

A special meeting of the Board of Aldermen was held Wednesday, June 10, 2020, at 7:00 p.m. via Webex.

President Lori Wilshire presided; City Clerk Susan K. Lovering recorded.

Prayer was offered by Deputy City Clerk Nicole Reyes; Alderman Brandon Michael Laws led in the Pledge to the Flag.

President Wilshire

As President of the Board of Aldermen, 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:

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

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

To join by phone dial: 1-408-418-9388 - Meeting number/access code: 712 759 664

If for some reason you cannot connect to Webex, please contact us at (603) 821-2049 and they will help you with connectivity. The public may also view the meeting via Channel 16.

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b) Providing public notice of the necessary information for accessing the meeting:

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 and publicly noticed at City Hall, Public Health Department and the Nashua Telegraph.

c) Providing a mechanism for the public to alert the public body during the meeting if there are problems with access:

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

d) Adjourning the meeting if the public is unable to access the meeting:

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.**

City Clerk Lovering 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 15 members of the Board of Aldermen present: Alderman Michael B. O'Brien, Sr., Alderman Patricia Klee, Alderwoman Shoshanna Kelly, Alderman Richard A. Dowd, Alderman June M. Caron, Alderman Benjamin Clemons, Alderman Lopez, Alderman David C. Tencza, Alderwoman Elizabeth Lu, Alderman Ernest Jette, Alderman Jan Schmidt, Alderman Brandon Michael Laws, Alderman Skip Cleaver, Alderman Linda Harriott-Gathright, Alderman Wilshire.

Mayor James W. Donchess, Corporation Counsel Steven A. Bolton, and Lisa Fauteux, Director of Public Works were also in attendance.

Alderman O'Brien

Present, I can hear the proceedings, I am alone and I am practicing social distancing.

Alderman Klee

Yes, I am here, I can hear the proceedings, I am practicing social distancing and I am alone.

Alderwoman Kelly

I am here, I am alone, I am practicing social distancing and I can hear everyone.

Alderman Dowd

Yes, I can hear everyone, I am here alone and I am practicing social distancing in accordance with the Governor's directive.

Alderman Caron

I am here, I can hear everyone, and I am practicing social distancing.

Alderman Clemons

Yes, I am here, I can hear everyone, I am by myself and I am staying home under the Governor's orders.

Alderman Lopez

I am here, I am social distancing, I have nobody with me and I can hear your every word.

Alderman Tencza

I am present, I can hear everybody, and I am staying home per the Governor's order and no one is in the room with me.

Alderwoman Lu

I am here alone, hearing you well, I am practicing social distancing.

Alderman Jette

I am here, I am alone, I can hear you and I am obeying the Governor's Order to stay home.

Alderman Schmidt

I am present, I can hear the proceedings, I am alone and I am following the directive for distancing.

Alderman Laws

I am here, I can hear you, I am alone and I am also following the directive for social distancing.

Alderman Cleaver

I am here, I am alone, following social distancing.

Alderman Harriott-Gathright

I am present, I can hear you, I am in this room alone and I am practicing social distancing.

President Wilshire

I am here, I am alone and I am practicing social distancing. Mayor are you on tonight?

Mayor Donchess

Yes, Madam President.

President Wilshire

OK, thank you. And Corporation Counsel, Steve Bolton?

Alderman Dowd

Attorney Clarke is one.

President Wilshire

Attorney Clark, ok very good. And there are a number of other people that maybe we can have them introduce themselves so that we know that they are here before I turn the meeting over to Alderman Dowd. Chief Rhodes? Chief?

Chief Rhodes

Good evening, yes, I am here, I am alone and I am honored to be before the Board. Thank you.

President Wilshire

And it looks like David Boucher?

David Boucher, Wastewater Superintendent

Yes, Dave Boucher, Wastewater Superintendent. Thank you for having me.

President Wilshire

Yes. Don Davidson.

Don Davidson, Fire Commissioner

Yes, I am here, I can hear you and I am alone.

President Wilshire

And we have Dorie Clarke.

Dorie Clark, City Attorney

Yes, I am here, happy to participate in the meeting.

President Wilshire

Thank you. We have Deputy Chief Walker.

Deputy Chief Walker

I am here, I can hear you and I am alone.

President Wilshire

And we have John Griffin. And I'm not sure if there is anybody else. If there is, could you identify yourself please?

David Fredette, City Treasurer

Alderman Wilshire, this David Fredette, City Treasurer.

President Wilshire

Ok thank you.

Kim Kleiner, Director of Administrative Services

Kim Kleiner, Administrative Services.

President Wilshire

Thank you.

Kevin Burgess, Fire Commissioner

Kevin Burgess, Fire Commissioner.

President Wilshire

Anybody else that hasn't been identified that is part of the meeting?

John McAllister, Nashua Fire & Rescue

John McCallister, I can hear you, I am home and I am alone.

President Wilshire

Anyone else? OK as is customary, I will turn this meeting over to the Chairman of the Budget Committee, Alderman Dowd.

Chairman Dowd

Good evening everyone. We have two Public Hearings this evening on two different subjects. We will not be taking a break between them. We will take a 5-minute break between the Public Hearing and the actual Budget Meeting. I will be calling for testimony in favor and testimony in opposition twice. If somebody would like to speak, if you are on video, please raise your hand and I will see you and recognize you. If you are on the phone, please just state your name and I will try and catch you – if many people are talking at the same time we will get whoever will like to speak on either one of the items. When we leave the Public Hearing, we will be going into the Budget Meeting and then the only people that will be able to attend will be from the Board of Aldermen.

When we include the Public Hearing, before we get into the Budget Meeting, if you have any lingering questions for Attorney Clarke, Treasurer Fredette or Mr. Griffin, they may not be staying for the entire regular Budget Meeting so if you have a question, please ask them so that they can sign off.

PUBLIC HEARINGS

R-20-040 AUTHORIZING THE MAYOR AND CITY TREASURER TO BORROW FROM THE NEW HAMPSHIRE DEPARTMENT OF ENVIRONMENTAL SERVICES STATE REVOLVING LOAN FUND AN ADDITIONAL AMOUNT NOT TO EXCEED TWO MILLION FIVE HUNDRED THOUSAND DOLLARS (\$2,500,000) FOR PUMP STATION UPGRADES

Chairman Dowd

Is there anyone that is going to speak to that for us from the City? Someone going to present what we are doing with this motion?

David Fredette, City Treasurer

That would be the Superintendent of Wastewater. This is David Fredette.

Chairman Dowd

Yes. Would the Superintendent please let us know the extent of what we are doing with this particular bond?

David Boucher, Superintendent of Wastewater

Yes this is David Boucher, I don't know if you can see me, but I am the Superintendent. This bond, currently we have a sewer pump station upgrade project. The project consists of upgrading 13 sewer pump stations throughout the City of Nashua. Most of the pump stations were built in the 1960's and have exceeded their useful life. So we are doing complete rehabs on all of them; some are receiving new buildings. All are receiving new pumps, some that didn't have buildings are receiving buildings. Some only had one pump, now they are receiving back up pumps. So this is taking place, currently we have six being upgraded currently as part of Phase I.

And we have Phase II, this one should be complete around September. We are getting ready to start going out to bid for Phase II which would be the remainder of the pump stations. So this Resolution is for additional monies. The project initially started, it was in the works in 2015 so I think the money had a changed over time, a need for more money, change over time as expenses increased. So this Resolution would help us borrow more money from the State to cover the cost of Phase II.

Chairman Dowd

Thank you. Treasurer Fredette, did you want to add anything to that?

Mr. Fredette

No, I didn't really have anything, unless somebody had a question. But as the Superintendent stated, this is a loan from the State, not a bond. The requirements, it is a lot easier than going through a bond process, we do have quite a few loans through the State for Wastewater.

Chairman Dowd

Are there any of the Aldermen that would like a clarifying question before we get started in the Public Testimony? Alderman Lu?

Alderwoman Lu

Thank you, Chairman Dowd. Could you clarify for me, did you say the \$2.5 million will include funds for Phase II? You started out talking about Phase I and then you mentioned Phase II. So if I could just get clarification?

Mr. Boucher

Yes, we had borrowed enough money for part of Phase II, it wasn't enough. We need to borrow an additional \$2.5 million. We are expecting Phase II to cost around \$6.1 / \$6.2 million, so we need the additional \$2.5.

Alderwoman Lu

Thank you. Just to follow up, so you are currently in Phase II.

Mr. Boucher

No, we are currently in Phase I. Phase I should be complete around September. That's the first six pump stations.

Alderwoman Lu

Ok and what is the interest rate that the State charges?

Mr. Fredette

That's listed in the Bond Resolution, it's 2%.

Alderwoman Lu

Thank you, that's all.

Chairman Dowd

OK any other questions before we get going in Public Testimony? Seeing none, I will now take testimony in favor of R-20-040. Is there anyone that would like to speak in favor?

TESTIMONY IN FAVOR - None

TESTIMONY IN OPPOSITION - None

TESTIMONY IN FAVOR - None

TESTIMONY IN OPPOSITION - None

Chairman Dowd

I will now close the Public Hearing on R-20-040. The next item for Public Hearing is R-20-041.

R-20-041 APPROVING THE COST ITEMS OF A COLLECTIVE BARGAINING AGREEMENT BETWEEN THE MAYOR AND THE BOARD OF FIRE COMMISSIONERS OF THE CITY OF NASHUA, NEW HAMPSHIRE AND LOCAL #789, INTERNATIONAL ASSOCIATION OF FIRE FIGHTERS FROM JULY 1, 2019 THROUGH JUNE 30, 2023 AND AUTHORIZING A RELATED TRANSFER AND SUPPLEMENTAL APPROPRIATION

Chairman Dowd

Who from the City would like to present the City's point of view on this?

Mr. Davidson

This is Chairman Davidson, I would ask and yield to the Chief and I will make comments afterwards, thank you.

Fire Chief Brian Rhodes

Good evening everyone. Thank you for the opportunity to testify before you. No one knew we would be facing the pandemic or the situation that we are in. I have faithfully served this City for over 33 years. And in those 33 years it has never been a good time for the Fire Fighters. The Fire Fighters have historically – well first let me back, full transparency. I have paid Union Dues for Local 789 for 29 ½ years. I no longer pay any dues, I roll the fire trucks they ride on, I crawl down the hallways they crawl down, I do the Safe Station calls they do today, that we started 3 ½ almost 4 years ago.

This contract negotiations was not easy. We did not roll over as a City, we did not roll over as a Fire Administration. And there was some healthy dialogue along the way. The letter that you all received from Fire Private Michael O'Brien, Jr. was very factual; extremely factual. The Fire Fighters of Local 789 are not looking for parity with our brothers and sisters of the Nashua Police Department. They are looking to close the gap. And that document that you got clearly is spelled out, the disparities and the differences between all levels of both organizations. Now both organizations, and again, I am in no way, shape, or form speaking against our Police Department, because we have the best Police Department in New England; we have the best Fire Department in New England.

I didn't want to bring this up at this point because it's not really factual but I am going to because I think you need to hear this as the Board of Aldermen. So the Management Study that you approved for our Organization has been sidetracked a little bit. But through that process, the lead for Emergency Services Consulting International, one of the things that they do is they look at our past studies and they look at our past ISO ratings, which determines business insurance rates.

We have been an ISO Class II Fire Department for as long as I've been here. Again, I am not 100% sure, but I am 99% sure, that in a very short time, we are going to be the first Fire Department in the State of New Hampshire that is going to be an ISO Class I Fire Department. And that's pretty big, because there are less than 300 Fire or Rescue Organizations in the entire country who have achieved that level.

And we got to this, and we found this through the study that you so graciously approved, to help us determine the needs of our Fire Department going forward based upon the growth of our organization. Again, I am not guaranteeing that, in full transparency, we are 99% sure this is going to happen in very short order.

To the contract – again we did not roll over as a City negotiating. The Board of Fire Commissioners, Attorney Clarke was there through all of it, financial services, Rose Evans was there through much of this. But it isn't all just a give. The Fire Union made some pretty good concessions and I am going to highlight three of them. So if you please excuse me, I am just going to read from the paper that I have so I don't misquote what is in this tentative agreement.

Currently, our dispatchers are paid time and a half overtime for every minute after their scheduled time, which means they work varying schedules because of the rotation. So they could be 34, 38, 48 hours a week. The way the current contract was written, if they worked 34 hours, they would get overtime for hour 35 at time and a half. We were able, through negotiations, to come to an agreement with Local 789 that we brought that to 40 hours. But that 40 hours is just like the Fire Fighters and that is feet on the floor time, which means they have to come to work. If you take a sick day, if you take a vacation day, you have to make up those hours before you get into the time and a half overtime. That's a big concession.

In this contract we negotiated for and the City wanted this, the Fire Administration wanted this, the Fire Commission wanted this, when we got the three dispatchers in our Fire Alarm Office, the two person model and the three person model currently, there is no defined outlined supervisor in that room. Currently, we still have one trainer / clerk for the Fire Alarm Division. That means that one person is responsible for training all of the different and new employees we bring in. So just think about that. One person is responsible for, at the time, 7 others, excuse me, now 11 other people, so how do we get consistent training for these members? We have to keep moving people around. We have to keep adjusting schedules, so one of the things we did in this new contract was, and we have already tested for it, we have tested to create and eliminate the Clerk Dispatcher position and create a Dispatch Supervisor position, which would be similar to a Lieutenant. So now we have a person in that room 24/7 who is responsible for decision making, who is accountable and it is not just peers. I mean no disrespect to our dispatchers when I say this. This was peers working together and the difference might have been seniority. So now with this contract, we can have a supervisor in that room 24/7 which is safer for our community, it's safer for our Fire Fighters, it is safer all around.

The third major concession that Local 789 made was in our promotional process. Currently you do need any prerequisites other than one year on the Fire Department to testing to the Fire Marshall's Division. Through the negotiations we were able to secure that anyone starting on January 1st of 2021 who aspires to be a member of the Fire Marshall's Division must have Fire Inspector I and Fire Inspector Certifications prior to taking the exam. What does that do, what does that mean for us? That means we are saving money now because we do not have to send someone out to achieve the Certification to do that job. That was in the current contract.

I am not going to belabor this point; I fully understand the current situation we are in. Again we were in a blue-chip economy, we were in record low unemployment, we were in record low vacancy rates in the City of Nashua. The City of Nashua is exploding with building and developing which is putting more work on the limited staff that we have and I am going to bring it up because it has to come up. Our Fire Fighters have done the Safe Station Program for 4 years, with \$0 additional benefit. They have done a fantastic job; they have saved lives and it is because of the great job they did. And they took this on and they didn't ask for anything at the beginning because they knew we were in a problem; we had a huge problem as a City and they took it on.

So again, I totally understand the situation we are in, I am taxpayer, I have been for many, many years. I plan on being one for many more years. But at the end of the day, the question for me is, when is the right time to do the right thing for the Nashua Fire Fighters. So I appreciate you giving me the opportunity to speak, I am truly passionate about this organization because this organization has been so good to me and my family.

Again, we are a shining star in the New England Region and far beyond and we are because we have support from our community and we have good employees who do a fantastic job for us every day who are not looking, they are not looking to get anything they don't deserve, because they fully deserve it. So I ask you, you have a tough decision before you, again I fully understand that and I just ask you to please, really think about the implications of this contract and think about the good things that your Fire Fighters do in our community, every single day. Thank you.

Chairman Dowd

Thank you, Chief. Mr. Davidson, did you want to add something to the Chief's statements, or do you want to wait until Public Comment.

Don Davidson, Nashua Fire Commissioner

The comment part may be appropriate if that fits the system.

Chairman Dowd

Ok, is there anyone else on the City side that wants to comment? OK and unless somebody has an objection, I am going to ask that the President of the Nashua Fire & Rescue, if he would like to say anything at this point or wait for public comment?

John McAllister, Nashua Fire & Rescue

The Chief hit a lot of good points right on. This contract has been negotiated; we've been in negotiations for this for over a year now. Local 789 sent a letter of intent to the City and we started negotiations back in March of 2019. It took that long before this Local stood firm on some of the goals that we wanted to accomplish here. Those goals that we wanted to accomplish, as the Chief had mentioned, were to close the gap in pay that our members currently have in reference to our brothers and sisters in the Police Department. And again, I do not begrudge them, they are worth every penny that they make; but so aren't our members.

As the Chief had stated, for four years now we have been dealing with opioid crisis in the City head on. Our members are on the front line. Four years ago our working conditions changed for the members of the Local 789. We didn't bat an eye; we took the challenge and we accepted it and I think our members have done a fantastic job. Many lives have been saved and many people have fought the addiction and they have come out on the other end. But our members have not been compensated for that. Four years a change in working conditions and we haven't received any type of benefit for that. So that's why we would stand firm on the percentages that we are looking for.

Not too long ago this Board approved the contract for the Police Supervisors for 3% over a 4-year deal. We are asking for 1/2 % more. We are asking for 1/2% more due to Safe Stations, due to our involvement in that process. Over the past, as the Chief had mentioned, it is never a good time for the Fire Fighters. At the end of March we finally came to a deal after two mediations. We had mediations for over 6 hours with a private mediator, two separate occasions. And then we filed for fact finding. But at the last minute we went back to the table and we were able to successfully come out with the agreement that you have before you tonight. That's a fair deal. It's a fair deal for the City; it's a fair deal for our members. As the Chief had said, it's never a good time for the Fire Fighters. We come out at the end of February with that agreement and then – Bam – COVID-19 hits us unexpectedly. Nobody saw this coming, it's not our fault, it is nobody's fault.

But the thing that we have to remember is that our members since Day 1 have been on the front lines dealing with COVID-19. We are going on calls every single day, 24 hours a day, 7 days a week dealing with this.

Our members are very concerned about bringing this back home to their families. We understand that what is going in the world right now is not a good time. But we are still fighting that fight. Over the past 10 years, Local 789 has gotten an increase in pay, 19.5% over ten years. That's 1.9% that our members have received over the course of 10 years for pay raises. The last time we have seen a raise of 3% was back in the 2008. That's 12 years that we haven't seen a raise over 2.5%. I believe the time is now that we pass this, we approve this, we show good faith to the members of this organization that are on the front lines. As the Chief had talked about a few of the concessions that we had made, the Fire Alarm Overtime is huge. That's a huge concession that affected, right now, 12 individuals of this Local. And we understood why they wanted to do that and we gave up, we conceded on that. I don't think you understand the importance of the concessions that we made for the Fire Marshall's Exam.

As the Chief had said, currently right now any member can test for Fire Marshall with one year on the Fire Department. They might not have the schooling and the education. Our contract right now says that they have a certain time to get that education. With the new language and the concessions that this Local made, that is going to benefit the City of Nashua tenfold. As we speak right now, our Fire Marshall Division is already understaffed; it is understaffed and it is affecting the City of Nashua's operations because they need to get plans out. They need to get these out for people to open up businesses.

During this whole COVID-19 Crisis, with the outdoor seating, they had to go to make arrangements for these restaurants to open their doors and allow people to sit outside and eat. So with the concession that we made with that alone is going to benefit the City way more than anybody realized, because people are going to go into that Division and they are going to be ready to go, they are going to come out of the door running. Also, with the COVID-19 response, when this hit us back in March, Local 789's Executive Board, nobody has dealt with anything like this before.

The Governor declared a State of Emergency, we met with Administration, we said what are we going to do, how are we going to handle this. What a lot of people don't understand is the Local came up with a Memorandum of Understanding with the Administration of the Fire Department to allow leniency on our current contract, because we knew dealing with this crisis that contract language might have to be changed. And instead of having that conversation every time it came up, we established a Memorandum of Understanding that stated if there is going to be contract language that we are going to change, just have conversation with the Local. The Local has worked, I believe, pretty well with the Incident Management Team that was established by Chief Rhodes to handle the COVID-19 Crisis. They have had to change contract language; we have allowed that to happen.

Not granted, that's not a concession for this particular contract, but I bring that up because it reiterates the seriousness of the situation that we are dealing with right now and how involved our members are. Our members understood that this is outside of the box for everybody, but we are willing to do what we need to do to get the job done, which we have always done. I'll end it with the members of Local 789 deserve these raises. They deserve this contract. Not only because of Safe Stations, not only because of the COVID Crisis, but because of the calls that they deal with everyday of the year, 365 days a year, 7 days a week they are dealing with this. We are already short staffed as the Chief had talked about, the new study that is coming out. That study was done 20 years ago and it called for 2 additional engine companies then. So if you think about that, the increase in runs over the last 20 years, we are still doing it with six engines and 3 ladders. Our companies are going out 15, 20 times a day, that's one company alone, never mind throughout the City.

I ask you tonight to approve the cost for this collective bargaining agreement. That was negotiated fairly between the City of Nashua, the Fire Administration and Local 789. Thank you for your time.

Chairman Dowd

Are there any of the Alderman that would have a clarifying question from anyone who has just presented?
Alderman Lopez?

Alderman Lopez

I was just curious; Safe Stations seems to be brought up a lot. Is the contract permitting the Fire Department to continue doing it for the duration of the contract?

Mr. Davidson

No, there are no provisions whether we or not we do continue or not throughout the length of this contract. Alderman Lopez, the ½% that we consider the raises for the Safe Stations were for the previous years that we have done them, for the last 4 years.

Alderman Lopez

Do you have any plans to continue?

Mr. Davidson

I don't know what the plan is for the City right now.

Alderman Lopez

OK just checking.

Chairman Dowd

Any other questions for any of the speakers from the Aldermen? Seeing and hearing none, I will now open up testimony in favor of R-20-041. Former Mayor Davidson?

Testimony in Favor

Mr. Davidson Thank you and I want to thank the Board of Aldermen for allowing us to join this meeting in this modern fashion. I still think being in the same room and seeing body language is a better way to do business, but we have to live with the times we are in. The comments that I am going to make may sound repetitive, repetitive from the last time I talked to you about this contract to some of the comments made by the Chief and to a degree a few of the comments made by Don. This contract is not excessive. When it first came out, I was, I don't want to say chastised, I was given a little "what for" about the contents of the contract. And I, from the very beginning, started to explain my view of why this contract was so necessary, as I still feel strongly that it is necessary.

The contract is getting up to the point of being on par with the responsibilities of the men and women who protect our City every day through their position as Fire Fighters and Administrative Staff, because they all play a roll. The contract still is below other Departments mean overall percentage that they've been able to get over the years. But as everybody before me has said, we are not here trying to tear anybody down. We are here trying to say the Fire Department needs to be brought up, in some fashion, to the real world. I'd like to put what the Fire Department has gone through for these many years, through an analogy of siblings growing up. The oldest boy or gal gets the new clothes and the new clothes last awhile and then they passed down to the next in line. And you say, how can you make analogy like that? Well the Fire Department over the years, have sort of felt they are in the same position. Other Departments get in and lobby and get a percentage in their contract that is very, very good. And when the Fire Department's turn comes up, Oh we can't do that, we can't do that, we don't have enough.

Now for those of you who have been around awhile like I have, you'd seen it. It is not uncommon for the Fire Department in the past to be the second level of contract. Now again, this contract isn't putting it on a par with anybody, it is just giving them what they should be getting given the responsibilities that they have everyday for us. There has some discussion about Safe Station. Safe Station came in several years ago and the whole idea of Safe Station was very noble. As John said, we had a terrible crisis in the City back then that needed Safe Station type of assistance. There was a segment of our population back then that were very against this, they didn't really realize why they were against it, they were against the issue that this was trying to correct. Nonetheless, the Firemen went out creating uproar, took on the responsibility. And if you folks could see the list of what they have accomplished over these years in handling the Safe Station customers, you'd be as impressed as I was.

Now some question about they are going to do going forward. Well we, as a City, haven't made our mind up yet.

Chairman Dowd

One minute, Don.

Mr. Davidson I'm sorry?

Chairman Dowd

One minute.

Mr. Davidson Oh I didn't know I had time, in that case I probably would have spoken...

Chairman Dowd

Keep going.

Mr. Davidson We don't know what we are going to do with the City except that the State has come down and changed the whole process. They have created an agency in the City from 8 to 5 and any Safe Station type of need is supposed to be handled by that facility. But the question pops up, what happens after 5:00 and until 8:00 in the morning. And what is happening is they are going to the Fire Station. That is going to be addressed going forward, but the Firemen are still there doing their job and as has been said by others, not getting paid to do that extra work. How many of us would work over these many years, doing something extra, without getting any kind of remuneration. I'm sorry I didn't know I was on a time thing here, but I do want to close by saying this, this contract is fair. It is helping the Administration going forward. It is not overkill, it is not excessive. When you are thinking about doing it, think about the needs for the Fire Department. Why do we need it? Well fires are obvious and you especially want them if it is your house that is on fire. Think of all the other things the Fire Department does, the members of the Fire Department, what about the medical calls? We have thousands of medical calls every year. We don't really know about them as citizens but they happen, somebody has a heart attack, somebody falls downstairs, somebody gets stuck in an elevator. Now for me, I kind of laugh, I try to push it out the door, how many of you people want to be stuck in an elevator? Guess who comes and gets you? 99.9% of the time – the Fire Department. How about people who are elderly and fall out of bed.

Chairman Dowd

OK I've got to ask you to wrap up Don if you can.

Mr. Davidson Alright I'm sorry, I'll take any questions but as I have said before this is a very important instrument for the men and women of your Fire Department. Thank you.

Alderman O'Brien

Mr. Chairman? May I rise to ask a parliamentary question, please?

Chairman Dowd

Sure.

Alderman O'Brien

You did not mention that there would be a time limit and we do have two testimony in favor and two testimony in opposition. Would Mr. Davidson where he may have had to cut his point of view short, could he speak again in the second half of the testimony in question?

Chairman Dowd

Yes.

Alderman O'Brien

Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Chairman Dowd

Yeah I did mention at the beginning of the meeting as in all the Public Hearings recently, 5 minutes, we don't know how many people are on, how many people want to speak and you should be able to articulate what you want to say in 5 minutes. But I always give the opportunity to speak again if somebody has a second thought, particularly if there is somebody that says something in opposition and they want to refute it. Again, if there is no one else in favor, any testimony in opposition?

Testimony in Opposition- None

Testimony in Favor

Chairman Dowd

Mayor Davidson, do you want to finish your thoughts?

Mr. Davidson Well yes, thank you for the opportunity. I won't ramble on but I did mention to you my strong feeling about the need for the contract. And it is tied to the Budget, you folks know that, you've got the Budget coming up so you've got to keep that in mind too. We need the contract passed because they deserve it. But then when it is passed, we need the funds to fund it. And you people have got to deal with money that you don't have. I am very aware that the revenues for the City and I am aware from my past experience, the revenues for the City have been nil for about 3 months, compared to what it normally is. Your State Revenues have gone through the floor, so when they come time to pass out to the cities and towns, there is going to be a shortfall. So you guys are really facing a really difficult problem. But we can't worry about what is going to happen in the future by handcuffing what is right now. We still need to have dedicated, professional, and needed men and women in the Fire Department.

So when it comes time for the Budget, you do know we are short with what you have in front of you now. So when you take and do your considerations of the Budget, I ask formally for a number of what \$500,000.00 which was what was cut from the Budget would do the tax rate today, at today's dollars. \$500 K is \$.05 cents per thousand. So when we are considering are the Fire Department worth getting a good contract for the next four years and you've got a money issue you are facing with, please remember \$.05 per thousand for the taxpayers. That is all I have and thank you and good luck in your deliberation.

Testimony in Opposition- NoneChairman O'Brien

Before we adjourn, is there anybody from the Board of Aldermen that has a question for Attorney Clarke or Treasurer Fredette on either one of the items that we just had the Public Hearing on as they will probably be stepping off of the meeting? Alderman Lopez.

Alderman Lopez

I have a question. Is Chief Rhodes still on?

Chairman Dowd

It looks like he's still on, there he goes.

Chief Rhodes

Sorry about that.

Alderman Lopez

So I got kind of an ambiguous answer when I was asking about plans for Safe Station, as it was continually referenced. I know that the Fire Station did a huge roll with accepting people who were walking up and they were talking about a greater partnership where Harbor Homes, AMR and other partners were also working – but what are the plans for that moving forward. Because my understanding from some of the Mayor's previous public comments that that program was being downsized and I know that the Governor has altered the model.

Chief Rhodes

Well thank you for that question, Alderman. You are correct, things are changing. I think things are changing as far as Harbor Homes involvement and I think Harbor Homes was the linchpin to the successes we had. But first and foremost, we all have to understand that we are an emergency services organization. We are not a social services organization. We have taxpayers who fund us and who expect us and rightfully so to respond in a timely and efficient manner to their emergency. Many Safe Station clients are from out of the City of Nashua. One of the things that we made crystal clear from Day 1, was the need to have Nashua Fire Companies available in 15 minutes or less.

Unfortunately for the City of Nashua, the Governor decided he had a better plan and the Governor never came to us and asked us about our program and basically said, this is the program. I can tell you with 100% certainty and 8:00 to 5:00 program will not work for Nashua Fire & Rescue. We cannot, excuse me one minutes, sorry about that. Nashua Fire & Rescue is not in the business of making phone calls to find an open program and open bed, call 211, that's not our role. The role your Fire Fighters have played for the last 4 years was to be caring and compassionate and to welcome everyone into our Fire Stations and made a no judgement zone. Those were why the Safe Station Program was so very successful. It was the collaboration of the City of Nashua, the leadership of Mayor Donchess, the leadership of Chief Steve Galipeau, at the time, the Union Leadership of John McAllister, and his Executive Board. That's why this worked.

Unfortunately going forward, all of these things have been taken out of our control. I cannot put any more burden on our Fire Fighters because, again, they are not clinically trained as social workers. They are not trained to go through a call and make 4, 5, 6, 7 calls to try to find a spot for someone to land. So the short answer is, the future of Safe Station is very dim and I think that light is dimming by the day.

And it is not by anything that we can do because that is not something that the City of Nashua should have to bear the burden because the State of New Hampshire is receiving an incredible amount of money to deal with this but unfortunately, they never consulted us to see why our model was so successful.

And again, I think you know Alderman Lopez, from your association with Harbor Homes, that is a great organization that stepped to the forefront, that has been there for us, for the City of Nashua for the past four years, 24/7 365. And they have not let us down one iota in any of the promises that they made. And our Fire Fighters have not let us down. But we cannot get into a program where we are going to put a Fire Company in the City of Nashua because of the activity level that we are already at, we cannot have a Fire Company out of service for a half hour, 45 minutes to an hour, trying to make phone calls. That's not the role of an emergency service organization.

So I hope I gave you the answer you are looking for; a little bit more maybe than you were asking for, but I think we have to be fully transparent here. I have been, I've probably been the biggest champion of the Nashua Safe Stations for the Fire Department for the last 4 years. And it pains me to tell you this. But those are the hard, cold facts of this and I just don't think that this should be put on the backs of our Nashua Fire Fighters or the taxpayers of the City of Nashua, going forward.

Chairman Dowd

All set, Alderman Lopez?

Alderman Lopez

Actually I would like to respond. So I appreciate the thoroughness of your response because it does put context to it. This is not the first time I've seen the State redirect or rearrange that was working really well in Nashua, particularly the Safe Station. So your context definitely makes sense. In reference to what former Mayor Davidson said earlier, you know, would anybody do this extra work without asking for any extra pay? Actually I did, because I was managing Maple Street Shelter through the kick-off of the Safe Station Program and it was basically dumped in my lap. I was asked, you know, are you and your staff willing to take the overnight overflow people.

So we were working with the after-hours element of it as well. And we were the ones that were calling 211, we were the ones that were connecting them with recovery sites and created the model on Harbor Homes' side. So knowing that first-hand and the amount of work that is involved with that, it is not a role I would imagine for our Fire Fighters to be taking moving forward. So I appreciate you making sure that we didn't have that mission and our Fire Fighters weren't being pushed in a direction where they are not really able to manage it.

Because what our Fire Fighters do really, really well is fight fires and there's plenty of that and there is plenty of concern about it. I mean during this meeting, I must've had 12 fireworks go off about 300 feet away. So I appreciate the efforts that you guys do. I was just wondering about the context of the Safe Station since it was brought up so many times. So thank you for your answer, I appreciate it.

Chairman Dowd

Thank you, Alderman Lopez. Anyone else that has any questions for Attorney Clarke or Treasurer Fredette? Seeing and hearing none. Alderman O'Brien would you please give us a motion?

ADJOURNMENT

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

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

Yea: Alderman O'Brien, Alderman Klee, Alderwoman Kelly, Alderman Dowd,
Alderman Caron, Alderman Clemons, Alderman Lopez, Alderman Tencza,
Alderwoman Lu, Alderman Jette, Alderman Schmidt, Alderman Cleaver,
Alderman Laws, Alderwoman Harriott-Gathright, Alderman Wilshire 15

Nay: 0

MOTION CARRIED

The special meeting was declared adjourned at 8:02 p.m.

Attest: Nicole Reyes, Deputy City Clerk