

A special meeting of the Board of Aldermen was held Wednesday, October 19, 2022, at 9:36 p.m. in the Aldermanic Chamber.

President Lori Wilshire presided; City Clerk Dan Healey recorded.

Prayer was offered by City Clerk Dan Healey; Alderman-at-Large Michael B. O'Brien, Sr., led in the Pledge to the Flag.

Let's start the meeting by taking a roll call attendance.

The roll call was taken with 14 members of the Board of Aldermen present: Alderman O'Brien, Alderman Sullivan, Alderman Klee, Alderman Moran, Alderman Lopez, Alderman Jette, Alderman Clemons, Alderman Comeau, Alderman Dowd, Alderman Gouveia, Alderman Caron, Alderman Thibeault, Alderwoman Timmons, Alderman Wilshire.

Alderwoman Kelly was recorded absent.

Also in attendance was Mayor Donchess and Corporation Counsel Steve Bolton.

UNFINISHED BUSINESS – RESOLUTIONS

R-22-063

Endorsers: Mayor Jim Donchess
Alderman-at-Large Michael B. O'Brien, Sr.
Alderman Richard A. Dowd
Alderman Patricia Klee
Alderman-at-Large Melbourne Moran, Jr.
Alderman Derek Thibeault

RELATIVE TO THE RE-APPROPRIATION OF FISCAL YEAR FY2023 ESCROWS

Given its third reading;

MOTION BY ALDERMAN O'BRIEN TO AMEND R-22-063 BY REPLACING IT WITH THE AMENDMENTS MADE DURING THE BUDGET REVIEW COMMITTEE MEETING, BY ROLL CALL

ON THE QUESTION

Alderman Thibeault

Thank you Madam President. I didn't speak at the last meeting just because for time. One little comment. Unfortunately it's going to get grim. I really think this whole – inflation and everything that's happening, possible recession, I think it's going to be grim. The news anyway is that way. I'm concerned about the tax rate just like every single one of us is. I wish there was something that was a magic bullet that we could provide to the taxpayer where we could give them hundreds of dollars back in their tax bill, including myself. I just don't think that's here in this escrow. I don't think it's there.

I think everything we need from the city departments – I can't imagine they would come to us saying they need something knowing that the taxpayers are in a crunch without actually being something that the city really needs. I have to take faith in the Directors that we have here and that the Mayor is put in place. I'm going to support this measure. Thank you.

Alderman Comeau

Thank you Madam President. I said and somewhat ingest to the Mayor when I first started on with the Finance Committee that I show up every night prepared to vote no until I'm convinced otherwise. With that in mind, I was leaning towards supporting Alderman Sullivan's motion. Hearing the presentation over the

last couple hours like Alderman Thibeault said, it's hard to find something in there that's something we should cut. I don't think any of us wants our trash to not get picked up or our streets to not get plowed. What it tells me though is that there is a conversation that deserves to be had at some point about how the city spends. When we talked about saving the taxpayer's money, I hope that it doesn't always fall on cutting police cars, or fire trucks, or snow plows and that we can find other ways to save the taxpayers some money without cutting these essential services that we all agree that we need. So thank you.

Alderman Moran

Thank you Madam President. The last time we discussed this I, too, was stating that then my half support half not support of a (inaudible) sponsored regarding how we spend our money. That Budget Committee meeting was exactly what I needed to go back to the constituents that had reached out to me about the concerns of their tax rate and how we're spending to justify to them why we need to do this. The talent again that keeps coming up in front of us who are very savvy in what they're doing and know how to balance a budget and know how to spend effectively. I think it means a lot to me. I'm sure it means a lot to everyone around here, especially being one of the best run cities. Time and time again, we keep getting these notifications how great we are.

Also to Alderman Comeau's point, I'm sure there are things that we can reduce spending on that aren't Public Works, Police, Fire, and other needed things like playgrounds for children. I'm very, very impressed again with the city department heads and the workers that came and gave us a very detailed explanation to why we need this money and why we need to do it. We need to spend it expend it in this way and I do appreciate that. Thank you.

Alderman Dowd

Yes two really quick things. One – as Chair of Budget, I want to thank all the Divisions Directors and Department Heads for coming out tonight and spending the time to explain the various elements of their requests and the escrows.

The other thing is I appreciate Alderman Sullivan's attempts to save money for the taxpayers. I think we all feel that if we could borrow money to help them it would be great. I've had that discussion over the last 12 years. When you're a new Alderman and seeing you haven't been through the process enough to know that there's just sometimes you can't any more without hurting the city significantly. So I just wanted to say I hope that when we're all said and done that we all leave as friends and shake hands.

Alderman Gouveia

Thank you Madam President. Yeah a few things. This is a tough decision. It truly is a hard vote for me and I don't think I'm going to support it but I do appreciate the Division Directors and Superintendents coming out. I like to see that there is that want to bring their divisions to the next level and to make them the best they possibly can be. I want them to present us with everything they want to be to be at the highest level they can. I think it then turns into our job to figure out which direction we want to go in to make who the best and when. I know we can't boil the ocean in a day. We have to just gradually chisel and keep making our way to the top. Our city has been ranked highly for reasons. I do think there was things we could have carved out of this in Committee and it came back unfavorable but that is what it is. At the end of the day, we'll move forward and we'll see what else we can do.

To comment off of what Alderman Comeau said earlier today, I think it is true. We should start looking at finding things other than schools, and fire stations, and police officers. There's a lot in these escrows that I like and there's a lot that I truly don't. I don't like bundling all this stemming together in one bill. I think there is some important stuff in here. That's kind of the dilemma holding me up here is there truly is some good spending in this bill. Some spending that will make our city a better place undoubtedly. At the same time, I can't support it. I just think it's too much. I do. Thank you.

President Wilshire

Thank you.

Alderman Lopez

I want to thank the city staff members who came to present on the information twice and then additionally the members of the Budget Committee for giving a second review as well. I think it's important specifically because we have such higher costs this year on the individual private level when it comes to utilities and such as well as the potential tax rate. We really do our due diligence. I think that was done earlier tonight with the presentations that we reviewed. Thank you to the Budget Committee for doing that extra work because I think we needed to be very, very sure of this.

I also want to state that I was elected to represent the taxpayers in Ward 4. For an amendment that eventually amounts to \$43 approximately, I don't want to tell my taxpayers that they're not going to be able to get to work because of a snow storm we couldn't clear, or that somebody is stuck on the rail trail on a scooter – which happened at least three times that I know of because it wasn't clearable. Public Work does a tremendous amount of work. They do a really good job with it. That's very important for residents who don't have a lot of money to spare. They don't have a little garbage shed to say okay well I guess the garbage truck isn't coming this week. That's not an option for them. I think the city does a great job providing these services at a bargain and that's very important for people who don't have money to spare.

So when we look at taxes and we look at how taxes end up impacting different socioeconomic groups, I think it's very important that our city be able to maintain the level of services that it provides. I didn't see wasteful spending in the CERF account certainly. I think very good arguments were made in the other escrows as well. Some of it was a little bit misconstrued maybe. I did have somebody approach and ask if we were spending \$40,000 on a shuffle ball court. You're not. You're surfacing and maybe like a couple dozen dollars goes to painting the little triangle on it. There were some questions about the school that was being built and wasn't opened yet. Why are we creating a playground for them? It makes a lot of sense when you actually have the presentations from the department heads that we're rubberizing a playground that special needs kids are likely to be playing on. We're doing it at a time that isn't obstructing school and goes in concert with the project they're doing.

A lot of the presentations that we had, and I encourage the public to check out the Budget Review Committee, stressed that if we don't buy something now with the leftover money that we have because we were fiscally responsible last year, we're going to spend more money next year. I appreciate the Mayor and his staff and how they've managed to create these escrows in the first place by being prudent and then how they're able to apply them in a savvy manner to save taxpayers money over time. Thank you.

Alderman Klee

Thank you Madam President. One of the things I wanted to clarify to the public – now I did those text messages about the \$400,000 I would save 72, and I calculated it down to 43. The question I had about escrows is why do we have so much money at the end of the year. Are we padding the accounts? Are we doing that? I want to state that the reason we have that is, and I think Alderman Lopez and many of my other colleagues have kind of referenced that, is that we were being fiscally conscious, and fiscally conservative, and that we didn't spend every penny that we kind of put aside for it. We were able to cut here and we were able to cut there. In the end, this is the unspent money. It's not found money. It's not any of that any yes you could just give all back to the taxpayers but to what cost. We did save money and we didn't do these things that are necessary to do. So it's good to use this.

I don't think we'll have as much escrows next year. I think we're going to find that as well as we did a good budget, it's going to have costs that we didn't anticipate. I don't think we're going to have this so we won't be able to put extra money necessarily into this CERF fund and so on. We were being fiscally responsible in our budget and I think ongoing budgets we will continue to be fiscally responsible and as such, that's

how we had the escrows this year. I think that to everyone else's comments that maybe there are ways of cutting a budget here and there. We all do it at home. I think two years ago we did a really big cut with the city budget. I know City Hall actually decreased their budget and not increased their budget. This is kind of by making all those cuts, this is some of the things that we have to do this year. Can we do better? Yeah probably and hopefully next year we'll be able to see that. Next year is going to be harder than this year. Escrows are not just a padded budget. They are how we saved money throughout the year and this is kind of what it was. Much like what the School District did. Thank you so much.

Alderman Sullivan

Thank you. I'm not going to support this. That doesn't mean that your trash isn't going to get picked up, or that your streets aren't going to get plowed. These were escrow monies. These are extraordinary economic times. As was stated earlier tonight that for whatever reason the commercial value dropped, residential went up, so now the burden is on the taxpayer. These were extraordinary times. However many homes we have here in Nashua, there are millions of decisions that are going on whether or not to – and I don't like to do this but it's happening. Either I fill up my gas tank or I pay for food, those things are happening right now in the city. For us to have \$7 million, which I was not advocating to cut. It was not an all or nothing. It was not a binary choice. It was to carve off a little bit. Would it have saved \$43, \$38, \$.18, whatever? Maybe it was the optics of it. Maybe it was a message to the city that said you have to prioritize and that's why I did it. That's why I made the amendment. I know that this is going to pass and I understand all of that.

Something was said tonight and the way it was said and the way I heard it so I'm just going to repeat back the way I heard it. We already have the money so why give it back? Hmmm, that to me really it just stuck right here. I can't support this and thanks for the time.

President Wilshire

Okay, anything further? Will the Clerk please call the roll?

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

- Yea: Alderman O'Brien, Alderman Klee, Alderman Moran,
Alderman Lopez, Alderman Jette, Alderman Clemons,
Alderman Comeau, Alderman Dowd, Alderman Caron,
Alderman Thibeault, Alderwoman Timmons, Alderman Wilshire 12
- Nay: Alderman Sullivan, Alderman Gouveia 2

MOTION CARRIED

Resolution R-22-063 was declared duly adopted.

ADJOURNMENT

MOTION BY ALDERMAN O'BRIEN THAT THE OCTOBER 19, 2022, SPECIAL MEETING OF THE BOARD OF ALDERMEN BE ADJOURNED, BY ROLL CALL

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

- Yea: Alderman O'Brien, Alderman Sullivan, Alderman Klee, Alderman Moran,
Alderman Lopez, Alderman Jette, Alderman Clemons, Alderman Dowd,
Alderman Gouveia, Alderman Caron, Alderman Thibeault,
Alderwoman Timmons, Alderman Wilshire 13

Nay: Alderman Comeau

1

MOTION CARRIED

The meeting was declared adjourned at 9:54 p.m.

Attest: Dan Healey, City Clerk