

WORK STUDY GROUP RELATIVE TO THE POLICE COMMISSIONERS

September 2, 2021

A meeting of the Work Study Group Relative to the Police Commissioners was held Thursday, September 2, 2021, at 7:00 p.m. in the Aldermanic Chamber and via Zoom teleconference.

The Zoom meeting link can be found on the agenda and on the city's website.

Alderwoman-at-Large Shoshanna Kelly, Chairman, presided.

Members of the Committee present: Alderwoman-at-Large Shoshanna Kelly
Alderman Richard A. Dowd
Deborah Novotny (via Zoom)
Nicholas Dahl
Marylou Blaisdell (via Zoom)
Mark Brave (via Zoom)
Kerry Baxter
Kendra Smith (arrived late via Zoom)

Members of the Committee absent: Eva Castillo
Sandy Cleary

Also in Attendance: Alderman-at-Large Lori Wilshire

ROLL CALL

Chairwoman Kelly

The first order of business tonight is going to be mostly a planning conversation. I know that I've told the members of the Committee that but the very first order of business here is to have a Vice-Chair and also a Clerk. So I'd love to open up the floor to Committee members to nominate a Vice-Chair.

NOMINATION OF VICE-CHAIR AND CLERK

MOTION BY ALDERMAN DOWD TO NOMINATE ALDERMAN DOWD AS VICE-CHAIRMAN

ON THE QUESTION

Alderman Dowd

I'll volunteer to be Vice-Chair.

Chairwoman Kelly

Okay. Nomination is for Alderman Dowd as Vice-Chair. Any other nominations? I'll close nominations.

MOTION BY ALDEMAN DOWD TO CLOSE NOMINATIONS MOTION CARRIED

MOTION BY ALDERMAN DOWD TO NOMINATE ALDERMAN DOWD AS VICE-CHAIRMAN BY ROLL CALL

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

Yea: Alderman Dowd, Deborah Novotny, Nicholas Dahl, Marylou Blaisdell
Mark Brave, Kerry Baxter, Alderwoman Kelly 7

Nay: 0

MOTION CARRIED

Chairwoman Kelly

We also need a Clerk. I know that not everyone on the Committee is used to the going ons of the aldermanic chamber but a Clerk is generally someone who just makes sure we have all the tech. up here going and keeps notes for the back office. So anyone want to be my Clerk? Anybody?

Nicholas Dahl

What does it involve?

Chairwoman Kelly

Just you would do instead of me doing the roll call, you do the roll call and make sure that the timer is on if we have public comment, and that’s about it.

Alderman Dowd

Alderman O’Brien will give you a good training session.

Nicholas Dahl

Well if you need one tonight, it’s going to be me or Kerry so I guess I’ll do it. I don’t think she’s going to fight me for it.

MOTION BY ALDEWOMAN KELLY TO NOMINATE NICHOLAS DAHL AS CLERK BY ROLL CALL

ON THE QUESTION

Chairwoman Kelly

So nomination for Nick Dahl to be our Clerk. Are there any other nominations or can I close the nominations on the floor? Okay.

MOTION BY ALDERWOMAN KELLY TO CLOSE NOMINATIONS OF CLERK BY ROLL CALL

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

Yea: Alderman Dowd, Deborah Novotny, Nicholas Dahl, Marylou Blaisdell
Mark Brave, Kendra Smith, Kerry Baxter, Alderwoman Kelly 8

Nay: 0

MOTION CARRIED

MOTION BY ALDEWOMAN KELLY TO NOMINATE NICHOLAS DAHL AS CLERK BY ROLL CALL

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

Yea: Alderman Dowd, Deborah Novotny, Nicholas Dahl, Marylou Blaisdell
Mark Brave, Kendra Smith, Kerry Baxter, Alderwoman Kelly 8

Nay: 0

MOTION CARRIED

DISCUSSION

Chairwoman Kelly

I just want the record to show that Kendra Soucie joined us by Zoom during the last roll call. Did I miss anybody else? Okay, great.

So the next agenda item on the list is discussion. Mostly like a heads up before this is going to be a planning meeting. How do we want this to work? What questions do we want answered, etc.? So in true me fashion, I have a PowerPoint. Okay so I put together the agenda that's attended to the agenda. We already elected our Vice-Chair and Clerk. What we're going to do first is just go around and introduce each other. I do not have the privilege to know everybody who is serving on this Committee. I'm very pleased to have all these people and I want to hear what your backgrounds are, etc. Then I want to talk a little bit about how we want to meet, how often we want to meet, and that kind of structural pieces. Then I was hoping that together we could create a list of questions or information we need to move forward and really get into the meat of this discussion here and then also along with that who might need to come to the table to help us sort of form this conversation.

So back to the goal of the committee. It was really just to bring all sides to the table in this discussion in terms of the Police Commission, how its appointed, really discuss it in depth, and then by the end of this offer some recommendations to the Board of Aldermen and the community really at large based on the research and the discussions that we have in this smaller group. So I think what we can start with is going around. I'd love each committee member to just introduce themselves, where they're from as not everybody is necessarily from Nashua and I will call on people in a random order. Can we start with you Kerry?

Kerry Baxter

Sure. Kerry Baxter. I retired from the Nashua Police Department last fall. At the time of my retirement, I had achieved the rank of Captain and was the Bureau Commander for the Detective Bureau. I'm currently employed as a police officer in Massachusetts and I moved to Nashua in 1998 when I started my career with Nashua PD and I've been a property owner in the city since 2000.

Chairwoman Kelly

Thank you very much – very thorough.

Marylou Blaisdell

I'm Marylou Blaisdell. I've lived in Nashua since 1988. I come into this totally open minded. I don't have an opinion one way or the other. I own a business downtown. I also serve as Chair of the Downtown Improvement Committee and look forward to this discussion.

Chairwoman Kelly

Thank you very much Marylou.

Mark Brave

Good evening committee members. My name is Mark Brave. I am the Strafford County High Sheriff. I live in Dover, New Hampshire, and I am here to give some insights on a few cities around us that do have Police Commissions and some ideas we can take from them to accomplish your goal as a community.

Chairwoman Kelly

Thank you very much Mark.

Kendra Smith

My name is Kendra Smith. Maybe you could correct that too on the paper. I have lived here since 1990. I'm a small business owner here in Nashua.

Chairwoman Kelly

Thank you Kendra.

Nicholas Dahl

My name is Nick Dahl. I'm a Nashua native. I've lived here most of my life. I've been with the federal government since 1989. I work for an officer and Inspector General. I'm overseeing the Department of Veterans Affairs the second largest

agency in government. I am a Police Commissioner here in Nashua and have been for six years.

Chairwoman Kelly

Thank you.

Alderman Dowd

Yes I'm Alderman Dowd. Alderman from Ward 2. Lifelong resident of Nashua and I am the liaison from the Board of Aldermen to the Board of Police Commissioners, and also Chairman of the Joint Special School Building Committee, and also Budget Chair of the city.

Chairwoman Kelly

Thank you.

Deborah Novotny

My name is Debbie Novotny. I am a Nashua native. I work at Enterprise Bank as a commercial lender and I only know what I've read in the paper. I'm really interested to hear how this came about and like what the actions are going forward.

Chairwoman Kelly

Thank you so much Deb. I think I'm it. I'm Shoshanna Kelly. I'm an Alderwoman-at-Large. I've lived in Nashua for 16 years now. I have two children – one who's in the school district. I'm also a small business owner with offices right on Main Street in downtown.

Again I just want to thank everyone for their willingness to give their time. As someone who has lots on my plate, I know that this is time that you are taking away from friends and family to do this really important work so I appreciate that.

This is the slide I was trying to find and you'll probably all laugh at me but I facilitate and do this kind of work for a living in terms of brainstorming. I really want to kind of set the tone of that's what this is that we're all coming with different sides. We're all going to be passionate about it but as we're brainstorming, let's really set a space where we can be open and really push each other to have this conversation. So I sit here and laugh because I literally use this when I brainstorm and we fill the wall with post its. I threw these out. I would love to hear if the Committee has any more to add but the community ones that I use are just one speaker at a time. The idea of being ragged that you don't have to feel like it's fully flushed out before you talk about it so we can really get into the nuts of that. Yes and when someone has an idea so you're building on it. My favorite is step up, step back. If you're someone who is constantly talking, maybe be the listener and the alternate as well. Assume best intentions. I think that's really important in brainstorming because we're all especially with something like this. We all understand that we're here to do a job for the city and be fair and open in how we do this. So there's that. Then I always tell people if you're not uncomfortable, you're not doing it right.

That's just my little – I think it's a good way to set up a brainstorm that everybody can come to the table. Okay. Does anyone have any norms they want to add or anything they want to comment on before I move on? There are norms in the chamber in terms of being called on. I know that not everybody here is an alderman. So if you want to speak from the committee if you're on Zoom, raise your little fake hand or you can literally waive your hand at me. If you're in the chamber, just raise your hand and we'll call on you.

So I think the nuts and bolts of tonight is really the structure ideal like how do we want to meet, when do we want to meet, how do we want to engage with the public. I know I have my ideas but I really wanted it to be a collaboration with everyone here. I kind of want to open the floor. These were thoughts of how often do we want to meet? When do we think we want to have a full recommendation? So I'd love to hear from the committee members.

Marylou Blaisdell

Can you explain this Shoshanna since there seems to be will this topic be on the ballot in November, and if it is does that override what our committee suggestion may be, and how does the study coincide and work with that time table?

Chairwoman Kelly

I was wondering how long before this topic came up. It's a good question. I think that the aldermen have really said the

piece that was in front of us we tabled because we felt strongly that we needed to talk about it. I believe it was certified petition is part of the packet that I gave you guys but I don't think that stops our work here. What happens in November yea or nay we still can continue to have this conversation and make recommendations. In my mind, we have two years because it goes on the ballot in two years.

Marylou Blaisdell

Okay. Thank you for that clarification.

Alderman Wilshire

It's on the ballot this November.

Chairwoman Kelly

I know. For our recommendations, it would be two years from now. Right? Because it won't make this November. Sorry if that was unclear.

Alderman Dowd

I think as we have discussions and findings come out, they'll be made public and it may or may not influence anything that goes on in November.

Chairwoman Kelly

Does that answer your question Marylou?

Marylou Blaisdell

Yes. Thank you very much.

Chairwoman Kelly

Does anyone have follow ons or other thoughts?

Mark Brave

I would say I like the evening times. I don't know what time of day would work for everyone but any time after 4 would work for me in regards to making the meetings.

Chairwoman Kelly

Great. As aldermen, we're used to that sort of 7 o'clock slot. I know that works for myself and (inaudible) availability. Does the 7 o'clock slot feel good for people? We don't have to make a formal. Just a nod would be good. Okay. Then Thursdays are good for the chamber. The first and the third are probably the best. I think you have a conflict on the second week right?

Alderman Dowd

I have a conflict on the fourth which is the Joint Special.

Chairwoman Kelly

So that way I think would be the next question. Do we want to meet once a month? Twice a month? Generally the cadence with aldermanic is once or twice a month.

Nicholas Dahl

I would think that given that we might want to have some potential impact on the election this November that we should be meeting every other week or twice a month.

Alderman Dowd

I agree. I think every other week. I think we put out potential times and dates and have everybody respond and make sure we get the most people here. If there are conflicts with the chamber, we can have the meeting at 6.

Chairwoman Kelly

Yeah that's true. Okay. So I'm hearing affirmatively twice a month feels right. If someone disagrees, you can yell at me. Are you all good? Okay. Okay so twice a month this 7ish hour works. I'll put a calendar together that would reflect that and make sure that the aldermanic chamber is available for that time.

So someone mentioned recommendations based on November but I'm wondering if we talk a little bit about when we think a further out from that when we can give a recommendation to the Board of Aldermen.

Alderman Dowd

Yeah I think we probably need to have a few meetings to get some data and information on hand before we can actually even determine what date we should be giving a feedback to the Board of Aldermen.

Chairwoman Kelly

I think that's fair. Okay. So I'll put together the schedule twice a month and then I'll share that out to everybody to make sure that that times work and then we can publish it so everybody knows when we're meeting.

So then the other piece I had was the format of how we want to meet. I know in the discussions in the aldermanic chamber and you know when I was talking about this I wanted to make sure that we do have some public forum where we can sit down and discuss this. I think we have worked to do as the Study Committee but I also really do want to hear from citizens, whoever would like to come to the table. I'm interested to hear how people if they have ideas on how that might work or if they've seen ways that that's worked in the past.

Mark Brave

So I've seen it work where especially here at the Strafford County the commissioners would have you know 15 minutes at some point during their meeting open it to the public. They would provide a Zoom link or they can show up in person now. I think that would be the format. You're giving them both options I guess.

Chairwoman Kelly

Thank you.

Alderman Dowd

Yeah I think that you know the purpose of the committee is to collect data and inform the public of what we're finding on both sides of the question. We definitely want public input. We can certainly ask that people solicit and put to us in writing so that we can study it. Perhaps we have public input every other meeting because if we end up having it at 6 for the meeting and another meeting at 7 if we're going to get anything done, we need to spend at least every other meeting just work session.

Chairwoman Kelly

Okay so the suggestion from Mark is kind of how we already do public comment and Alderman Dowd is saying maybe we do public comment every other meeting. Other thoughts? I'm looking at masked faces which is hard too and Zoom trying to see if I'm missing anybody. Okay. So I think that that makes sense the every other public meeting public comment open to so we can get work done especially if we're crunched in an hour. Okay.

So then my next slide was really about gathering from you all what types of pieces of this puzzle do we need to really do this work. So I'd love to just start to get some ideas from I know a couple of people mentioned that I don't know much, or I only know what I read in the articles, so as you're sitting as a committee member here like what types of questions do we think we need to really address so we can kind of get to who might need to come, etc.

Marylou Blaisdell

I think what a basic question is what brought us to this point? Why at this point in time do we need to look at changing it? Are there circumstances that we as citizens of Nashua may not be aware of that have gone on that we need to look at how the Police Commission is formed? I think just very basic of why now do we need to look at a change. If we are going to look at a change, I think we need to talk to people on both sides of the equation who are for and against it and why they are. Probably from the Chief of Police, to the Mayor, and on down to understand everybody's opinion and how the Commission runs right now and why it runs the way it does right now.

Chairwoman Kelly

Yeah that's great.

Marylou Blaisdell

I think also hearing from other communities who are running their – the city is actually appointing the commissioners of how that is working and the pros and cons of that as well.

Chairwoman Kelly

And in a potentially vice versa too cities who have maybe not in New Hampshire but in other States like Massachusetts how do they do it and what does that look like.

Marylou Blaisdell

Right.

Chairwoman Kelly

I thought I had someone else's hand up on Zoom.

Mark Brave

Yes so what my question is has the city ever considered moving those positions to an elected position where the people – the citizens would vote for the best candidates as opposed to appointed?

Chairwoman Kelly

Yeah and I feel like the answer to that is potentially in the history like have we ever looked at this before. Then, again, to Deb's point in communities where they've done that what's that look like.

Kerry Baxter

So I'd be interested in hearing from the people who are interested in changing how the commission is made up. They've cited concerns on transparency so I'm curious to see if they have some examples of where there's been a lack of transparency. Additionally, I'd like to know more of what their process is going to be for appointing these commissioners, how they would be selected, the vetting process, if they would be subject to some sort of background check as commissioners are privy to a lot of sensitive information, and just kind of what their general process would be and what the vetting process would be.

Alderman Dowd

Yeah I came into this with some thoughts that I understand, I think, where the people that put the item on the ballot are coming from and from a general standpoint, I don't necessarily have a problem with going to five members. I certainly don't have a problem whatsoever with insuring that we have a woman on the Police Commission and maybe a little more racial mix.

The one concern I have with the item that's on the ballot now, and I could be wrong, but it appears to me that if the Mayor and the group of aldermen had an issue with the Police Department and the Police Commissioners, they could get rid of all of them and vote in new people. One of the things that somewhere along the line that I would strictly want it adhered to is if that every changes because of the ballot passes that it takes a super majority of the Board of Aldermen to remove any

police commissioner. There has to be a valid reason not just because you disagree with what they did per say.

I think that this is a Charter change and Charter change is a very serious and there should be a distinct reason. I serve as liaison to the Police Commission. I don't see anything right now with the Police Department that's working wrong whatsoever. We have one of the highest accredited police departments maybe in the country and definitely in New England. Almost perfect scores on the evaluation. Is it perfect? Nothing's perfect but I certainly think that anything that has an issue is taken care of judiciously and quickly. I know that most people in the City of Nashua think we have an outstanding police department and don't have any issues with it.

My concern for this Committee is to look at all the facts, garner the information, and put the right question on the ballot if we determine what that question would be. I don't know how the question was formulated by who and if it meets the real needs that the city should be looking for. I also had input from a lot of people some of them even to sign the petition and they want their name off because all they heard was local control which I can understand but there are other ways to get more local control perhaps in a partial way over time. So there are other things to consider. There are also a lot of pieces of the puzzle relative to political inputs to police commission that have not come up and may come up in this Committee meeting. Things that have happened over the years and I've in Nashua for 75 years. I think I have a pretty good background on things that have happened. My father and my Uncle were both Judges here in Nashua so I've been exposed to a lot of what goes on. I just think that if we're going to make a Charter change that it should be thought out, it should be articulated, and it should be the right question. Right now I think there are issues with what's on the ballot.

Chairwoman Kelly

Thank you. I made a bunch of notes while you were talking. Added some of my own. I know that you touched on the dismissal so I put concerns about the mechanism for dismissal. I'm interested in how it's currently handled. Accreditation I put down because I think you brought that up as well. Does the Commission how it's appointed effect the CALEA other cities on both sides to have that accreditation in terms of how they're appointed. Those are some that I had in my head that I was adding as you were talking. Then I put the historical background which I know we've touched on a couple of times but I think there is a few facets to that.

Deborah Novotny

Just to go back to Marylou's comment or the question that she wanted answered. I think we really need to understand what brought this on? What is wrong with the way that it is done now that needs to be fixed? What happened? Why are we here now and for Alderman Dowd is there anything we can do about the way the petition what's going to be on the ballot is worded? I'm in agreement with you that the way its worded if people aren't really understanding everything that is – all the background on it and don't understand, you see local control and you're going to say yes which I agree with but how did this happen and is there a way to change the wording of the question? I would imagine no. So from here without being able to change it I think we need to understand exactly why this was brought up, what the issue was that is trying to be fixed, what is wrong with the current process? If I could nominate someone and that person is vetted through the State, what will the difference – or I guess the huge difference is is that in this new role it would be the Mayor or the Board of Aldermen appointing someone or it would be vetted. I guess why is this happening is a really important thing to understand and how did this even come to fruition?

Chairwoman Kelly

Thank you.

Alderman Wilshire

The Board can't make any significant changes to the ballot question. If we do, there will have to be a second public hearing and we may have to move it out to a special election if we make any significant changes to the wording in the referendum.

Alderman Dowd

I'll just add to that discussion with Attorney Bolton that went over the laws involved in any change to the ballot question would have to go back to Concord through three levels of review and the way the laws are written basically all the Board of Aldermen can do when it comes before us is make sure that the City Clerk has validated the signatures and if they have, we have to pass it on.

Chairwoman Kelly

Yeah that was my understanding as well. It's the way it is worded is how it will go on the ballot. As Aldermen, we declined to make it on the ballot the way we wanted because we wanted to do the study.

Kendra Smith

Okay so my question is Alderman Dowd said that the process that works now seems to work well pretty much and there really haven't been any issues with the Police Department in the last 70 years. Growing up in the tree streets, I mean I guess I can agree. I don't agree that everything kind of works out. I mean I guess the tree streets kind of have a bad rep. but that doesn't mean anything. My question I guess is how are we getting the word out to the people in the inner city? Are we just taking the word from the suburban part of Nashua or are we actually going to involve the inner city people and get the word out to them so that they can be heard as well?

Chairwoman Kelly

I think that's a great question and I think I've been very clear that I want to make sure the public has a say in this. From a city perspective, we post it at the Library, post it all of the steps but I think in terms of getting stakeholders to the table, I think that can be some of the work that we do as committee members. If you think someone should be here for a public comment session and you really think they're valid, we can post it on the website and people are like oh that's happening today. So I think you bring up a really valid point and I appreciate it.

Kendra Smith

I just wanted to say that I mean we all – I don't know how many people here watch the Board of Education meetings but it tends to be when things are posted like that that we get the same 15 people giving the same hundred comments and there's never a different perspective because you know the small majority speaks for the whole city. So I mean for me to be on this board, I think I represent the people from downtown Nashua and pretty much the minorities that don't usually have a voice in things like this. I appreciate you bringing me on. However if I have to go door knock, I'm willing to do that. I already feed the kids so I'll be out there anyways. I think a sheet of paper maybe if we could print something out, I'd be happy to get them to the places that they need to be. I just don't think that it's fair that we're doing this and obviously a lot of them just like they didn't have technology for their kids to be able to do on-line learning, it's going to be the same situation where they're not going to see this and their voices aren't going to be heard.

Chairwoman Kelly

I will happily make you a flyer. I do that in my spare time.

Deborah Novotny

Kendra you bring up a valid point. I think that we need to identify some of the leaders in downtown and in this tree street and make sure they know the information so that they can be sharing it and giving everyone that voice and really requesting people to come to the meeting. There are certain – (inaudible) big name, ten people that we really need to be making sure that they're fully aware of what is happening, what this is about, and how do they feel about us, and they can bring their voice to it.

Alderman Wilshire

One of the things that we had talked about when we first started talking about the study committee was maybe bringing it to ward meetings. I don't know. I mean time is really of the essence to get the word out that there is more than one side to this issue. I don't know if we could do that maybe instead of 9 wards maybe we could do 3 wards at a time and just invite people to wherever they can be in their ward and talk to them. I think 9 meetings would be a little too much but if we could condense those a little bit maybe wards 1 through 3 and then 4 to 6, and 7 to 9. I don't know. I agree that the public needs to hear this.

Chairwoman Kelly

I'll put that to the committee. What do you guys think? I know we talked about public comment at every other public comment here. What do we think about either additional ward meetings or ward meetings instead of the public comment at our work sessions?

Unidentified Female Speaker

I'm in favor of it.

Mark Brave

I just wanted to add I agree this touches on insuring that this decision here isn't for or this problem arising isn't a reflection on the current climate in the City of Nashua and the residents. Like residents from the tree streets, or downtown, or in suburbia. You know you want to make sure that this is something that due to concern as opposed to hey we don't know what's going on. We just know this police commission that make decisions that are important to us in regards to public safety. So I think having those meetings and inviting those wards in small groups would be beneficial at least eliminating that piece of it.

Chairwoman Kelly

Okay. That sounds like everybody thinks the ward meetings is a good idea. I also think it is. Obviously the committee would be there. I'd want the Chief there. Is there anyone else that we think would be good to have at the ward meetings?

Kerry Baxter

I think having the Chief is a good idea. Maybe even someone who is looking for the Charter change.

Unidentified Female Speaker

I agree.

Chairwoman Kelly

Okay. Great. Analog and virtual notes.

Kerry Baxter

I just had something else that came to mind about additional questions that I'd like to have answered because I obviously know one side of this issue because I lived it for 22 years. In addition to learning more about what they feel or their concerns with transparency, I'm also interested in learning what benefit this Charter change would have to the Nashua Police Department, to its employees, and how this would benefit the city? Local control has been cited so much along the lines of what other concerns with their transparency? What are the concerns and where are the issues with local control over the Police Department?

Chairwoman Kelly

I think that's really valid points.

Kerry Baxter

And also what their long-term goals are for that Charter change.

Chairwoman Kelly

This is kind of similar unless there's more questions. I think like it's kind of tied in there but is there any specific data. So I put you guys together a packet of stuff of what I thought had our notes from what we've discussed and had a list of the all of the commissioners ever appointed in Nashua. Are there any like data pieces that we think might be good to try to gather for this?

Alderman Dowd

Yeah I think that we've heard that we're the only city and town in the State of New Hampshire that doesn't have local control over their police commissions. I think and just some preliminary stuff I've done, I think we need to get data on how that's been accepted in the other cities and towns. For instance, Manchester has a police commission but they're advisory only. How does that work? And the other cities maybe some of us anyway pick different police departments or commissioners and talk to them and get feedback as to hey how are things working in these other places. Maybe working

great. It may not be. They may want to change to some other perhaps maybe not going back to the State but some other intermediary way of doing things. Find out what's wrong in these other cities and towns that they'd like corrected and that might give us some insight.

Chairwoman Kelly

Yeah what I heard from you is like the structure of commissions. I think there could be like just a data of like what are the different structures that there are in New Hampshire. What are the different structures there are in Massachusetts. Pick a city in the middle of California that's about the same size like what does that look like. So I think how they're structured and to your point that there's different ways that they interact. They're not all to your point that advisory is a little bit different. I wrote down structure and then how has the change affected is what you had said but I think we have that captured above. I did the list and I'll add that list of past commissioners. Does anyone on (inaudible) have anything else they think would be good to put here?

Alderman Dowd

I did review the list of previous commissioners going back the 100 years. I don't go back 100 years but I can tell you that two things struck me. One, I knew a lot of the people on that list and from my history and perspective going back quite a few years, that they were all outstanding Nashua individuals. Paul Debarker was a major company owner here in Nashua and Maurice Arel who ended up being Mayor was a commissioner for a long time.

The other thing is that most of the people that served as commission served for a number of years. It may go back 100 years but there's not that many commissioners when you start adding it up. The one thing that concerns me going forward is I want to be sure that whatever we do that there's no political influence on the Police Department. I think we found in things going on in Boston and in places that if there's political input on the police commission, you have a problem with the Police Department.

Chairwoman Kelly

When you were talking, I added the idea of the average length of a commissioner also in Nashua and other cities that are interested to know how long people tend to serve. Other things from the committee that's not in the chamber?

I think this is kind of baked in and we may be able to just do this a little bit off line but like who do we need to hear from, who can get these answers. I know we talked about the Chief. Who else?

Alderman Dowd

I think if you check with Corporation Counsel, we may be able to share things amongst the group as long as we make the information public by e-mail or other written forms of communication.

Chairwoman Kelly

Did you check with him because I have not?

Alderman Dowd

I have not on that particular question but again I think that we want to be as transparent as possible and anything we find out. There may be instances where people want to come in and tell us things that are sensitive or it might pass history classified and we may have to do that in non-public session and only say what the findings were in general and not specifics because they may involve names of people. There have been instances in the past where things have come up that if there were political influence on the police commissioners it would have been an issue.

Chairwoman Kelly

Okay.

Unidentified Male Speaker

I think in addition to the current Chief, it would be great if we could hear from some past Chiefs who you know might have some thoughts on the matter positive and negative on how he commission is structured and how it works. There is still quite a few that are in the area and maybe they would be willing to come speak.

Chairwoman Kelly

That's a valid point. Past Chiefs is interesting too especially where we've outlined some history things that we really want to talk about. I'm just adding. We had talked about somebody who's in favor of the Charter change, Chiefs, past Chiefs.

Unidentified Female Speaker

Just wondering is there a way that someone do you think we could get someone from the Executive Council to come to kind of explain how the process works, could someone from the Executive Council kind of come and talk about how it happens now and what their involvement is after the commissioners are selected?

Chairwoman Kelly

Great. Yeah.

Kendra Smith

I was going to add to that maybe some prior and past police officers just to get their perspective. I mean they're the ones that work within that culture so maybe they would have some insight of reasons why they left or reasons why they stay.

Chairwoman Kelly

I know we have a Commissioner on here but maybe some past Commissioners. Were you done Kendra? I didn't mean to interrupt you.

Kendra Smith

No that was fine. I just meant like current officers. Maybe not a Commissioner but you know...

Chairwoman Kelly

I have current and past Commissioners. I think I got that. Okay. Who else? I'm going to put the Mayor on here since he put in the piece of legislation. Is there anyone else want to add to this? I'm sure we can add to it offline but I think this is a good start. I'll share these notes with everybody. I'm trying to make sure we capture it and we can add to questions and go from there.

Next up for me I'll share the lists. We can formalize our next time to meet and then we'll share all of that out and make sure that people know when we're meeting and when they can join in the conversation.

We do have on the agenda tonight public comments.

Alderman Dowd

Just before that relative to minutes. People may not be aware that we do not have our stenographer anymore and Donna is on vacation right now. Minutes may be delayed coming out because we just don't have the staff right now to do them expeditiously.

Chairwoman Kelly

Thank you. That will be important but the recordings is available pretty quickly after a week so people can find those right away they can definitely watch in all its glory.

Alderman Wilshire

In between meetings like I'm wondering if people might want to take some of these suggestions and reach out to a police commissioner in another town, another city and not just say we're here at the meeting and then we'll meet in two weeks but nothing in between. I think that's what you want. It's not just to sit here in a room but to get people actively working on this.

Chairwoman Kelly

I think that's really smart.

Alderman Dowd

Yeah I think that's a good idea but I think we ought to coordinate so that we're not hitting the same person with three different people and not missing somebody else. Coordination on that would be key.

Chairwoman Kelly

Yeah and once we talk to Attorney Bolton about electronic communication whether we can talk through e-mail then maybe we can assign tasks to people based on the list of people we think we want to have at the table. I think that's smart because that does happen. You have a meeting and then you go away and then you're like oh it's here again.

Alderman Dowd

I think that I'll try and reach out to maybe some of the other Police Chiefs now that Fairgrounds Middle School is completed. I have at least one day of the week when I'm not tied up with a school project so that doesn't always work either but.

Chairwoman Kelly

Okay so you'll look for some past Chiefs. I already spoke with the Chief who was unable to make it this evening but he said that he would make every effort to be at our next one. So I can talk to him again and then Kendra said she was open to reaching out to some of her neighbors and I'm happy to help give whatever you need in terms of letting them know when we're meeting.

Mark Brave

I know I have within 15 minutes of Dover. Portsmouth which I have information. They have a police commission in Rochester, New Hampshire, so I can take those two and reach out to those Chiefs and police commissioners.

Chairwoman Kelly

That would be great. Thank you so much Mark. We also have some knowledge in this room so that will be good to have.

We are not opening for public comments. If you have public comment, please come to the mic, state your name and your address, and we will still have the three minutes.

PUBLIC COMMENTKaren Bill

Good evening Karen Bill, 95 Parnell Place here in Nashua. I think the whole process is a little bit suspect with getting this on the ballot in a format that can't be changed. It's putting the cart before the horse, really, and I'm glad to see this group meeting and I hope that there is a lot of public input and that there is a way that the public can voice their opinion to have a meaningful outcome on a may vote in November so that then there is time to actually work on all the questions that everybody on the committee has asked. Why now? What happened? Did anything happen? For instance the big thing that you hear in every single article or every discussion, well there hasn't been a woman on the commission since 1891. Well I'm glad it took finally somebody after 130 years woke up. Come on. That's not an argument because they're not screaming. There hasn't been a person of color. So sure we can go from 3 to 5 and there should be a woman on it. There should be a person of color. It doesn't have to be just one woman.

We should advertise it whether it's on Facebook, through the Health Department. We have to figure out where people get their information from the inner city. Is there a cable option to put not only Comcast but a lot of people don't have Comcast any more so a lot of people can't even see these meetings because it's on Comcast. Can we insert it a bill but bills go to landlords and not always the tenant so we have to be a little bit creative on how to get this information out.

So I think that public comment should be available at every meeting and like people said, it's not just coming here talking about it and doing work here at this meeting. It's the work that gets done in between that you're bringing back Lori. You're the one that said it – that you're bringing back to the table and showing information about how we can make it better. Again, I really do hope that the vote comes out a no because I think it's being rushed. I don't think people understand it enough. I'm very glad that there is going to be a discussion. So thank you very much.

Chairman Kelly

Thank you.

Laurie Ortolano

Laurie Ortolano, 41 Berkeley Street. Can you hear me okay? Okay. Just to move through some items quickly. I do think there was definite confusion by some people who signed that petition. I know I've been out talking to people and there are definitely people who regretted putting their name on it and not understanding what they were...

Chairwoman Kelly

The mic is not working. Could you state your name and start over please.

Laurie Ortolano

Laurie Ortolano, 41 Berkeley Street. People definitely were not aware of what they were signing. Some of these individuals didn't understand the ramifications of it and they definitely said to me that they're not voting for it and they regretted having their name on it. Really once you put your name on a petition, you can't really take it off. It's there.

Also I think exit polling is very important. We have a great opportunity. In eight weeks we're going to be at the polls voting. No matter what happens with this vote if it passes or it doesn't, we have an opportunity to have information on the table and collect, question people coming out, and let's gather data coming out of the polling because no matter what the committee is going to still work and try to come up with a solution that we think is a united solution and that's an opportunity. There could be 10,000 people come out of those polls.

I love the idea of the ward meetings grouped together – 3 at a time. You don't have time not to. I can tell you the public is hungry. Those people who are concerned about this want a unified message. They're out there now and they're not certain what exactly we should say and what we should put together. What kind of signage we should have for the police. It would be nice if someone on this board or a few people on this board could help direct that. There's two functions here as I see it. There's this longer term study committee absolutely necessary and then we have this short eight week need of trying to we're either going to take a position to try and stop that vote from happening, or make people more educated to make a more informed vote, or we're going to just let it fly and say whatever happens happens. I don't think there's enough people in the public that I think don't want to just let it fly and let's see what happens. They want to participate in trying to educate people - handing out literature, putting up signage, and trying to tell people what they think is important.

As far as expanding – okay the Executive Council. I think it's great to invite somebody from the Executive Council but I can tell you the people that have been calling the Governor's office, one individual in particular, talking to the assistant up there. You need somebody out of the Governor's office because the Governor's office is making the nomination for the Executive Council and they're actually doing the screening. There's a woman up there who has a lot of knowledge and I think the idea of getting an Executive Councilor in here is great but I think the past Councilor would be interesting. Deborah Pignatelli. Let's get her back in because she picked the last Executive Councilor. What types of concerns did she have? What was the vetting process like? She's right here from Nashua and let's pick her brain and find out what's going on and check with other Commissioners. It sounds like that's going to happen.

As far as expanding the board goes, you know are the Commission. I'm not really in favor of that. Okay you can do it but you can find qualified women or minorities to come join a three person board I think without issue. There's plenty of opportunity. Thank you.

Chairwoman Kelly

Thank you. Does anyone else from the public wish to speak? I see you Ms. Colquhoun but I'm going to finish in the chamber first.

Sonia Prince

Hi. I know most of you. My name is Sonia Prince. I live at 49 Tufts Drive in Nashua. I find it interesting that this study committee is mostly made up of people who want to keep the status quo. I had to go outside the city to find people who would support no change. For example, Strafford County Sheriff, Mr. Mark Braves, and a Manchester Police Commission Ms. Eva Castillo who doesn't seem to be here this evening.

I have a question for the two invited guests from Dover and Manchester. I am very curious since both Manchester and Dover are both CALEA certified and have local control over the police commission appointments. Do you find that your police departments are corrupt? I would love to hear that. According to our Nashua Police Chief Michael Carignan, he claims it will be an issue here in Nashua. Do you truly believe that to be right? Those are my questions to both of them. Would there be corruption? Is there corruption in your Dover Police Department Sheriff Brave? How about your police department in Manchester Ms. Castillo? If she listens to this recording, I would love to hear.

Does local control mean automatic corruption like our Chief Michael Carignan is suggesting? I'm very curious to know and looking for your responses tonight if possible. Obviously Mrs. Castillo is not here so that won't happen but I thank you for your time.

Laura Colquhoun

Laura Colquhoun at 30 Greenwood Drive. This committee is a total waste of time because the committee is not going to have enough time to educate the Nashua residents before November, especially now with the Mayor shoving this shotty change down our throats.

Chairwoman Kelly

Ms. Colquhoun you have to mute in one place or the other. We've got a big reverberation and we can't hear you. Are you still there? When she fixes it, we'll let her finish. Is there anyone else in the chamber? I don't see anyone else on Zoom.

Laura Colquhoun

Do I get to finish my statement Madam Secretary?

Chairwoman Kelly

I did say that you could finish it if you finished your technical difficulties. Would you like to continue?

Laura Colquhoun

Well I don't know what I'm doing with technical. The Mayor does not want the residents to know what is really going down and what he's actually doing is taking and making a major power play. The Police Commissioners are all Nashua residents and are all highly qualified but our Mayor keeps telling the Nashua residents that Nashua doesn't have any control when this is not true. The problem is our Mayor wants complete control. The next Charter change will be the change from the name of the City of Nashua to the Kingdom of Donchess. Residents must be reminded of what happened in 1997 when some of the members of the Board of Aldermen went to jail. If the Police Commissioners were friends of the Mayor at that time, that would have never happened and then the corruption would really have grown. I will definitely be voting no and asking everybody else to vote no on this Charter change. Thank you.

Chairwoman Kelly

Thank you. Okay. I don't see any other members of the public present or raising their hands so we'll move on to remarks by the committee. Does anyone from the committee like to make a remark before we close for the evening here?

REMARKS BY THE COMMITTEE

Alderman Dowd

I think we're off to a good start and I think that we'll be progressing as we go along. I think that we will find out a lot of things that we don't know now and that's the whole key behind this committee.

Chairwoman Kelly

Thank you Alderman Dowd. Anyone else want to make a comment? Okay I don't see anyone else so do I have a motion?

ADJOURNMENT

MOTION BY ALDERMAN DOWD TO ADJOURN BY ROLL CALL

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

Yea:	Alderman Dowd, Deborah Novotny, Nicholas Dahl, Marylou Blaisdell Mark Brave, Kendra Smith, Kerry Baxter, Alderwoman Kelly	8
Nay:		0

MOTION CARRIED

The meeting was declared adjourned at 8:12 p.m.

Nicholas Dahl
Committee Clerk