

BUDGET REVIEW COMMITTEE

OCTOBER 26, 2020

A meeting of the Budget Review Committee was held Monday, October 26, 2020, at 7:00 p.m. via teleconference.

Chairman Dowd

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

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

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

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

*To join by phone dial: 1-929-205-6099 Meeting ID: 876 9762 9708 and Passcode: 670991*

*The public may also view the meeting via Channel 16.*

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

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

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

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

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

The roll call was taken with 7 members of the Budget Review Committee present:

Alderman Richard A. Dowd, Chairman  
Alderman-at-Large Ben Clemons, Vice Chair  
Alderman-at-Large Shoshanna Kelly  
Alderman Jan Schmidt  
Alderman Ernest Jette  
Alderman-at-Large Lori Wilshire  
Alderman-at-Large Michael B. O'Brien, Sr.

Also in Attendance:

- Alderman Elizabeth Lu
- Alderman Patricia Klee
- Alderman Linda Harriott-Gathright
- Alderman Skip Cleaver
- Mayor James Donchess
- Kim Kleiner, Director of Administrative Services
- John Griffin, CFO
- Michael Carignan, Nashua Police Chief
- Jim Testaverde, Nashua Deputy Police Chief

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ROLL CALL

Alderman Kelly

I am here, you can hear the baby with me and I can here everyone.

Alderman O'Brien

Alderman-at-Large Michael O'Brien is present, I am here and I can hear myself.

Alderman Jette

I am here, I can hear everyone very clearly and I am staying safer at home with my wife.

Alderman Schmidt

I am present and I am alone in the room.

Alderman Clemons

I am here, I can hear everyone and the only person home with me is my wife.

Chairman Dowd

Yes, I can hear everyone, I am here alone practicing social distancing in accordance with the Governor's Order and I see that Alderman Wilshire has rejoined.

Alderman O'Brien

The record so reflects that Alderman Wilshire is present. Also in attendance are Aldermen Lu, Klee, Harriott-Gathright and Cleaver. I hope that I got you all. Also in attendance is Mayor James Donchess, Kim Kleiner and John Griffin as well as Nashua Police Department Chief Carignan and Deputy Chief Testaverde.

Chairman Dowd

Alright the first item on the agenda is public comment. Is there anyone on-line that would like to provide public comment for anything that's being discussed this evening? Hearing and seeing no one, Communications?

PUBLIC COMMENT - None

COMMUNICATIONS - None

UNFINISHED BUSINESS - None

NEW BUSINESS – RESOLUTIONS

**R-20-081**

Endorsers: Alderman-at-Large Lori Wilshire  
Alderman Richard A. Dowd  
Alderman Jan Schmidt  
Alderman Linda Harriott-Gathright  
Alderman Patricia Klee  
Alderman Skip Cleaver  
Alderman-at-Large Ben Clemons  
Alderman Thomas Lopez  
Alderman-at-Large Brandon Michael Laws

**APPROVING THE COST ITEMS OF A COLLECTIVE BARGAINING AGREEMENT BETWEEN THE NASHUA BOARD OF POLICE COM MISSIONERS AND NASHUA POLICE COM M UNICATION EMPLOYEES N.E.P.B.A. LOCAL 125, I.U.P.A., AFL-CIO FROM JULY 1, 2019 THROUGH JUNE 30, 2023 AND AUTHORIZING A RELATED TRANSFER OF \$186,145.00**

**MOTION BY ALDERMAN O'BRIEN TO RECOMMEND FINAL PASSAGE OF R-20-081 BY ROLL CALL**  
ON THE QUESTION

Chairman Dowd

Ok, so would you please call the roll? I guess we want to have communications first.

Alderman O'Brien

Discussion, Mr. Chairman?

Chairman Dowd

Discussion, yes. Chief did you want to lead us off or did you want to turn it over to Deputy Jim Testaverde.

Police Chief Michael Carignan

Thank you Alderman Dowd and I appreciate the opportunity. I would just like to say I am going to turn it over to Deputy Testaverde who has done a lot of hard work for a long period of time on this contract. I want you all to know I fully support it, I think it's a great contract. It helps begin the process to assist City Hall in getting, they have made some considerable health concessions, which I think will help the City moving forward. And I think it allows us to re-set the clock a little bit and attract people that we can keep. So with that, I'll turn it over to Deputy Testaverde.

Chairman Dowd

Deputy Testaverde, would you like to give us a lead in on this?

Deputy Police Chief Jim Testaverde

Yes, Mr. Chair. Good evening everyone, can you hear me ok?

Chairman Dowd

Yes.

Deputy Police Chief Testaverde

Thank you. I just want to take you through a couple of things and not take all night I promise you; I know you've had a lot of very long meetings the past few months. A little historical background about our Communications Union. It's 21 civilian personnel and we are at full complement. 12 are in, are known as Communications Technicians, who answer the business line and the emergency 911 line that goes through Concord. There's also various paperwork aspects of that job, clerical, you have to be very organized. But the meat and potatoes of it is answering those emergency calls, getting all the pertinent information and getting it over to Dispatch Center. And Dispatch we have 9 civilians, 3 on days, 3 on second and 3 on third shift. At any given time, there's 2 in the room with their rotations. They rotate like the officers rotate, 4 days on, 2 days off which means that they get a full weekend off every six weeks. So it can be kind of a tough schedule especially if you are pulling the second or third shift hours.

Since 2010 to 2020, this Collective Bargaining Union has increased their base salary 2%. I'm not talking about the employees that have gotten pre-negotiated raises, through Collective Bargaining. I am talking about the base salary for all incoming employees. What that has done is it has made it very, very difficult to be competitive with other agencies in the area.

Since 2018 we have lost 13 members of Communications; two to retirement but the vast majority have been through leaving the agency for jobs that have better schedules and more pay. There's even been a few of the members that have left Communications to seek out other positions within the agency. There's two individuals who were phenomenal at what they were doing but they switched to the Detective Bureau to be Administrative Assistants, just because – while the pay was comparable it was Monday through Friday, day shift, just a little bit better hours.

What we did over the past probably 14 months or so is we looked at what our employees were making and we tried to make an apples to apples comparison as much as possible. If you'll allow me, I am going to share a document with you. I do want to apologize, I shared this document with the Mayor and Alderman Dowd. Alderman Jette called me earlier today and I shared it with him and with Alderman Wilshire. When this meeting is over, I am going to send it to the entire board so you see what I am talking about and you can see the numbers, but if you'll allow me to share this. Can you all see this document? I know I am scrolling through, I am trying to get to a specific page here. Could you all see that OK?

Chairman Dowd

I can see it.

Deputy Police Chief Testaverde

OK I am going to assume everyone else can. At the top of this chart here is the Nashua Police Department. You see this is the starting salary, hourly wage for Communications for \$15.52 and for a Dispatcher \$17.91. You see last year we went to over 85,000 calls for service, there's the population for Nashua. And we dispatch just for ourself, just Police. I made one comparison to NFR and I am not going to, I think the world of NFR, I have some very good friends. I am not a big fan of comparing the two agencies, because I think so much of them and I never want to create an adversarial system with another agency I respect so much. But the one aspect of both of our jobs that is probably, in my humble opinion, the closest between the two is Dispatch.

They take in information and they dispatch it to their firefighters who are going to emergency calls, they are updating it, they are taking the information and we are doing something very similar. I will never claim it's identical but it's two entities with our two agencies that is fairly similar. And that's the only reason I use them, they are another city entity that has as dispatch center. You see as I go down this Chart, there's 16 including

NFR, there are 16 agencies I compared us to. Manchester Police and Lowell PD are the only two agencies that are larger than the Nashua Police Department.

All the other agencies, as you see, Dover, Hudson, Hollis, you can read it yourself I won't read it to you and insult you, but if you look at their calls for service, which is where my mouse is right now in the center, you are seeing that Nashua is doubling or even tripling calls for service, yet their dispatchers are doing roughly the same type of work of getting in some cases a significant increase in pay.

So what we are looking to do is raise the rate for the starting salaries for the dispatch personnel, pardon me, let me just scroll up here. OK I am going to make you dizzy if I keep going up and down, I know it's right – here we go sorry. For the Communications Technicians we are looking to move the hourly rate to the \$18.27 which makes a yearly salary of roughly \$38,000.00 and for Dispatch \$23.07 which makes a yearly average of \$48,000.00. Based on the research that we did, this would put us comparable to NFR and again it was only to keep close to another city entity that had a dispatch center with a similar sized agency and that's kind of where we got that figure. In no way, shape or form am I here to say one entity over the other deserves more or less. I think you have the best Police Department and the best Fire Department in New England and I would argue with anyone over that fact. I think this puts us on a good starting, I think this takes a step in the right direction so that we will not only be able to recruit quality people, but it's the retention.

We fortunately have some really, really good employees that have been here for over 20 years, but the vast majority out of those 13 people; 11 of the 13 that left didn't have even close to that amount of time on, and it's the retention. When we are losing a Communications Technician, one of our employees to Tyngsboro, Mass., just over the border because she was making roughly about \$13,000.00 a year more for a fraction of the calls to service; you see with Tyngsboro, 26,000 compared to our 85,000. We know it is extreme when you look at the percentage breakdown, but one thing – well there's two points I really want to drive home with this Collective Bargaining Unit, with the Communications Unit. If you set aside the year to restructuring, that is what we are looking to do. We are in the year 2, the year 1 of the contract has already passed. You will see that the percentages we are talking about, fall right in line, I believe, with what City Hall is basically looking for especially with everything going on.

So you are looking at in Year 1, which has passed, a 2% increase for about 2/3 of the employees and the top six most senior employees getting a 2.5. Year 2 is the restructuring, which I know is the sticker shock and that's why I am going into this amount of detail. Year 3, 2/3 of the employees looking at a 1% increase, with six employees would be getting a 2.25 and in Year 4 the entire Union as a whole, asking for a 2% increase and a 2% increase to the starting salaries. We realized that the problem was we weren't increasing the starting salaries along with all the other raises that the Union was receiving, so we came up with a game plan that as we move forward, occasionally every few years through Collective Bargaining Negotiations, we want to put an increase into the starting salary, so we avoid the problem that we have here today.

So first of all, if you take the restricting out of it in Year 2, which the Mayor was good enough to put money in contingency and understood the problem when we had this conversation with him. The other thing I'd like to say is that this Union wanted to show that if the City goes forward with this, as I hope you would, that the Union is very grateful and I know that the Mayor has made an emphasis on focusing on the insurance issues that the City is having. And this Collective Bargaining Union has agreed to, I think pretty drastically, change their current language in their insurance. If you look at the Summary Chart, Article 16, you will see that the HMO Deductibles, they are agreeing to changing are significantly drastic increases, going from a \$500.00 deductible for a two-person or family plan to a \$3,000.00 deductible is pretty significant.

Additionally, I believe we've said it before, but we have also, to help out the City and be part of the solution and not part of the problem, we have also made a strong push with all our employees to consider the high deductible, health savings plan with the high savings account. A vast majority of our employees have switched over this past year and we are going to make another strong push at the open enrollment in May. So I did want to say this is not an all take and no give; this is, I believe, a fair contract to a group that has really been underpaid, for lack of a better term, I can't sugar coat it any other way. You will see out of the

Summary of Changes, a lot of the other stuff are very, very minor and some of them are just housekeeping items. With that, I will turn it over to you. I'd be happy to answer any questions.

Chairman Dowd

Thanks Chief, a very detailed explanation and yes I want to give the Mayor an opportunity to speak. Mayor?

Mayor Donchess

Sorry I was on mute. Thank you, Mr. Chair. Well as the Deputy explained, during the time when I was considering a budget and before you – I proposed it to the Board of Aldermen, I believe Deputy Testaverde and Chief Carignan came by and talked about the problem of the dispatchers and the fact that they had the very significant turnover that you just heard about. We were sitting at the big conference table that used to be there pre-Covid and explained that when these positions were open and weren't being filled, the uniformed officers would have to fill in and occasionally on overtime. And, of course, this is not a good expenditure of funds. It's not a good expenditure of the time of the sworn officers who we want on the street for obvious reasons. So proposed that the salaries for the dispatchers be equalized with other similar employee groups so we could get the kind of retention we need, get experienced dispatchers and keep the officers on the street.

To me it seemed like a reasonable proposal and therefore I am asking you to approve the contract. But I would like to point out two significant things. First of all, there is the change in the health care plan design, very important for the City. You all will recall that we have been hit a couple of years in a row, the \$3 million dollar increase in health care costs. This will help to mitigate future increases. It also benefits, although deductibles do go up, it benefits employees as well. So both the City and the employees benefit in this respect. The so-called working rates, the amount that gets deducted from employee's pay comes down as a result of the plan design changes that are incorporated in the contract.

For the non-affiliated employees it was around 10% immediately; so if you were contributing you know, say \$100.00 a week, now it's \$90.00 a week, you save \$500.00 during the course of the year. So there are benefits for the employees as well. And as the Deputy pointed out, except for the adjustment year where we kind of get things in place, the increases that are being agreed to are in the range of the cost of inflation. So for all of those reasons and I do appreciate that the Department came in to discuss this issue. For the reasons that we both discussed already, I included and you approved, Mr. Chair, you approved the contingency amount in the amount which I proposed and you approved. We put the money in the budget to make this, to fund the second year of this contract, which is the current Fiscal Year, Fiscal '21. So again, I believe that this is a reasonable proposal and will help us put officers on the street and will stop the turnover and will, in the end, potentially save overtime cost.

Chairman Dowd

Thank you, Mayor. Are you all set?

Mayor Donchess

I am, thank you, Mr. Chair.

Chairman Dowd

Anyone else like to comment or ask a question relative to the motion on the floor? Alderman Wilshire?

Alderman Wilshire

Yeah I'd like to say I am going to support this contract. This is a group of people that are so important to the Department, I mean they are your first point of contact when you call there. You need to depend on them and what we are paying them, I don't blame them for not staying. I mean the starting rate it's pitiful. So I appreciate that you brought this forward. Thank you.

Chairman Dowd

Anyone else with questions or comments? Alderman Jette?

Alderman Jette

Yes, thank you, Mr. Chairman. When I was in my first term as Alderman, I was liaison to the Police Department and I learned back then the problem that they were having retaining people that work in this Department as dispatchers or communication technicians. And that we were hiring people, training them and then they would go to other places because they would be getting paid more, which you can't blame them for that. At the time, I wondered, at the same time the issue of the Nashua Fire Rescue Dispatchers came up and I think I am correct about this, the ambulance service agreed to use the Fire Department's dispatchers and they agreed to pay the Fire Department some amount of money in exchange for the Fire Department's Dispatchers handling the ambulance calls.

And at the time, I wondered why aren't all of our dispatchers, dispatching functions handled by one central department. I noticed in what Deputy Testaverde sent us, you know the comparison to other departments in the area there are several departments that combine those functions. In fact, two of them Hollis and Portsmouth combine Police, Fire, Emergency Medical Services and the Department of Public Works, all into one centralized dispatching service. Bedford, Lebanon and Lowell on that list, combine Police and Fire. So it seems to me that you know centralizing this function, you know, people – it may be oversimplifying but it seems to me that you've got people sitting in an office waiting for the phone to ring, the phone doesn't ring all the time. And if all of these calls came into one centralized office, it seems to me that there would be an efficiency that could be achieved.

So I put that out there. I support this, I am going to support this contract because I think that the Police Dispatchers are underpaid and the evidence of that is certainly the fact that we are having trouble retaining them. It's certainly inefficient to have Police Officers performing this function. But for the future, I would really encourage the Police Department and the Fire Department to get together and have a centralized office. The money that's being paid by the ambulance service would still be coming in and would help pay for these people and perhaps we could perform the function more efficiently and be able to pay all the people that work there an appropriate amount of money. Thank you.

Chairman Dowd

I think that, you know, that's something that is apart from this current contract. You've got two separate unions and I know that (audio cuts out) say in a second that the training and the type of things that they dispatch and the types of activities are different especially when you have the number of calls we have combined. Alderman O'Brien, did you want to speak?

Alderman O'Brien

Yeah, thank you, Mr. Chairman. I would like to say that my colleague Alderman Jette is not without in common sense some merit to bring up the concept. But one has got to take a look at it, if it was brought to bear as an idea here in the City of Nashua, it was done somewhere else. That idea has been done in several locations. The big thing is like, I had the conversation earlier, when you are dealing with the public safety factor, there are apples and there are oranges. And depending upon the size of the community if the community is small enough a concept on having combined service, you can even do that, you can even

dispatch (audio cuts out). But the thing is, when you get into a City with the call volume that Nashua Fire & Rescue and NPD is doing, you get into something that would be too much.

The burden of dispatching the ambulance to Nashua Fire & Rescue isn't really that much because when you look at it, I can say that those are shared calls. Generally many of the calls that the ambulance is going to, the First Responders at Nashua Fire Rescue are already responding because of their proximity in the neighborhood. They also, and all via 911 in Concord, relays the information to NPD and they also do respond. But there's a closer work proximity as far as EMS and ALS, Advanced Life Support, with Nashua Fire Rescue. So I would be hesitant. I think the question at hand is approving this contract. I know Alderman Jette brought it up as a conceptual idea perhaps in the future, but like I said, I think it's been tried in other communities and I really cannot see the real true benefit of having that idea.

The thing I know if you do have a fire you are trying to get mutual aid out, apparatus into the city, you are on the phone calling. You may be trying to call back another crew, trying to stop a pending conflagration and that's the same with the Police Department in their inter-agency and interoperability needs. So it is better to keep the two things focused and keep in mind, we are starting with Mr. Mansfield to have an emergency interoperations center, but that's more for the radio transmission in case one facility does go down we do have the capability, as a City of our size should, to have the interoperability to go to emergency backup. So thank you Mr. Chairman.

Chairman Dowd

OK anyone else like to comment? I don't see anyone or see anyone. Alderman Jette again? Yes? Go ahead.

Alderman Jette

I just wanted to respond that yes other places have looked at this and other places have adopted it. Lowell has a higher call volume that we do and they combine Police and Fire. Portsmouth is not that much smaller than we are and they combine Police, Fire, EMS and Department of Public Works. I know that's not the subject of tonight's discussion and I know we are talking about the Union Contract which I support. But in the future, I think we should look at this.

Chairman Dowd

Thank you, Alderman Jette. Anyone else. Seeing no one. The motion on the floor by Alderman O'Brien is to recommend final passage of R-20-081, approving the cost items of a Collective Bargaining Agreement between the Nashua Board of Police Commissioners and the Nashua Police Communication Employees, N.E.P.B.A., Local 125, I.U.P.A., AFL-CIO from July 1<sup>st</sup>, 2019 through June 30<sup>th</sup>, 2023, and authorizing a related transfer of \$186,145.00. Would the Clerk please call the roll?

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

Yea:	Alderman Clemons, Alderman Schmidt, Alderman Jette, Alderman Wilshire Alderman O'Brien, Alderwoman Kelly, Alderman Dowd	7
Nay:		0

**MOTION CARRIED**

NEW BUSINESS ORDINANCES – None

Chairman Dowd

The items on the table, I've no communication for anyone that is looking to bring those off the table, of



course, anybody can but there would be nobody here to discuss them. So unless I hear something, we will move on to General Discussion?

TABLED IN COMMITTEE

**R-20-016**

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

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

**R-20-017**

Endorsers: Mayor Jim Donchess  
Alderman Thomas Lopez  
Alderman Richard A. Dowd  
Alderman-at-Large David C. Tencza  
Alderman Patricia Klee  
Alderman-at-Large Michael B. O'Brien, Sr.  
Alderswoman Linda Harriott-Gathright  
Alderman Skip Cleaver  
Alderman Jan Schmidt  
Alderman-at-Large Lori Wilshire

**RELATIVE TO THE SUPPLEMENTAL APPROPRIATION OF \$50,000 TO FUND A FEASIBILITY STUDY FOR THE FUTURE REUSE OF THE ELM STREET MIDDLE SCHOOL BUILDING**

- Requires a Public Hearing which has not yet been scheduled

**R-20-028**

Endorsers: Mayor Jim Donchess  
Alderman-at-large Michael B. O'Brien, Sr.  
Alderman-at-large David C. Tencza  
Alderman Richard A. Dowd  
Alderman Linda Harriott-Gathright  
Alderman Patricia Klee

**AUTHORIZING THE CITY OF NASHUA TO ENTER INTO A MASTER DEVELOPMENT AGREEMENT WITH LANSING MELBOURNE GROUP, LLC.**

(re-tabled at 8-12 mtg)

GENERAL DISCUSSION

Chairman O'Brien

I just want to thank Deputy Chief Testaverde, he's done a lot of work with the Unions and on this contract in particular. I appreciate all the work that went into it and all the information provided. It's nice to have that on a contract so we have all the information to deal with. So thank you both, Chief Carignan and Deputy Chief Testaverde. OK, Public Comment, is there anyone that would like to speak to Public Comment?

PUBLIC COMMENT - None

REMARKS BY THE ALDERMEN - None

POSSIBLE NON-PUBLIC SESSION - None

ADJOURNMENT

**MOTION BY ALDERMAN O'BRIEN TO ADJOURN BY ROLL CALL**

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

Yea: Alderman Clemons, Alderman Schmidt, Alderman Jette, Alderman Wilshire 7  
Alderman O'Brien, Alderwoman Kelly, Alderman Dowd

Nay: 0

**MOTION CARRIED**

The meeting was declared closed at 7:33 p.m.

Alderman-at-Large Michael B. O'Brien, Sr.  
Committee Clerk