance the budget, the tax rate, and other things.

Alderman Sullivan

Okay. Thank you.

Chairman Dowd

Anyone else? Seeing no one.

Mayor Donchess

Thank you, Mr. Chair. Now Matt Sullivan will come up to address line items related to Community Development - hydroelectric.

Matt Sullivan, Community Development Director

Good evening Mr. Chair, Mr. Mayor, members of the Board. Thank you for having this evening. I'll be speaking to three specific requests this evening and speaking in support of one final request that Shawn Nelson will be bringing before the Committee for your consideration.

I'll start my comments this evening related to the requested contribution to the Hydroelectric Trust Fund at \$200,000 - the proposed escrows. By way of background, the Hydroelectric Trust Fund was created in 2015 and its basis was to provide support to the Jackson Falls Dam and emergency repairs and other expenses that would be associated with running that facility. It was later brought in in 2017 to expand it to include the same purpose but in fact to provide that support not only to Jackson Falls but also to the Mine Falls hydroelectric facility. If you're not aware of the Jackson

Mill facility is a one megawatt dam from generation perspective and the Mine Falls Dam is a three megawatt dam. So there's some variation in size. But again, the intent of this fund is generally to support the operation and ongoing emergencies that do arise as part of running a hydroelectric facility. Specifically, we've had drive shafts break. We've had fish ladder equipment break. Unfortunately because of the way that these facilities are funded and supported, revenue is a critical part of continuing this to be solvent moving forward. And so time is money very much.

The request this evening is \$200,000 to replenish the existing balance of the fund as it stands today. Specifically when it comes to the Jackson Falls facility, we're anticipating a large upgrade at that facility. That's been delayed by a period of one year and therefore the ability to have funds available to support any emergency work that might need to be done is of critical importance in that context. Happy to answer questions that arise as part of that request.

The second of my requests this evening is related to an asset that you may not be aware is under the jurisdiction of Community Development and that is the lighting along the Veterans Memorial Parkway Bridge. This is actually a Community Development managed construction project several years ago as a result of the donation received by the city. But over the years, this equipment has experienced wear and tear not only due to weather but due to other elements that exist in that specific geography. We have some equipment that's broken. Although the equipment provides a basic lighting function from a safety, security perspective to the bridge, it's actually color changing in nature and we often have requests from the public to light it for specific national holidays or other single day events whether it be a breast cancer awareness month, ovarian cancer awareness month. We've had several requests throughout the year with several of the fixtures being out. It's difficult for us to provide the same level of service to that equipment obviously and it doesn't provide the safety and security that's necessary from just a pedestrian and vehicle lighting perspective along the bridge.

The request is \$15,000. That will replace four lights and the associated controls with those lights. It also allows us to buy some backup equipment to ensure that if these pieces of equipment fail in the future, whether there's damage from the weather, or other factors, we do have the ability to make replacement in a timely manner to avoid having to come before you to make these repairs. I do want to point out the timing of this request. Several of these pieces of equipment broke at the same time and sort of mid budget stream and so this need was not known to us during the budgeting process of last fiscal year.

The third request before you this evening moves to our new Sustainability Department that this Board supported as part of the Fiscal Year '23 budget process. We're excited to get to work on moving forward. Many of the initiatives that the Sustainability Department was founded upon. In addition as you're aware, Energy Manager Doria Brown has been working very, very hard on the community power coalition efforts and the idea of bringing more affordable electric rates to the City of Nashua. The Master Plan adopted in 2021 laid out some very aggressive goals related to sustainability, energy efficiency, and the long term resiliency of our community. Specifically, I'll say just three here: one being achieving citywide carbon neutral electricity by 2050. The second is powering 25% of the buildings in Nashua by solar in 2050 and that refers to all structures within the city not just municipal facilities. And lastly, implementing a community power program with a goal of investing in community health renewables and bringing the entire city to an electric portfolio by 2050.

While each of these efforts - the creation of the Sustainability Department, the ambitious goals within the Master Plan, and of course the work of Doria Brown for community power while they're each in their own right a tremendous step forward for the city what we currently lack and what this request speaks to is a cohesive set of short and long term goals and a really an implementation strategy to achieve the goals that have been identified within the Master Plan. In order to actually to work through that plan and develop that strategy, we do need some outside expertise. Therefore, this requests seeks \$50,000 to secure professional consultant to work directly with the Community Development Division and Sustainability Department to create that comprehensive strategy document that will move us forward. Our expectation is that will involve a public process both with the Board of Aldermen - not both but with the Board of Aldermen, the public, ratepayers, and of course city staff. Ultimately, my hope is that we'll arrive at citywide sustainability vision statement, priority focus areas for the city in these areas, and corresponding goals, strategies, and benchmarks so that we have some very real targets as a city to work towards.

And lastly, I would like to include within the scope of work and update to the city's livable Nashua dashboard which you may not have been exposed to just yet. That would really be with an eye towards ensuring that our goals and strategies are actually achievable over the term of time that we're talking about within the context of the plan. Those are the three requests that I'd like to speak to this evening directly. Happy to answer any questions. Obviously, it's

part of the subsequent meeting and any requests from the public and I'll also be here to support Your Voice Your Choice Fiscal Year 2023 request that Shawn Nelson will speak to in just a moment.

Chairman Dowd

Any clarifying questions for Mr. Sullivan? Seeing none, thank you Matt.

Matt Sullivan, Community Development Director

Thank you.

Mayor Donchess

Now, I'm gonna ask Shawn Nelson to come up to talk about the impact of the Your Choice Your Voice but before he speaks, come on up and sit, I thought I'd give you the context of it. So in order to engage the tree streets neighborhood to an extent that we had not before, and there is not as good a relationship or close enough engagement with that neighborhood is really there should be given some of the problems that exist, we developed the Your Choice, Your Voice approach. What we've done for several years now, and this started a couple of years pre COVID and there was some interruption during COVID. We allocated a certain dollar amount for a neighborhood improvement. Then we saw to using staff develop 8 or 10 different ideas of neighborhood improvement projects that could be undertaken for the budgeted dollars. Those ideas were developed and then demonstrated with, you know, drawings and things like that. PAL was very involved. It was all done really well done it at PAL. Then once the ideas were developed, and we engaged really hundreds of residents in this, people from the neighborhood or really anyone could go in and vote on which of those projects they thought would do the most for the neighborhood.

The first project that was adopted was a futsal court. Now something that I had never even heard of before that and I believe a like a 9 or 10 year old boy came up with the idea. What it is, is it's an enclosed soccer field but it's on asphalt much smaller than a typical field. More like bigger than a basketball like a basketball court where kids can play soccer in an inner city basis and learn a lot of soccer skills. In the course of doing that, I mean some people you know were just so from the neighborhood and elsewhere so exhilarated by kind of this effort. I remember Sarah Marchant who used to be Community Development Director said that this was he project that gave her the most satisfaction of anything she'd worked on in the city for her period of seven or eight years, whatever it was. So we did it again.

And the next year, of course, the neighborhood came up with various ideas and ultimately arrived at improvements that were required or needed lighting and the like at Los Amigos Park. Since that time, some of those improvements have been undertaken. There's probably more to the story, but Shawn can fill you in on the impact that this has had in the neighborhood that he works in. Before I turn it over to him, I'll say that PAL while he's here has made a tremendous, tremendous impact in the City of Nashua and Shawn's leadership has been critical in that. He's taken, you know, this role in the tree streets neighborhood and really, really made a difference in the lives of many, many children, especially but adults and families as well. So thank you Shawn but I'll turn it over to you and you can talk a little bit about the way Your Choice Your Voice has worked for the neighborhood.

Shawn Nelson

Sure. Thank you. So as you know, I'm not a department head but I'm a member of many committees including Your Choice Your Voice and when there was so much turnover with Community Development, Matt knows much of it but turns out between Alderman Lopez and myself are the only ones left that from the original days of Your Choice Your Voice. So you'll see \$60,000 that is within that requests as the Mayor described. It's all about engaging the community that youth and families which is my specialty. The projects funded have increased lighting at Los Amigos Park, along the Heritage Rail Trail, have supported our thriving community garden population, and the futsal court which I had also not heard of until a 10 year old came in with this idea and then brought it to light.

How does the project work? That each project we've seen hundreds of ideas that have come community driven. So all of the ideas that come through this process are from Nashua community members. When we narrow them down, it's really based on the scope of work. There are some stipulations. They need to be affordable. They need to be a capital project and they cannot be something that can be addressed by another department easily. So after that, narrowing down the process really takes off that each project is assigned a community champion. So somebody of any age. You don't need to be a voting age. The futsal court was a great example of a young person rallying their effort, rallying hundreds of teenagers that before this process would not be involved in civic engagement unless this project process existed. Each community champion presents the project to the community and then the community votes. So after that narrowing process, the community votes. Last year, we were able to split some of the proceeds - split the available money into I think two and a half projects. Along the way, the really important part is that dozens and dozens of products that are identified that didn't make the cut for Your Choice Your Voice but that are spread amongst the many community leaders that we have. Examples - constant conversation around splash pads. How can we make that happen? It's too expensive a project to fit within the Your Choice Your Voice, sidewalk and road safety, adding water misters, and many, many, many more. So truly this \$60,000 could go to engage literally hundreds of community members that without it they won't feel motivated to get involved with what you all live and breathe every day. So that's Your Voice Your Choice.

#### Mayor Donchess

And before you may be asked any questions, I'd like to say that Alderman Lopez - Tom Lopez from Ward 4 has been very involved with this as well throughout all these years. Without him would not have been as successful as it has.

#### Chairman Dowd

Any clarifying questions? Seeing none, thank you Shawn.

#### Mayor Donchess

Thank you Mr. Chair. So now I would ask Tim Cummings. He's going to, of course, he's Economic Development Director but Acting Administrative Services Director. So he will address various administrative services requests - IT as well as Economic Development.

#### Tim Cummings, Acting Administrative Services Director

Thank you Mr. Mayor and through you to the Chair and the Committee. For the record, Tim Cummings, Director of Economic Development and Interim Director of Administrative Services. I'm here this evening to talk to you about the various escrow record requests. I will start with the Administrative Services. There's essentially two escrows - two deliverables from the escrows that are before you this evening. They go hand in glove with one another. First is the engagement plan. That is what the consulting services escrow is essentially going to be providing. As you may or may not know, labor - retaining employees is very difficult in this type of labor market and so what we're looking to do is develop an enrichment plan. One of the strategies from that is offering professional development through training and certifications, which is the second escrow that is before you through Administrative Services. This was an initiative started by Director Kleiner and I'm just carrying it forward on her and the Divisions' behalf because of the need that is out there.

Relative to IT. This is a relatively straightforward. There's some equipment that's necessary. I'm not going to go into any more detail but the risk or the city buildings, as I believe, the Mayor covered that relatively in a relatively straightforward manner in his opening comments.

And that would bring me to the Economic Development escrows. There's three escrows before you from Economic Development. First, one is to cover temporary part time administrative support for the office to assist with differing administrative functions. During the pandemic, we've reduced the Office of Economic Development buy one FTE. This before you would be a part time FTE. So it wouldn't even bring it back to its full complement. I'm thinking it would be temporary in nature and if it worked out, I would suspect that it would be something I would propose in next year's operating budget for a permanent position. Again, that's the first escrow.

The second escrow is relative to continuing of the study that's underway for the Elm Street Middle School. That's an initiative that has been undertaken by the Office of Economic Development to study repurposing of the Elm Street Middle School, which is getting turned back to the city in June of 2024. Clearly through that process, you know, there is more consensus needing to be gathered. The feedback I got actually from a couple of the subcommittee's here of the Board of Aldermen was that we need to further study this opportunity to see what might be in the best interest of the city. So this \$50,000 would retain the consultants and enhance the scope of work that we've started on that initiative.

And then finally is the outdoor dining initiative. This \$50,000 is what we've paid over the last few years for outdoor dining for us to be able to do it again next year and the following years. I would anticipate seeing this type of escrow as necessary as it wouldn't be built into the operating budget. This was a three year resolution that was passed by the Board of Aldermen. I think it would be appropriate only to do through the escrow process. That's essentially the various escrows for both the Office of Economic Development and the Division of Administrative Services. Of course, I'll be available for any clarifying type questions as need be. Thank you.

#### Chairman Dowd

Any clarifying questions for Director Cummings? Seeing none, thank you Tim.

#### Tim Cummings, Acting Administrative Services Director

Thank you.

#### Mayor Donchess

Thank you Mr. Chair. Next, we have Public Works. Now Bryan Conant who's Park's Superintendent is here. Lisa Fauteux, Director of Public Works, was going to be here but she's been stranded and cannot make it back to Nashua. So Mr. Conant is going to address some of these needs. You'll see that there are a number of lines related to Public Works. A lot in Park Recreation. I think he can talk through some of those, and you can learn more about them, and ask any questions that you have.

#### Bryan Conant, Park and Rec. Superintendent

Thank you, Mayor. Good evening. Bryan Conant, Superintendent of Parks and Recreation. Yes, we do have some escrows and we've got plenty of improvements to be made. I'm just going to go down the list. The cost to do the Lions courts - the courts over at Lions Park. I've had several residents contact me about these courts. There's currently one shuffle board court and some hopscotch. Several residents reached out to me saying that they, you know, a lot of people in the neighborhood wanted more shuffleboard courts. The court really isn't used that much. I thought it was a great idea and so that's why that's on here.

Earlier in the year, there was escrowed money for central irrigation. We focused on all our major water users' usage in the parks. Main Dunstable is a very big, you know, there's a lot of water that's used at Main Dunstable. It was not on that list. There wasn't enough money to cover it. So that's what this is about. I think it's been great. The installation has been completed. It gives us access on a desktop or an iPad to be able to change the controller settings, run time to be able to shut it off, put it in a rain delay. It has saved us a cost on labor and it has decreased our water usage which is good.

There's a long list of equipment here. Parks has a lot of small ticket items and I think it's hard to get a lot of our things on the CERF list because I believe it has to be \$50,000 or more to get on that list. When you look at our equipment, a lot of it is aged. We've got to leaf vacuum that we use every year in the fall to suck up leaves in the back of a truck. It's a 1986. Some of the equipment we have is so dated and aged, it's mechanically obsolete. So, you know, I know this number jumps out at everybody. It's a big number. I'm not saying it is but you know, it doesn't solve all our problems but it's a very healthy start. So I don't know if you want to speak to every piece of equipment on the list but that's where that list was derived from. A lot of it is just replacing current pieces of equipment that we have.

Park rehabilitation. I think we could use that. Whether we're talking about light infrastructure. I know right now currently we've got a big renovation over Atherton Park. We're gonna have to find a way to fund the playground. Playground structures are exuberant costs. We just spent \$180,000 to do the playground at St. Andrews. So you know those funds can be spent relatively quickly if we were to go that route.

The pool repair. We have three pools in the city. Currently, right now we've got out to bid the concrete decking repair around the pool at Crown Hill. If you go over there, it's sunken in in some areas, which you know creates an uneven surface which is hazardous. You think about all the kids running around these pool decks throughout the summer. So that's what this is going to address. I think moving forward as a Division, we're trying to word these so that it's city wide so it's not so specific. So if another issue arises, which it usually does, funds are available. Let's see what am I missing? So much to talk about.

The Stone House improvements. I believe originally we were going to use this for the roof. It's the historic structure. That money is going to be used to hire a structural engineer to get stamped plans to do a building renovation. So that is what that's for.

Mayor Donchess

And that Stone House is in bad shape. So it really needs work very urgently really.

Bryan Conant, Park and Rec. Superintendent

It does.

In the city wide playground repair, I mean you could look at Field Groves. You could look at the playground next to Kirkpatrick Field, Shady Lane. There's numerous areas that, you know, we could use funding for that as well. The playground equipment has become extremely expensive. Just to replace the bridge that had recently broken Roby Park, I believe that bill was about \$6,700. Some of the costs just to replace the equipment on current infrastructure we have is exuberant. I think I've talked about everything Mayor. I don't know if I missed anything.

Mayor Donchess

I think you've covered most of it.

Bryan Conant, Park and Rec. Superintendent

If there any questions, I'd be happy to answer them.

Chairman Dowd

Any clarifying questions for the request from DPW?

Alderman Caron

Thank you. Concerning the Stone House at Greeley Park. Do we have any money in the Jackman Fund to do some of this consulting work?

Mayor Donchess

I think there might be 50 grand but not nearly enough.

Alderman Caron

Not enough. Okay. Thank you.

Mayor Donchess

If the roof falls there, you know, the public will not be happy. So we really need to take a look at how to maintain the – the roof is not in good shape.

Alderman Caron

No, I don't think anything's been done to this for years.

Mayor Donchess

Yeah, probably since it was built right and that was 100 years ago or more? We've got to be careful because it's the look. The look of it needs to be retained while still complying with current codes and that is not an easy task.

Chairman Dowd

Any additional clarifying questions for DPW/Park Rec? Seeing none, thank you.

Bryan Conant, Park and Rec. Superintendent

Thank you.

Mayor Donchess

Thank you, Mr. Chair. I think the last person we have is Dan Donovan of the School Department. As I mentioned, thank you to the School Department for generating \$2.5 million dollars of surplus but they've requested that we make various allocations. A portion of that money which Mr. Donovan can explain.

Dan Donovan, Chief Operating Officer, Nashua School District

Good evening everyone. Dan Donovan, the Chief Operating Officer for the Nashua School District. I will just run through. It's a total of \$1.5 million. There are seven items so I'll run through those. These have all been approved by the Board of Education by the way.

The first item is \$25,000 for adding some security measures to the District Office. As you're probably aware, we have significant security at all our schools, which is obviously very important these days and this would put something at the District Office. Certainly not at the level that we have at the schools, but this would put some security there.

The second is also for \$25,000 and this is for improvements to the Franklin Street School playground. Mostly for the surface. Many of the students here have special needs - wheelchairs, things like that. This will allow for more complete access for all students to the playground.

The next amount is to increase our deferred maintenance by \$250,000. The Fiscal Year '23 budget there was \$260,000 put into deferred maintenance. This would increase that to \$510,000. Even though that may sound like a lot of money, when each year when we put together the capital improvement plan myself working with Mr. Smith, our Plant Operations Director. If you look at that plan, you'll notice it's well over a million dollars of deferred maintenance

requests that we have for each of the next six years. This has been an area that is typically not funded to the level we choose but we do the best we can so we thought this would be helpful to get some of those projects done that are on the capital improvement plan list.

The fourth one is \$25,000 for the District Office improvements to the office. Last year we had an escrow of \$50,000. We had four or five items we wanted to get done. First step was to do the carpets. Carpets ended us costing \$40,000. So therefore, we couldn't do many of the others and this escrow will allow us to get those other things done during this year.

The fifth item is \$50,000 for the improvements to the Nashua North boardroom where the Board of Education has its meetings. Much of the technology in there is 20 years old. We've had a number of issues where interference has been so loud we've had to get a custodian to climb up on the ceiling to cut the wires so that we could actually hear each other. We've had to cancel a few meetings. So this will sort of bring us up to date with the technology.

The sixth item is \$600,000 and this is for improvements to air quality at seven of our schools. Basically what it is it's an induct air purification system. So this can be done only in schools that have ducts. Some of our schools don't have the duct technology and this will clean the air. We've done a test with this. It cleans the air much better than the filters do. We have increased the filters with the COVID pandemic but this will improve it even more.

And the last item for \$529,000, this is for final invoice and the retainage on the EEI energy savings program. EEI is a firm. It stands for "Energy Efficient Investments". Back about two years ago, we signed an agreement with them. It's funded by borrowings of approximately \$6.5 million and by rebates of about a million. Between those two funding sources, we will put in all these improvements. These will put in new transformers, new lighting, controls, upgrades, condensing, hot water, etc. The deal we have with this firm is we are guaranteed we will save as much money as we paid share, which is about \$450,000. We'll be getting our first report probably in the next couple of months on that as we're making our first payment on the loan this year. So this is something that if you if you work for a large company or school district, there's companies out there that do this sort of work. So this was our venture into that. So this would be to pay the final invoice and the retainage. Like I said, there have been rebates that have covered this cost. As the Mayor said, we have still despite this, we've still returned over \$1.1 million to the city to be used in whatever way the city desires. So any questions anybody?

Chairman Dowd

Any clarifying questions?

Alderman Sullivan

Thank you very much. I have a few. I didn't know if you wanted to go now or if you wanted to wait until the Budget?

Chairman Dowd

Are they clarifying or are they intuitive?

Alderman Sullivan

I would say that they're clarifying. In relation to the Franklin Street School, that \$25,000, where did the ESSR funds come into that? Is that a possibility?

Dan Donovan, Chief Operating Officer, Nashua School District

Not for the playground. We are using ESSR funds for the new HVAC system at Franklin Street.

Alderman Sullivan

Okay. Around the air quality improvements - \$600,000. I recall that we had a balance in ARPA funds and since this is tied to HVAC, I mean is it possible to use part of those ARPA funds towards that \$600,000 to pay for that?

Dan Donovan, Chief Operating Officer, Nashua School District

Well we do have a significant amount of ARPA/ESSR funds. Most of those have been allocated towards projects. We've allocated \$6 million towards the Franklin Street and we're putting approximately \$15 million towards improvements of HVAC at Birch Hill and Main Dunstable Schools. So we have put a number of those funds into it. There's a maximum that you can spend on things like this. You have to put some monies towards other events or other items sorry.

Alderman Sullivan

Okay, thank you.

Chairman Dowd

Any other clarifying questions? Okay, now we'll go into the public hearing R-22-063 Relative to the Re-Appropriation of Fiscal Year FY23 Escrows. First, I'll call for testimony in favor. Is there anyone that wishes to testify in favor of R-22-063? Please state your name and address for the record.

TESTIMONY IN FAVORTim Sennott

Thank you. Tim Sennott, 62 Underhill Street, Nashua. I am rising in favor of several of the line items I've observed on this proposal. Some that stick out to me as of particular importance are the improvements to the air quality in our elementary schools. I don't know which schools will be affected. I don't know to what degree they will be affected but as I've stated at this lectern before, I am the Moderator in Ward 7. I have spent 18 plus hours in at least one of our elementary schools. Anybody who's done that tells you you will be leaving with a sore throat at the end of the day. It is dry in there. It is stuffy in there. I often wondered why my son was coming home so sweaty from school every day. There's only so much he can be doing in a school building. Now I know. The air quality is not good in the schools. It's not equitable across all of our elementary schools and any improvements that we can be making towards that I think is money well spent.

Several other items that I want to just briefly speak in favor of - Your Voice, Your Choice I feel is an excellent program. I feel it's a real boon to the City of Nashua to engage a community that is not otherwise as engaged as other parts of the city. We've seen as was described, residents as young as the age of 10 being engaged in that. As somebody who first stepped into this chamber at the age of either 13 or 14 for something that affected me as a teenager, I can't speak enough to how far that's gonna go for somebody who's 10 or 11 years old and realizes that they can make a difference in their city. So anything we can do to continue on that program I feel is also money well spent.

I'd also just like to speak in favor to some of the items in my own Ward in particular resurfacing the courts at Lions Field. Lions Field is a very, very heavily used park. It gets a lot of foot traffic from the baseball organizations that utilize it and those organizations bring people that use the courts and the playground. So I certainly would love to see money put into that investment in my own neighborhood as well as the repairs for the Crown Hill pool, but I'm happy to hear it's out to bid. That is anybody who's driven down Burke Street in the middle of the summer can tell you that is a very, very attractive asset to the Crown Hill neighborhood and anything we can do to keep it in the best condition I'm entirely in favor for. Thank you.

Chairman Dowd

Anyone else wants to speak in favor R-22-063? Seeing no one. Testimony in opposition to R-22-063. Please state your name and address for the record.

TESTIMONY IN OPPOSITION

Laura Colquhoun

Laura Colquhoun, 30 Greenwood Drive. I can't believe that I had to come here to this meeting tonight to tell both the Mayor and the Board of Aldermen to have some common sense. Nashua taxpayers are tired of paying for your pet projects and all your wasteful spending. The additional escrow money should go against the upcoming new tax rate plain and simple. As it is right now, this new revaluation kicked the low homes up so much that many may have to sell their homes in order to survive. With electricity, food, gas, and fuel going up, how much more do you think the Nashua taxpayers can handle? The average residential resident we'll be getting an increase of \$900 a year. So yes, Nashua residents would like to bring that figure down. Most residents are cutting back on things and we're putting off making any improvements with the current inflation. Maybe the city should start doing the same thing. Most of these residents are not getting government pensions and/or on government or city payrolls. They're on fixed incomes.

It is time for this Mayor and Board of Aldermen to start thinking about the residents first and put their wish list on the backburner. Apply the escrow money to the new tax rate and do the right thing and actually help the Nashua taxpayers. If this Board does not give this money to the Nashua taxpayers, it will be a slap in the face of every Nashua resident and I hope they all remembered it on Election Day. Thank you.

Chairman Dowd

Anyone else testimony in opposition?

Laurie Ortolano

Laurie Ortolano, 41 Berkeley Street. I have some questions about this - a few. The escrow money that's being transferred or be appropriated is that all 2022 money or some of that from the first quarter of 2023? Does anyone know?

Chairman Dowd

Mayor do you want to address that or?

Mayor Donchess

It's all '22.

Laurie Ortolano

It's all 22. And so do we know how the first quarter has shaken out for spending or expenditures and what we're running on there because a large part of this escrow money that builds up is positions that go unfilled. So if I listened to correctly, it's, you know, revenues that exceed expectations or anticipation and appropriations that remain unspent. We have, you know, a good number of appropriations that have remained unspent for the first quarter of 2023. So there's quite a bit of money there as well.

Regarding the Emergency Management position and establishing that. When we lost our Emergency Management person, it seemed like there was some controversy about that position or some difficulties when that person went out, concerns about how the office was being run. Did we resolve those issues to establish this position and bring somebody in who's going to be successful? Or has the position been redefined? Okay, maybe that's for a later day.

What about - I'm concerned about pre loading the CERF fund? We plan for capital equipment reserve fund. We have money in there. We're spending it down as Mr. Griffin told us but this \$3 million that you're transferring over is allowing you to preload for next year for 2024. Not interested in pre-loading given where the tax rate is. I think you just ride that through, do your deal in 2024, and shift some of this money back to the taxpayers. You know, Miss Colquhoun mentioned that the average home is going up \$910. That was 1,750 residential properties that are essentially the single families up to four families. Only 478 of those saw a return...

Alderman O'Brien

30 seconds.

Laurie Ortolano

...I didn't think timing worked because you could ask questions. Is that true or can I come back up for questions?

Chairman Dowd

It's not the three minutes for a public hearing. No.

Alderman O'Brien

Oh, excuse me. That saves me with a timer.

Laurie Ortolano

Thank you. And so only 478 went down or see a flat rate and 3500 of those are going to see an increase of over \$1,200. The manufactured homes, of which we have 870 units, their average increase is \$700 bucks and 230 of those homes are going up almost a grand. That's a big, big shift. The increase alone isn't the problem. The problem is for people who carry escrow accounts on their mortgages because what happens is the bank anticipates that that \$1,000 increase is really going to happen next year. They forced the property owner to pay an estimated \$2,000, \$1,000 increase divided over 12 months. So all of a sudden you get your bill in December and it says your escrow short \$1,000 and oh by the way as you pay your mortgage this month, your escrow has been recalculated and you owe an extra \$175 bucks per month starting now. So they get a double hit. Unless you're able to PMI or buy out of that program where you put enough money down, you get hit it that and it's expensive. I'll tell you it's very hard to negotiate with the mortgage companies to say no, no, no, this is a one-time thing don't double me up. They won't listen to that. They make you pay.

I'm a little bit concerned about - I'm very supportive of the air quality issues but if there is ARPA funds available for that, I'd look at shifting some of the money for what's going on with improvements and do that air filtration system that they have very high regard for. I think you could make a big difference in just the health of the students and that's important. I think the Your Voice, Your Choice program the way it was pitched has a big benefit for a relatively low cost to the community.

I'm really concerned about all of this. I want to speak to the Police Department. You know, I'm very supportive of the Police Department but I'm not certain I support these two positions and I'll tell you why. Simply because they're down 13 positions and the reality of the department is they struggle to fill their positions. They don't reach that 179 officers often and it's a fleeting moment. They're struggling to fill the positions. So if they're down 13 and they're struggling to fill the positions but they want to add two more, I'm just not certain it makes sense. I really did listen to the Chief and the concerns about the growth of the city with all of the high rise units going up - Bronstein apartments, High Street flats, your new shelters opening, your development over at Henry Hanger. All of those things have an impact on the police. Even establishing the riverfront walkway. I understand that but I think part of our responsibility and the responsibility of this Board is to make certain you're doing your growth such that your Police Department can keep up with it. I don't think we've done that. I don't think they're going to be able to keep up with what you've done here. It's

not just the numbers game of Manchester having 267 officers and Nashua having 179. If you just look at the math of it based on size, Manchester is about 20% bigger. That would say, you know equality being what it is, we should have Manchester would have 232 to our 179 but they have 267. They're another 30 officers higher. But a lot of that depends on the type of events, the city, the density downtown, the number of large gatherings they hold, their high rises, their apartments, their buildings of need, their income levels, all of that plays a role in those officers, and that officer count. I think we have to look at that a little more carefully.

I do support the equipment requests. I understand the needs for those but I am concerned about positions and I'm concerned about these decisions that the city makes to grow, go, go, go, bond, bond, bond, and police and fire good luck chasing and keeping up with us. Because when places aren't safe, people change their tune about coming downtown and walking the riverfront and other areas. Thank you.

Chairman Dowd

Anyone else in opposition? Seeing no one. Going back to testimony in favor. Any additional testimony in favor?

TESTIMONY IN FAVOR - None

TESTIMONY IN OPPOSITION – None

I will now close the public hearing on Resolution R-22-063 at 8:34 pm.

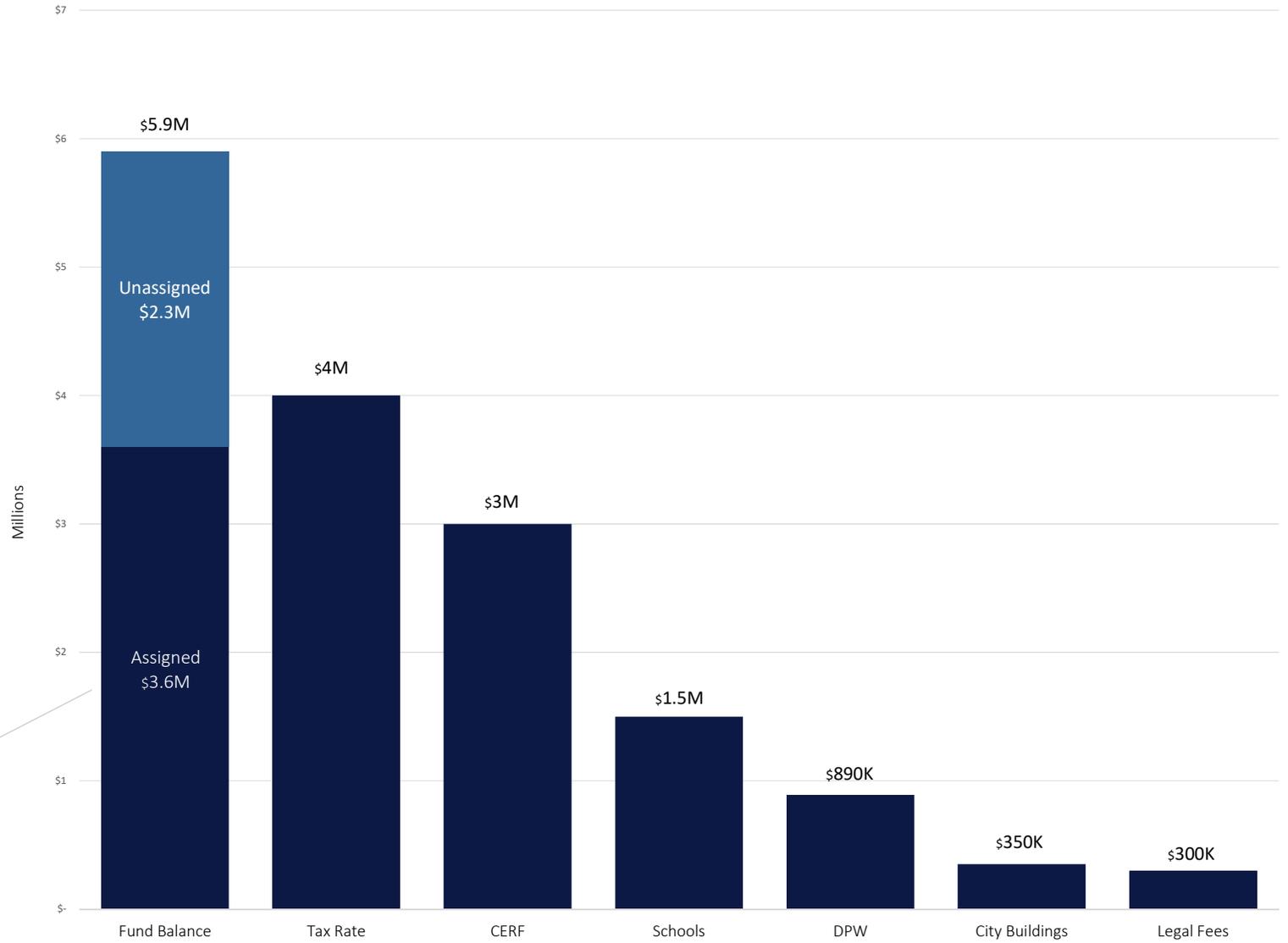
ADJOURNMENT

**MOTION BY ALDERMAN O'BRIEN THAT THE OCTOBER 4, 2022, SPECIAL MEETING OF THE BOARD OF ALDERMEN BE ADJOURNED  
MOTION CARRIED**

The meeting was declared adjourned at 8:34 p.m.

Attest: Dan Healey, City Clerk

**FY23 UNLIKE ESCROW REQUESTS**  
Requests \$300K and above



\$1.5M Abatements  
\$1.3M Teachers' Contract  
\$800K Fire