

## BUDGET REVIEW COMMITTEE

JUNE 2, 2026

A meeting of the Budget Review Committee was held Tuesday, June 2, 2026, at 7:00 p.m. in the Aldermanic Chamber and duly noticed in two places, including the City's website, in accordance with the requirements of RSA 91-A:2 II.

Alderman Richard A. Dowd, Chairman, presided.

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

Members of Committee present:       Alderman-at-Large Michael B. O'Brien, Sr.  
                                                  Alderman-at-Large Shoshanna Kelly  
                                                  Alderman-at-Large Alicia Gregg  
                                                  Alderman Derek Thibeault  
                                                  Alderman Paula Johnson  
                                                  Alderman Tim Sennott, Vice-Chair  
                                                  Alderman Richard A. Dowd, Chairman

Members not in Attendance:

Also in Attendance:                   Alderman John Sullivan (via Zoom)  
                                                  Alderman James Ravan  
                                                  Liz Hannum, Economic Development Director  
                                                  Megan Caron, Chief of Staff  
                                                  Dawn Enwright, CFO

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### ROLL CALL

### COMMUNICATIONS

From:   Megan Caron, Chief of Staff  
Re:      Department 104 – Office of Strategic Communications Presentation

***There being no objection, Chairman Dowd accepted the communication and placed it on file.***

UNFINISHED BUSINESS - None

NEW BUSINESS – RESOLUTIONS - None

NEW BUSINESS – ORDINANCES - None

### TABLED IN COMMITTEE

**MOTION BY ALDERMAN O'BRIEN TO REMOVE FROM THE TABLE R-26-028 RELATIVE TO THE ADOPTION OF THE FISCAL YEAR 2027 PROPOSED BUDGET FOR THE CITY OF NASHUA GENERAL, ENTERPRISE, SPECIAL REVENUE AND GRANT FUNDS**  
**MOTION CARRIED**

### **R-26-028**

Endorsers:   Mayor Jim Donchess  
                  Alderman Vengerflutta Smith  
                  Alderman-at-Large Michael B. O'Brien, Sr.  
                  Alderman-at-Large Alicia Gregg  
                  Alderman Thomas Lopez  
                  Alderman-at-Large Lori Wilshire

**RELATIVE TO THE ADOPTION OF THE FISCAL YEAR 2027 PROPOSED BUDGET FOR THE CITY OF NASHUA GENERAL, ENTERPRISE, SPECIAL REVENUE AND GRANT FUNDS**

DEPARTMENTAL REVIEWS OF THE PROPOSED FY27 BUDGET FOR THE CITY OF NASHUA

| <u>Dept. #</u> | <u>GENERAL GOVERNMENT</u>          | <u>REVENUES</u> | <u>APPROPRIATIONS</u> |
|----------------|------------------------------------|-----------------|-----------------------|
|                |                                    |                 |                       |
|                | <u>GENERAL GOVERNMENT</u>          |                 |                       |
| 183            | Economic Development               |                 | 53                    |
|                |                                    |                 |                       |
|                | <u>PROPOSED NEW DEPARTMENT</u>     |                 |                       |
| 104            | Office of Strategic Communications |                 | 57                    |
|                |                                    |                 |                       |

ON THE QUESTIONChairman Dowd

This evening we have two departments we're going to be covering - 183 and 104. 183 is Economic Development and they'll be first and the appropriations are on page 53. Someone here to present?

183 – ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENTLiz Hannum, Economic Development Director

Liz Hannum, Economic Development Director. I'm here to talk to you today about the Economic Development budget. We - as you'll notice, there is a zeroed out number that will be addressed in the golden rod copy, I believe, which should be level funded from last year or this current year. So that is one of the corrections.

But the main change this year was an addition to the marketing and public relations department or line item and that will be to start beginning our business recruitment plan. We are currently in the process of finishing up a skills gap analysis which will help us create a business recruitment plan and in that process, we'll also have a marketing strategy that will begin to implement some of those plans. Things like recruitment packets for businesses, things like ads - kind of website design that can support additional information. Sorry.

And then consulting services is level funded but I know that's always a hot button issue, so that will be the business recruitment strategy. So I have a couple of quotes so far and they're all in that \$22,-000 to \$24,000 range right now. So that will help me create the best strategy with only one and a half staff. We have to be very strategic in how we do things. So that will give us a target.

There's also issues with downtown right now. Although there are signs of positive signs with new businesses coming in from Manchester and Concord, there also are kind of distressed signs as well with loss of some of the retail. So part of that business recruitment strategy will focus on downtown and what types of businesses will bring the most foot traffic into the downtown, but it will also target larger businesses and an entrepreneurship kind of plan.

Then the \$129,000 that will would be restored with the golden broad copy, Other contracted services also a hot button topic, I'm sure, for many departments but that will be to support our plan for business recruitment but also activating Nashua that program. This year, we completed the Library Walk as well as Martha's Alley. The lights just went up there. We have five other locations that we're working on right now in creating plans for, including Richard LaRose Way, the connection from the Riverwalk up to the High Street garage, the Heritage Rail Trail, the Ash Street Skate Park, and several other small locations. So that will support that as well and real estate development. So things like appraisals and feasibility studies come out of that that line item as well. So we do have a few appraisals that I know are coming that will put out for RFP properties there.

I guess that those are the big changes. Those three line items. I mean two of them are level funded but just so you're aware of what kinds of projects will be coming out of those two line items.

Chairman Dowd

Questions?

Alderwoman Kelly

Thank you. So I guess I'm not following because you said that your level funded and that there's a golden rod copy. We don't have that. So are you talking about 55699?

Liz Hannum, Economic Development Director

Yes.

Alderman Kelly

You're not asking for \$229,000, you're asking for the \$129,000?

Liz Hannum, Economic Development Director

Right. Yep. So I did initially propose that to the Mayor but we decided together that the additional 100 that I was asking for, for the financial empowerment center would we would fund raise elsewhere. So took that out.

Alderman Kelly

If I could follow up?

Chairman Dowd

Follow up.

Alderman Kelly

So the Mayor's proposed has that line item completely zeroed out. You're saying there's new information since we got this piece?

Liz Hannum, Economic Development Director

Yes, I believe ...

Chairman Dowd

It's going to be described later.

Alderman Kelly

It's going to be described later?

Liz Hannum, Economic Development Director

Yes.

Alderman Kelly

Okay. So that – I don't have it on my desk so.

Liz Hannum, Economic Development Director

Yes. So we will be proposing that that is restored to the 129, which is what I have this year.

Alderman Kelly

Okay. Can I follow up?

Chairman Dowd

Follow up.

Alderman Kelly

So your actuals as of end of March in that, you had \$129,000 last year. You only - March time, you'd only spent about \$70,000?

Liz Hannum, Economic Development Director

Yes. So as of right now, I have spent \$119,000.

Alderman Kelly

And can you just describe what you?

Liz Hannum, Economic Development Director

Sure. So the barriers were one of those that was kind of the largest ticket item - almost \$30,000. And then I've got another appraisal. I've got some of the work on the north side of the riverbank. The ducks from Make It Labs, I covered the cost of those. We've got some branded items like table tent or table cloth rather that is coming. Some small items. I purchased some office supply type things for the Arts Commission to be at the Riverwalk to support that. Things like that.

Alderman Kelly

Okay. I have just one other question.

Chairman Dowd

Follow up.

Alderman Kelly

So I was trying to follow but it sounded like your overall initiative is business recruitment, and it sounded like the consulting services line - the \$25,000 is going towards the strategy, then another 75 for public marketing and public relations is going into that.

Liz Hannum, Economic Development Director

Yes.

Alderman Kelly

And then something else from under the contracted services is all going to that?

Liz Hannum, Economic Development Director

Yeah. So I have...

Alderman Kelly

What's the cost in totality?

Liz Hannum, Economic Development Director

So there are a few items within the business recruitment that would come out of other contracted services, but the majority of the other contracted services are for the other programs within Economic Development. So business recruitment is one program. I have the Economic Mobility Program. I've got Activate Nashua, and then I've got real estate development, and then other things as they come up - feasibility studies, that kind of stuff. So I try to keep, you know, \$10,000 to \$15,000 in case we have to do an appraisal last minute or things like that, but I will be spending all of that money this year unfortunately.

Alderman Kelly

I'm good for now. Thank you.

Chairman Dowd

All set.

Alderman Sennott

Thank you, Mr. Chairman. You had mentioned that a lot of this in terms of the business recruitment campaign, things like that are contingent on the results of a skills gap analysis that's been ongoing. My memory is foggy but I feel like we've had a presentation on that before. What's the estimated completion date of that because I feel like within the last term, we were in here hearing the results of that or at least a progress update.

Liz Hannum, Economic Development Director

No. So we had not - I had talked about doing it but we had - we just signed a contract with them two months ago. So it's only a three month study. So we are in the process of finalizing it right now and we will be presenting it hopefully at PEDC shortly. So the skills gap analysis was a part of the Economic Mobility Strategic Plan. So that's why it's been talked about a lot over the last year, but we are just now getting it completed.

Alderman Sennott

Okay.

Chairman Dowd

Follow up?

Alderman Sennott

Thank you. It's not really a forward budget question but I have to ask just because it came up and I saw a couple of eyebrows go up. What was the cost associated with the duck fabrications from Make it Labs because I feel like that went out to the public and it was sold like it was. Look what Make It Labs did for us and now there's a cost item associated with it. Could you talk to that?

Liz Hannum, Economic Development Director

Sure. So they donated their labor and I paid for the materials, which was about \$2,500.

Alderman Sennott

Okay,

Liz Hannum, Economic Development Director

So I had costed out, you know, a regular bronze sculpture and we were in the \$100,000 range. So that was obviously not going to be feasible. So I went to Make It Labs and they donated their labor, and all of the installation, and all of that. So that - so they did donate a big portion of the cost of the ducks but the materials cost about \$2,500.

Alderman Sennott

I'm all set for now. Thank you.

Alderman Thibeault

Thank you, Mr. Chair. I've got a couple questions. I mean the first comment just so everybody knows so nobody's – just a reminder. We got a goldenrod copy a few weeks ago in one of the budget meetings. It was left on our desk and we went over it. The issue was we didn't want to go over it until...

Chairman Dowd

We're going over it later tonight.

Alderman Thibeault

Oh, we are going over it later night?

Chairman Dowd

Yes.

Alderman Thibeault

Okay but we had gotten it though a couple weeks back and there was things on there that weren't in this budget that were mistakes. Physical mistakes - not like that was missing but just typos or someone didn't put it in. So - and I think each department that's come up is kind of mentioned if they've had something that was scrapped. I just don't want to make sure people understand that it's not somebody doing something sketchy after the fact and we just didn't read it into record at the time because we didn't have time or whatever.

So my first question is - so this \$129,000 that's being added back in would you say \$60,000 of that is barriers?

Liz Hannum, Economic Development Director

No, thank goodness. So the good news is that DPW has offered to pick up the barriers. So they can't drop them because of the timing of it but they can pick them up because it's a larger - or a longer time frame. So I am saving about \$25,000 on that but we were going to put that towards some of the Activate Nashua programming to stay level funded.

Chairman Dowd

Follow up?

Alderman Thibeault

Right, so it's really \$30,000 of that is now - out of the 129, 30,000 is the barriers?

Liz Hannum, Economic Development Director

Yes.

Alderman Thibeault

Okay. And that was planned for ahead of time that that \$25,000 or that \$30,000 was not going to be used where it did. You're saying level funded but last year \$60,000 was...

Liz Hannum, Economic Development Director

Yes. Yeah.

Alderman Thibeault

So actually, its level funded but it's some of that money is being used in a completely different way from what we would expect because we had the three year is - so when is the three year barrier optag?

Liz Hannum, Economic Development Director

This is the second year. So we still have one more year. So I am anticipating a \$30,000 drop off for the next year. So in this Fiscal Year '27 budget...

Alderman Thibeault

Unless we get rid of it, then it'll be...

Liz Hannum, Economic Development Director

Yeah. So I didn't have to budget for the pickup but I did have to budget for the drop off. So that was that was really helpful from DPW.

Alderman Thibeault

Follow up, please?

Chairman Dowd

Follow up,

Alderman Thibeault

So the other thing I wanted to look at is so the wages full time. So you would propose \$263,000 or \$264,000 and the Mayor cut that back. You're the only employee, right, currently?

Liz Hannum, Economic Development Director

I have a half.

Alderman Thibeault

Half person so what was this - what was this going to be if that ended up still being on here?

Liz Hannum, Economic Development Director

Yeah. A business recruitment specialist. So I had planned to budget for half a year, assuming that we would get the skills gap analysis and the business recruitment strategy done in this first six months of the year and then hire somebody to actually implement it since I have a lot on my plate, but I think at the pace that we are going, we're going to revisit that in next year's budget or the Fiscal Year '28 budget to propose it again at that point potentially.

Alderman Thibeault

Okay. I'm good for now.

Chairman Dowd

All set.

Alderman Thibeault

Thank you.

Alderman Gregg

Thank you, Chairman. So I just had a question I guess more around like logistics of how you're working and stuff, because you mentioned downtown a lot as far as like business development, making sure bringing businesses there. Are you looking at our flanks at all as far as like down Daniel Webster Highway? Do you do that as well and then Amherst because I just - I wonder where that is because you've only really talked about downtown. So I just wanted to make sure that this is encompassing.

Liz Hannum, Economic Development Director

No - so I'm sorry. I guess I meant that the business recruitment strategy was a citywide strategy but I wanted to point out that it would also be a part - downtown would also be a part of that because it is a very different type of business that we would be recruiting for the downtown. So it is citywide recruitment at all levels but I think I just wanted to point out that people have noticed that that downtown needs a little bit extra help. So I wanted to make sure that you notice that as well. Sorry.

Chairman Dowd

All set?

Alderman Gregg

Yeah, that's good. Thank you.

Alderman Sullivan

Thank you very much. Thanks for letting me join tonight. I'm on Zoom tonight as I'm traveling on work. I'm here alone in the room and I can hear you all.

Question I had was around 2027 key initiatives Director Hannum. And you had mentioned in there targeted recruitment and retention. Do you - since we're essentially funding this for the coming fiscal year, do you have examples of what it is you'd like to do as far as you have specific companies that you're going after?

And then as a follow-up in a year when we're here a year from now, what does it look like? What does Nashua look like if you get this money and execute on this task?

Liz Hannum, Economic Development Director

Yeah. So we don't have specific businesses yet, but we should have industries based on the skills gap analysis in the next month here. I can kind of tell you based on kind of our initial conversations of the skills gap analysis, life sciences are a big recruitment. We have a lot of people that travel outside of Nashua to do those jobs. So if I can get businesses that could satisfy those jobs, we could keep those people here during the day. So that's one of the strategies. But I think that infill is going to be one of the biggest strategies around business recruitment. We don't have big plots of land like Londonderry, or Salem, or any of those things so we're going to have to - we won't have the next Tuscan Village anytime soon unless we put together a lot of plots of land.

So we're looking at small industries - probably 25 or less employees. That is kind of the sweet spot, I think, for what we'll end up with but in the consulting line, I do plan to do a full business strategy. So we'll actually get data for exactly what types of businesses as well as the business names within that that final report there. So I do anticipate having business names for you in the next six months. Does that answer all the questions or?

Alderman Sullivan

It does, thank you. Mr. Chairman, could I have a follow-up please?

Chairman Dowd

Follow up,

Alderman Sullivan

Will you be doing that personally or will you be outsourcing that to the consultant?

Liz Hannum, Economic Development Director

I will need to outsource the business recruitment strategy. I just don't have the time to do all of the data work, and then analyze it as well, and that's the \$22,000 to \$24,000 is where I'm getting kind of the quotes at this point, which is why I put kept the \$25,000 in the budget level funded but I anticipate having lots of conversations. The skills gap analysis - I'm meeting with them every other week. So I am getting updates along the way. I anticipate that being pretty similar with this - with the business recruitment strategy as well as the marketing strategy. So I will be involved heavily. I just won't be doing the analysis work.

Alderman Sullivan

Could I have one more follow-up, please?

Chairman Dowd

Follow up. Go ahead.

Alderman Sullivan

Thank you very much. Also in your 2027 key initiatives, you talked about fostering small business growth. How is the city currently fostering small business growth?

Liz Hannum, Economic Development Director

So right now, we have a small business revolving loan fund that has been kind of neglected a little bit just due to, you know, lack of outreach programs but my one halftime person is going to be managing the revolving loan fund and doing actual outreach programming for that. We do have marketing that we're working on currently to start building that. We are trying to de-federalize that as well so we can have a little bit more flexibility in how we collateralize loans, things like that can help us reach more businesses - small businesses that would not normally be bankable. So that is one strategy that we're working on.

The other is to - the other was initially the financial empowerment center, which would be for individuals as well as businesses. We put out an RFP and didn't get any responses. So the model that we were looking to use through the cities for financial empowerment center might be a little bit too restrictive. So we're going to re-evaluate exactly what that is but that, you know, one on one business technical assistance is something that we can either do in house or we're going to try to get either the small business development center or the regional economic development center to start coming to the community a couple of days a month. Right now, we don't have any technical assistance type federally funded or State funded programs in the city. They're all in the region but we need to have them on site regularly. So I'm going to advocate for them to try to open - do open business hours somewhere. Probably at the library to support our small businesses to drop in and get some technical assistance as well.

Chairman Dowd

All set?

Alderman Sullivan

Yes. Thanks for letting me chime in.

Alderman Sennott

If it's all right with the Chair, I'll cede my time to Alderman Johnson. She hasn't had a chance to speak yet.

Chairman Dowd

Okay.

Alderman Johnson

Oh, thank you. I greatly appreciate it and I've got to run to the Conservation Commission meeting.

I just wanted to kind of make a statement or kind of ask a question. You can - I know that down by the Clock Tower, there's a piece - there's a building that used to have industries in there. I mean that would probably be a great building to market not to bring in 25 employees to probably bring in more employees. That would they - a company would come in and hopefully refurbish that building and make it into something more because that really - and we heard from former Alderman Fred Teeboom talked about that area was supposed to be the technology center and we're putting in a lot of homes, a lot of apartments but if you want more businesses, we have to have apartments, and if we have apartments, we have to have skilled jobs so people can afford it. So it all goes in hand in hand. That's all I want to say. Thank you very much.

Chairman Dowd

Alderman Johnson has to attend another meeting so thank you.

Alderman Sennott

Thank you, Mr. Chairman. And actually that worked out really well because that was kind of along the same lines where I was going to go. Considering business recruitment - attracting businesses to Nashua, I'm not an economic developer. I'm not in the business of attracting businesses but - and this may be a little pie in the sky or a little ideological but I feel that there's at least an element to, you know, if it's there, if you build it, they will come. I know that setting aside small businesses and setting aside the downtown for a moment, there are vacancies in Nashua. There was a very big one up in the northwest corridor that unfortunately got bought out by a very unpopular company. When I think of that, I get frustrated because I know along the same time that that transaction was going on sort of underneath our noses, a company the size of Hasbro was looking to leave Rhode Island, and relocate, and they wound up in a facility that's similarly sized in Boston. I would have been falling over myself to try to get a company like Hasbro to set up their world headquarters in Nashua, New Hampshire. I know there's other locations like that.

What can we do now, skills gap analysis aside, to attract those companies, to fill those vacancies, to bolster our economy in that sense because there is an element to that. That if a company is going to move, they're likely in the interest of expanding. They're likely in the interest of building up their workforce. Regardless of whether those folks are living in Nashua or commuting to Nashua, they're driving our economy by coming there. I know because I drive Bedford's economy every day when I drive up there, and I fill my tank there, I get lunch there, and I pay the taxes on the building that I work in there.

Liz Hannum, Economic Development Director

Yup.

Alderman Sennott

So what can we do now? You know like Alderman Johnson was saying, you know, 25 employees. Cool. What about 125?

Liz Hannum, Economic Development Director

So typically, those businesses reach out to us initially. So it's about supporting the people that come. There's not a lot of recruitment that happens. They usually have site selectors. They have very stringent needs and so we either fit those needs or we don't. So not to say that we shouldn't be recruiting that, but that shouldn't be our target audience, but we certainly support anyone who's coming in and showing interest. I'm also one person and so trying to do business recruitment full time when I have all these other projects, and programs, and meetings, and things has been a struggle but having collateral to start out with, having marketing material, redoing the website which is free. That's not in the budget but those kinds of things will go a long way in helping me be more efficient in reaching out to places like that. I do reach out quite a bit when I hear that there are places coming, but I don't really have like a pitch and that's what the marketing strategy will help me create.

So the business recruitment strategy will help me identify industries and specific businesses to start going after and the marketing strategy will help me identify the type of collateral that I need to be creating to then hand off to them. Like here's our packet, here's why you should come to Nashua. I have been just talking on the phone to do that recently but we really need to create some material that is professional looking and similar to what Manchester has created over the last year here. Things like that, that will help me 1) when they reach out initially and 2) there's just not a lot of properties that would fit the larger scale like the Northwest Boulevard area kind of. And so it would take me probably to get an organization like that, it would take me two or three years to get one versus maybe five in a year at the 25 people level. So it's a different strategy but when the business recruitment strategy comes together, we may see more need for larger scale businesses. So we'll adapt the strategy once we kind of understand exactly what our assets are and what we can sell essentially. Does that make sense?

Chairman Dowd

Follow up?

Alderman Sennott

Yeah and you sort of preemptively answered my follow-up question, which was going to be and not necessarily a Director Hannum issue but more of a, I guess, a foresight issue which is if I'm hearing you correctly, that how long ago was the

Broad Street Parkway completed and that area was envisioned as the tech center that we've heard so much about. That we're here in 2026 and we still don't have a, for lack of a better term, film Nashua marketing strategy.

Liz Hannum, Economic Development Director

Yup.

Alderman Sennott

Again not necessarily a you issue, but it seems like over the course of a decade plus we've kind of dropped the ball in that respect. So that's disappointing to hear, but more clear. Thank you.

Liz Hannum, Economic Development Director

Yeah.

Alderwoman Kelly

Did you want to finish?

Liz Hannum, Economic Development Director

Oh, just we do have the kind of branding tourism kind of branding that is finally ready. So now that we have that, we can use it as part of that packet. So that's my goal for this year is to have all the collateral that I might need.

Alderwoman Kelly

Thank you. So I wanted to inquire around - I know you guys just did a great event that I was unable to attend - the Renaissance on the Riverwalk. I know you do a lot of work with Downtown Nashua Business Association. I can't remember their name. It's GAD in my head still. So given that you guys are probably going to continue that, what, if any, of your contracted services would be potentially flowing to programming that D and A puts out?

Liz Hannum, Economic Development Director

Not any of my operational budget. So I - we had initially given the GAD a \$50,000 city events budget separate from my operational budget and we did pull it from them. So they do not receive any direct funding from us. However, we kept that \$50,000 city events line item and some of that pays for some of the hard material or actual - we had basically just given them the \$50,000 to do whatever they wanted with. So now we're using it to pay for things like - they did an unwrapped downtown where they wrapped all the windows in wrapping paper and had Santa pull it off with the kids one day. I paid for the wraps. So that was through the city events budget not through my operational budget. So my operational budget is not paying for any downtown event with Downtown Nashua.

Alderwoman Kelly

Where does that city events line item live? Do you know?

Liz Hannum, Economic Development Director

I think it's the community activities, I believe.

Alderman Sennott

It could be under the Mayor's budget too.

Liz Hannum, Economic Development Director

Yeah, it's under that section.

Dawn Enwright, CFO

(inaudible) activities.

Liz Hannum, Economic Development Director

Yes. There we go.

Dawn Enwright, CFO

Page 38.

Alderwoman Kelly

Do you know which line item? Like I see Holiday Stroll. Does that not go directly to them?

Liz Hannum, Economic Development Director

That goes to directly to our Police Department.

Alderwoman Kelly

That's all police. Okay.

Liz Hannum, Economic Development Director

And then civic and community activities...

Alderwoman Kelly

City Events - 56212.

Liz Hannum, Economic Development Director

Yes. So there is \$50,000 in that city events or civic and community activities that goes towards city events.

Alderwoman Kelly

Okay. Okay. Can I just follow up?

Chairman Dowd

Follow up.

Alderwoman Kelly

I'm trying not to get nerdy about the marketing stuff but you mentioned the website twice. So I'm sort of interested in that. You said that the website's going to be redone. Is that the whole city website?

Liz Hannum, Economic Development Director

It is, however, also the Economic Development. So the Economic Development Department has kind of a separate website. So that is going to be redone as well as the full city website. So I'm working on that at the moment.

Alderwoman Kelly

Are you still working with Civic Plus?

Liz Hannum, Economic Development Director

Yes. So Civic Plus is the one that does the city's website as well. That's everybody - every department in the city has to work with Civic Plus.

Alderman Kelly

Oh, I know. I just...

Liz Hannum, Economic Development Director

Fair.

Alderman Kelly

We get a lot of, you know, feedback about the website being very hard to navigate and find things and as someone who works in this industry, Civic Plus does a lot of municipalities because they do them all the same way and I don't think that they're great. That's just my own personal opinion knowing what I know.

Liz Hannum, Economic Development Director

Yeah.

Alderman Kelly

It's not your fault but I was interested. So that website, sort of that marketing stuff that you're talking about would still live on your Economic Development website?

Liz Hannum, Economic Development Director

It would. Yes. So I'm, I'm completely kind of redoing it to attract, specifically to attract businesses and to have somewhere to direct people when I am trying to get them to come to Nashua. So I'll have collateral - like physical collateral like a folder similar to what Manchester has created but I'll also have that in the digital form that I can email back and forth with

Alderman Kelly

Understood. Thank you.

Chairman Dowd

All set?

Alderman Kelly

Yup.

Alderman Thibeault

Thanks, Mr. Chair. Boy that got too nerdy for me.

Alderman Kelly

That wasn't even very nerdy.

Alderman Thibeault

So we talked a little bit about – it seems to come up every year that we're here that the big tech facility needs to be down off West Pearl there by the end of the (inaudible). How long ago was that planned to have a tech center there? Way before my time.

Liz Hannum, Economic Development Director

Yeah, I believe that was at least 20 years ago.

Alderman Thibeault

Okay.

Liz Hannum, Economic Development Director

So the market has changed a little bit, but we - the location may change but we do still need industry. I am working with the Tech Hub which we are a part of. The EDA designated Tech Hub Region Valley, which is bio manufacturing mostly. So the Millard up in Manchester has really focused heavily on the research and development project and so we're thinking that Nashua would be a great place 1) for housing for a lot of the people that are up there but 2) to eventually whatever they create for machinery that we would then build the machinery here in town. So kind of a symbiotic relationship between here and there. So that's the initial thought right now so that all the research is done in one location and all the development of the machinery is done here.

Alderman Thibeault

Follow up?

Chairman Dowd

Follow up.

Alderman Thibeault

So I mean that's kind of my point, right. My point there was we can have that in the city. It doesn't have to be there anymore,

Liz Hannum, Economic Development Director

Right.

Alderman Thibeault

Times have changed and maybe it's somewhere else. Maybe that's where the housing is and it's a couple miles south or, you know, somewhere else in the city.

I mean I look at off Exit 1. We got Flatley, right. They get all that land there. We could put a ton of stuff there. Don't tell my constituents that but you can put a bunch of stuff there but they built some small facilities there and they haven't been able to fill them at all.

Liz Hannum, Economic Development Director

Right.

Alderman Thibeault

They're just sitting there empty. So we know – and they could put tech stuff there. The problem is they weren't coming. The stuff wasn't coming there because they've had some empty plots there for a while - not only buildings and they still haven't been able to - they haven't built quickly there...

Liz Hannum, Economic Development Director

Right.

Alderman Thibeault

Because I think when they do build, the only thing they know what can go there is apartments, and they know that's all they can make, so they continue to put apartments there. Mr. Flatley say what you want about him but he's a businessman and if he can make money on something whether it's apartments or its businesses, he's going to do whatever makes money for him. So I think that's probably the biggest - it's like 400 acres. That's probably the biggest chunk of land just sitting there to be developed.

Liz Hannum, Economic Development Director

Yup.

Alderman Thibeault

And unfortunately certain things don't come here to fill that spot. So I think, you know, I think you know I'm not going to give it to you but you could use more money. I just want to say that before anybody thinks I'm going to add more money to this budget. I'm not. But generally, I think you could use more money because I think that, you know, obviously the more money you have, the more you can do. It's also trying to make sure you utilize your money in the best way possible based on what you get. I get that, you know, when companies call, you want to be able to provide them something - a portfolio, a packet, something about Nashua that explains why it would be good here.

I also assume, and I don't know if you must be in tune with Director Sullivan and Manager Durfee, I'm assuming the new Code is - it might help us open up some development for businesses in the city - south end, north end, northwest corner, Main Street just because of some of the ways we're going to be looking at the coding, some of the overlays, the mixed business. So hopefully that will help you to be able to bring people in, in the course of over the next year, six months to a year. I'm hoping. I don't know if you have any comments on that.

Liz Hannum, Economic Development Director

Yeah, I think you're right that to start out with the tech stuff with AI tech is having less human jobs and so they're not filling the spaces that they have right now. But manufacturing is always a potential there as well but we're kind of - we've been sending a lot of people Flatley's way just as they come through. But I think you're also right about kind of building out the next piece. Sorry. Can you repeat what the ending part that you said there? I had something in my brain.

Alderman Thibeault

The new code, right? I mean...

Liz Hannum, Economic Development Director

Oh, yes the code, Sorry.

Alderman Thibeault

It's descriptive now and maybe it could open some stuff up.

Liz Hannum, Economic Development Director

Yes, yes. So the code definitely will streamline the process quite a bit, which will make it much more attractive to work here in Nashua than it is in other locations. So the more we can do to streamline that, and the code is really working hard to do that to streamline the process as well as to make it more developer friendly that we will be able to recruit better and more if that makes sense. But I think there are a lot of places that have reached out and said, you know, we're really interested in hearing what the code looks like. So they're kind of waiting to see what it looks like when it's finalized but we have quite a few places that are interested in learning about the new code, yeah.

Alderman Thibeault

Okay. Yeah, well that's great. I thank you for that. I know it's currently kind of restrictive and I know Nashua in general, you know, we want it to be attractive for people to come in. So it's not always about, you know, maybe - I mean maybe it is recruiting. Maybe it's not recruiting. It could be us. It could be the code. It could be what benefits New Hampshire, Nashua brings as opposed to Massachusetts or somewhere else, right? Maybe the taxes are better somewhere else, maybe the code is better somewhere else. So it's not just that but hopefully that will be one thing that will help, you know, in your tool belt so thank you.

Chairman Dowd

All set?

Liz Hannum, Economic Development Director

I will say that there's not a lot of tools in the tool belt for economic development in New Hampshire, but we are using all of them that we can. I know Director Sullivan and Manager Durfee have done a really great job of creating a developer-friendly process. Even within the code that we have, you know, there's pre-application meetings that can help them not put a ton of effort into designing something if it's not going to work for the different departments. So we have meetings ahead of time with them with all the different departments. So we've created a process that works pretty quickly even within a kind of more restrictive code.

So I want to give the Community Development Department their due there, but that's been really helpful. As I recruit, I kind of hand off to that department as they get into the technical code, and the Land Use, and all of that, and it's been a really, really streamlined process between the two departments. It's been really helpful to have multiple people to go through there.

Alderman Thibeault

Okay. Thank you.

Chairman Dowd

All set?

Alderman Thibeault

Yup.

Alderman Johnson

Thank you very much and thank you for your patience with me running to the Conservation Commission meeting.

I guess I want to pick up a little bit where I left off because I'm listening to the conversation here. So, you know, we've always said Nashua is the best place to live and it's been kind of like a slogan. We should probably put a slogan, Nashua is the best place to live and work and because you're right here in Nashua. I think - and again, I go back to that warehouse that's down on behind the Clock Tower. I mean if you put out an ad, envision what your business could look like and put out, you know, showing like we do when houses. You'd stage it. I mean you staged a picture of that whole thing being redesigned and having businesses in there because that's a big industrial building that could hold a lot of businesses because I remember when a dear friend of mine, Mike Biando, had his sign business in there. The steps are old and it's an old building but it's got character to it, probably still has good bones to it...

Liz Hannum, Economic Development Director

Yeah.

Alderman Johnson

... and to me, that would be - and you could design it even on the internet and send out pictures of that.

Liz Hannum, Economic Development Director

Unfortunately, we don't own that building so.

Alderman Johnson

I got that.

Liz Hannum, Economic Development Director

So we probably shouldn't be designing anything we don't own but.

Alderman Johnson

But I mean just showing something like that out there.

Liz Hannum, Economic Development Director

Yes. Yeah, I take your point.

Alderman Johnson

And I'm sure you could probably find out who the real estate agent is to that.

Liz Hannum, Economic Development Director

Yes, yep. So we certainly - I take your point. Yep.

Alderman Johnson

Thank you.

Chairman Dowd

All set? Any more questions? Thank you.

I do know that BAE when they were trying to hire people, the young people couldn't find a place to live. So I think as we approve some of our ability to find places to live, we may be much more successful in getting people to come and move here for business.

Liz Hannum, Economic Development Director

Correct.

Chairman Dowd

All right. Next item on the agenda is the proposed new department Office of Strategic Communications. Appropriations on page 57 so.

#### **104 - OFFICE OF STRATEGIC COMMUNICATIONS**

Megan Caron, Chief of Staff

Good evening. For the record, my name is Megan Caron, Chief of Staff. I am here tonight to review the budget for a new proposed department, which is the Department of Strategic Communications. As part of your packet, I did provide a communication that included the presentation I gave at Personnel last month. So I don't want to review that entirely and belabor the point, but I did just want to make a few comments before I jumped into numbers.

So I think as we crafted this budget, this has been an ongoing need and the objective of this office is to shift the way that we look at communications from a function to organizational infrastructure and we feel it needs to be part of the core service delivery. Right now, our approach is decentralized so communications are distributed among different departments who do different things, and in various capacities, and each does it in their own way, and that has led to some inconsistencies, and gaps in communications, things like that. So the way I have been describing it is if we're looking at communications as a hub and spoke approach, right now we have the spokes but we don't have the hub.

This communications has really become a specialty discipline in municipal government and we want to be in line with the best practices in municipal management. So really the landscape as you all know, the landscape of public information has shifted drastically and we need to adapt just like other departments like technology or emergency management. Those evolve really over time become specialty practices and so has communications.

This department, just to turn to numbers, in the proposed budget is \$122,211. My communication noted that the golden rod copy actually reduces salary by \$30,000. So from \$85,000 to \$50,000 and that brings the total budget to \$87,211. This position or this office would start with one position, a strategic communications manager, and the first step would be to develop and implement master communications plan. So this position it wouldn't take place - or take the place of the

Communication Specialist that exists in departments right now. It would just support them and also elevate their work so that it's we're more cohesive and consistent in our messaging and delivery. I'd be happy to answer any questions.

Chairman Dowd

Questions?

Alderman Sullivan

Thank you. I had a couple of questions. The first one is as you look across the city, how many people currently have the title or have the word "communication" in their title across the city?

Megan Caron, Chief of Staff

That's a good question. So - and I would say we also have a Citywide Communications Department. So you might see some communications there, but that's related to emergency radio and it has nothing to do with the communications we're talking about now.

If we're talking about formal positions that encompass the day-to-day operations of communication for their department, I can think of three off the top of my head: DPW, Public Health, and then the Mayor's Office. So this would really be an overarching office that would report to the Mayor but would oversee the larger strategy. Alderman Sullivan, I can confirm that number for you if you'd like. I just thought of another one too.

Alderman Sullivan

Follow up?

Chairman Dowd

Go ahead, follow up.

Alderman Sullivan

She had mentioned that she had mentioned that she had...

Megan Caron, Chief of Staff

Yes, sorry. I wasn't sure if you...

Alderman Sullivan

...so I didn't want to interrupt.

Megan Caron, Chief of Staff

I wasn't sure if you caught that. There's a little bit of a delay. Transit also has Communications Administrator.

Alderman Sullivan

Okay.

My follow-up is around communication and I'm sure you've been following what's been happening through the budget meetings. Currently, we're - the city is faced with the budget and how tight it is and the School District is looking to cut 56 positions. Twenty-one of those are teachers. How should we if this goes forward, how should we communicate to a parent of a child in the School District who might be losing a teacher, or a coach, or something like that, that we decided to fund this as opposed to fund the positions that or not funding the positions that are being cut from the School District? Thank you.

Megan Caron, Chief of Staff

That's a great question and I certainly don't want to pose these as competing priorities, because all of these positions have their place and importance. I also don't want to speak to the School District's budget and that process because it is different. But what I will say is that this position is a fraction of our total budget and communications impacts every department, every resident, everything we do, and so we see that as an investment. Not to take the place of teachers. I just want to make that clear. We're not trying to do that. So I don't know if that really answered your question. It's not really an apples to apples but I understand your point. I think right now we know that we have to do better. This is our next step.

Alderman Sullivan

I would just offer as a comment please.

Chairman Dowd

Go ahead.

Alderman Sullivan

Is when you look at the bigger picture - thank you. When you look at the bigger picture and it comes down to priority. If you look at this and if somebody's watching tonight, you might say we've decided to do this as opposed to doing this and I think that when it comes to situations like this, regardless of how much is on the appropriation sheet, I think that it's really important that, you know, your budget is a reflection of your priorities. I think that, you know, I just want to point that out tonight as we go through this and just kind of put the civil priorities against each.

Chairman Dowd

All set? Good. You have an answer?

Megan Caron, Chief of Staff

Yeah, I actually Alderman Sullivan I agree with you and I think that's why we are presenting it now because we view communications as a priority and an area for improvement.

Alderman Johnson

Thank you very much. My question - you're talking about better communications with the public. Does this mean that you're going to still be so strict with the Right to Know law that everybody's going to have to go through hurdles to get information if you're going to be more open with the public in communications?

Megan Caron, Chief of Staff

Well this position wouldn't have anything to do with the Right to Know process. However if you - I'll give you an example. Maybe the way that we present information on our website, and I know that is we're kind of going back to the website, but our website is so convoluted because at one point we were trying to put everything on there and I think we could probably all agree it's a little difficult to navigate sometimes. So this position would strategically look at the website, the content that we are putting on the website, where we're putting it on the website, the language that we're using to direct people to find information on the website. So could that alleviate some of the Right to Know process or inquiries? Probably but this - I mean, yeah, I would think probably, yeah, we can do a better job of making information available just at first, second click. Sometimes we receive a Right to Know request when the information is already on the website and we just have to direct them. So it could minimize this but it's not - that's not the official objective.

Alderman Johnson

Can I do a follow-up?

Chairman Dowd

Follow up.

Alderman Johnson

Thank you. And I get that, you know, with the communication. So do we have a job description already written up for this position?

Megan Caron, Chief of Staff

Yes. So - and that would - thank you for that question. We have a draft job description and I know we talked about that at Personnel. It's just making its way through Human Resources to make sure that it's vetted. We don't want to put any - even if it's a draft, we don't want to put anything out there that isn't, you know, by the book.

Alderman Johnson

Can I do a follow up?

Chairman Dowd

Follow up.

Alderman Johnson

Thank you. So this position you're talking about starting off at \$55,000 now - around 55?

Megan Caron, Chief of Staff

\$50,000.

Alderman Johnson

Okay. My...

Megan Caron, Chief of Staff

But that's - we would - that's a half year higher. So in January.

Alderman Johnson

Half year higher. You know, and I'll tell you, I'm having a real problem with all these new positions and I'm going to keep going back to the unaffiliated positions that were supposed to get that raise that the Board voted on last year, that ordinance, that the Mayor is asking to take away, and let me - I guess this is my feeling. How would you feel if you're working here for the city that you were supposed to get something, now it's taken away, and you hear new positions coming in but yet you aren't good enough to get what you were - that you were offered. That you were told that you were going to get. The Board voted on it. I mean whether or not I agree with the amount of money that I think it was way too much money in one year. I would have probably split it up into two years but the question is different departments are adding new positions and you have people that work here every day that were told that you were going to get this, they're going to divvy up \$450,000, and now they're taking it away, and now they're getting that COLA, and the step - whatever level they were going to be on. It took me a bit to understand what everybody did.

So this is part of my problem. Whether it's \$50,000 or not, you reneged - the Mayor and the Board hasn't voted on this yet but the Mayor reneged on something and I guess Mr. Cummings also because he was part of this whole thing in your office on employees that are here all the time. So thank you very much.

Chairman Dowd

Okay.

Alderman Sennott

Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I guess I got a lot of open-ended questions tonight but I'm going to ask another one. Just because I - is this a \$122,000 answer to a cultural problem within the organization?

Megan Caron, Chief of Staff

I think this is a step towards solving a citywide operational problem. Yes. I think the impetus is really to be more effective organizationally. Right now, we don't have the capacity to do what we know we should be doing. Like we can't do more than what we're doing right now or else we would be. Could we squeeze a little bit more out of employees right now? Sure we could but it's still not going to meet the need and expectation of the public.

Alderman Sennott

Follow up?

Chairman Dowd

Follow up.

Alderman Sennott

Is one person going to be able to do that?

Megan Caron, Chief of Staff

One person is a start but if you look across the country really, I was just speaking with a colleague. I think she's in Missouri. Population of 30,000 and she has a staff of three for comms. So we're not there yet. This would be a great start and it would be slow and steady, but that's really why we're looking to bring this person in. Start with a master communications plan and then go from there.

Alderman Sennott

What's preceded this organizationally? I won't pretend to know the first thing about the - I guess you would say the day to day here in City Hall. You know how the - I know how each of the departments runs but intermingled together as a large organization. How often are these groups sitting down together and getting on the same page? Is that happening ever?

Megan Caron, Chief of Staff

Great question. No and that's what we envision this person to do because as I noted, you know, this has kind of been brewing. This has been a thought for a few years and I've really tried to take some time to understand how different municipalities do it. One way would be, you know, when you have larger operations and you have special specialists in each department, they're the subject matter experts, right? Like I can't replace DPW Communications. I wouldn't even know where to begin. But this is a person who would sit down, maybe quarterly, and go over like the larger strategy. I gave the example in Personnel that one of the best practices in this field is, you know, this manager would sit down with each department by the end of the calendar year and say let's plan out your entire next calendar year together in terms of communications. Let's look where there's cross development in terms of different departments.

But I think what we're missing if we were to just put all these specialists in a room is we'd have those ideas but there's no one to execute them. So they would then just go back, rightfully so, to doing their day-to-day operations. Like social media posts and PRs, those are functions but they're not an overall strategy. I was speaking with Director Hannum about this and it actually made me think of when you had asked, you know, what can we do to bring businesses here? Part of this person's job - not all of it, but part of it is to manage that message because when you ask why Nashua, we all love Nashua for different reasons. We want people to live and work here but who is managing that message consistently, and who's putting it out there so that if I'm an employee, or if I'm a business who maybe wants to recruit or come to Nashua, I'm googling Nashua and what am I getting? And so those are those are the missing pieces. We're just missing that central that hub and I don't know if I made that more confusing or if I answered your question at all.

Alderman Sennott

I think you at least spoke to my concern that this at this stage, with a city this size, and an organization this size is more complex than I think we're really going to be able to chip away with that what's proposed here. I guess personally, I think I'd like to see more strategic planning for our strategic communications and I know you have to start somewhere, but I just I worry that next year if this were to go through, this is going to be - and I hate to throw her under the bus as an example - this is going to be another Director Hannum who's up here presenting a budget saying I'm only one person.

Megan Caron, Chief of Staff

Yeah.

Alderman Sennott

You know and it cascades. It snowballs.

Megan Caron, Chief of Staff

Yeah - and if I may respond?

Chairman Dowd

Go ahead.

Megan Caron, Chief of Staff

It's a great point because by the time we hire this position, on board them, it's going to be budget season. So yeah, they won't have much to show for that for, you know, results but it's a start.

Alderman Sennott

Thank you.

Chairman Dowd

All set?

Alderwoman Kelly

Thank you. I'm not sure that I have any questions. I didn't ask any because I was at the Personnel meeting where you presented this in depth. So I had a good sense of what you're trying to do. I think you do a good job of articulating what the need is. I just can speak with authority because this is what I do in my day-to-day. I agree that I don't think this is going to solve the problem. I don't think it's centralized enough. You don't have people coming up under this person so that we can really get a handle on a citywide communications plan.

I did ask in Personnel, and I don't know if you had given any additional thought to it, but could you do a communications plan as a consulted service and then when we have that really consider how this could be set up?

Megan Caron, Chief of Staff

Just to clarify. So basically, it would almost be like an audit in addition to a plan.

Alderwoman Kelly

I mean you could bring a consultant in to do a communications plan for the city for sure.

Megan Caron, Chief of Staff

We could. We didn't budget for that, but that's a great point.

Alderwoman Kelly

It would probably wouldn't be \$87,000 I bet you.

Megan Caron, Chief of Staff

It would. My concern would be then we have another plan but we're not, and that's it, and then it just stays there. I don't think you're - I think that's a great point and it's a matter of like when we do it because it needs to be done. Yeah, we could outsource the plan and I don't think you should rely on one person just to create the plan itself. Like I envision that as someone kind of overseeing that process and not just creating the plan by themselves if that makes sense. So point taken

but, you know, my fear would be that we outsource the plan, we have the plan, and then we don't have anyone to really run with it so but that's something that we would have to consider at the time.

Chairman Dowd

Follow up?

Alderman Kelly

I mean I think...

Chairman Dowd

Follow up?

Alderman Kelly

I think, if I could follow up. I think some of this conversation started with some of the things that happen in this community, including Sky Meadow and I think when we look at that, we talk about we need coordination with police, with education, you know, with the School District, with City Hall and that's not how you've necessarily explained this position, and I think that was where - at least myself when I was talking about if we need a centralized way, how do we get the information out to the alderman when things like that happen? How is Emergency Management involved in that? How are we telling a cohesive story in a moment of crisis and that I just don't think the way you've presented this solves that problem. I kind of agree with my previous colleague that you're setting up another person on an island to try to fix the problem.

Megan Caron, Chief of Staff

Yeah.

Alderman Kelly

At \$1,000.

Megan Caron, Chief of Staff

That's valid. I understand. I'm sorry if I may respond?

Chairman Dowd

Go ahead.

Megan Caron, Chief of Staff

But I think we just get back to and then what's next because we can't expect - if we want to move forward with, you know, executing a communications plan first, sure. That's better than where we are now, but we can't expect the folks who are overseeing the day-to-day functions in the department to then implement this like this plan in a moment of crisis because that's not - it's not going to work. So yeah, I mean point taken.

Alderman Johnson

Thank you very much. I just want to say, I want to agree with my colleague Alderman Kelly. I think she has - she's straight on point and I think before you can implement it, you have to have a plan in place. Because if we don't have this plan in place, this is going to go nowhere. We're going to be in a worse situation than we are now because we have nothing as a guideline. Since she does this every day, maybe she can give you some pointers on how to do it, an outline form, on what to do here. Because if we're going to present this to a community and say we're going to put in another position, then we better have a straightforward plan here. How it's going to be implemented, how we're going to have the new person work within the other teams, and the other departments because if not, we're going to fail and I'm not going to spend the money to fail on this. So I would say come back with a plan and do what Alderman Kelly said because she - this is how this is what she does. So she's the expert on it. I'm not but she is. Thank you for your information. I appreciate that.

Chairman Dowd

All set?

Alderman Thibeault

Thank you, Mr. Chair. Do you have a plan?

Megan Caron, Chief of Staff

Do I have a plan?

Alderman Thibeault

Did you have a plan for this before coming in here today on the budget for the budget meeting?

Megan Caron, Chief of Staff

Are we talking about - I'm sorry.

Alderman Thibeault

A plan for this position.

Megan Caron, Chief of Staff

Oh. Again, I just want to clarify a communications plan or a plan for what this position would do?

Alderman Thibeault

A plan for this role. Yeah.

Megan Caron, Chief of Staff

Well the first step is to let's - the first step for this position is we need a communications plan. We want you to oversee this. That is the first step and that's kind of why we're like this chicken and chicken or the egg. It could work both ways and I think the points on this side are completely valid so, but...

Alderman Thibeault

Follow up?

Chairman Dowd

Follow up.

Alderman Thibeault

I was trying to give you an easy one there because I assume you had a plan going into this. I assume you just didn't think of it today and come in here and say, "Hey, this is what I want, and me and the Mayor have not talked about this. I've not discussed this with anyone but hey, give me \$50,000 to do this. So my goal there for that question was just that. Of course you had some form of plan. Whether or not it was getting somebody that is an expert in communications, and then have them formulate a plan on how it would work, that may be the plan but you had one.

So when I look at Emergency Management what happened at Sky Meadow, I don't see that this role would be that person. I expect Emergency Management to do that role and I've talked to the police about it. That's not their role. Their role is to solve the situation as fast as they can. It's not to get messages out. That's not their role. They have a job. It's to make sure everybody's safe. Emergency Management probably should have found a way to get that out to everybody.

So - and I don't like the analogy or the we have teachers and we have this role, right. Sorry parents of kid A, you're not

going to get a teacher because we need this role. Well why don't we cut - why don't we cut Director Hannum's consulting fee and keep a couple more teachers, right? Why are we accusing you of taking - of adding a job and going against the teachers? Maybe education budgets over overfilled. We hear from people here that we should be closing schools. So we should be closing schools. We probably have too many teachers but we don't have any communication specialists, right? So I don't understand that logic of doing that. I think that's kind of if someone doesn't think we should spend the money on this, I don't want to spend the money on this. We don't have to like pull at the heartstrings of the kids that might not have their teacher this year when the reason you're adding this is not cutting a teacher's job. They're just not - it's not related and so I just want to make that clear. That's not the reason why if we don't vote for this, it's the reason why. It's the reason why we don't think this role today and this money that's allotted is the right thing at the right time for this. That's all we need to say. We don't need to come up with things to kind of make us talk us into it, right? If we don't feel that, we don't feel that.

I think the communication in the city is terrible and I'm going to be nice because I don't want to say anything bad.

Alderwoman Kelly

That's nice.

Alderman Thibeault

But it's terrible. It's awful and I don't mean anything against any person working in the city. I think they have a difficult situation. I mean you kind of explained it with you got all these different departments trying to get out a communication. There's nothing branded together. It's just here goes this, this goes that way. Most of us have probably worked in a whether it's a 200 person company, or even 100,000 person company, or even higher, they have a communications team. It's not one person. It's communications team for a company.

All the messages that come out to us employees are looked over a million times over. There's usually a good company will be no, you know, typos. There'll be no wrong grammar. There'll be no - there'll be one message. You'll see that same similar message over and over again. It's branded. It looks good. We don't have that here. And does one person fix that? No. Does one person start us in the right direction? Probably. Is this the right time to do that? I don't know yet. I haven't decided for myself if I think it because I think it's important.

I think a good city that has good communications for the people who are - example today, Facebook hit. People getting their tax bill. Someone said our taxes went up 8% today on Facebook. That's what they said. Our taxes went up. I got a notice from the city - from the city, a notice. Not a tax bill. A notice from the city. So that's you and the Mayor sending out a notice to someone saying they got an 8% increase in their taxes. So I said to myself how can that be? How can the city be communicating that. We haven't even finished the budget yet. So I went and I opened my tax bill because I got it and I said, "Oh, it says right here, interest 8%. Somebody thought that that interest meant that their taxes went up 8% and I looked on the back to see if it said what interest was. I know what interest was. You don't pay it, you get 8% interest. I understand but it wasn't on the tax bill. So people are just making stuff up out there that their taxes went up 8% when that wasn't the tax - that wasn't the increase last year for this tax bill that's current now.

So that's just an example of a communication going out that maybe doesn't explain stuff well. Even though we did put something on the website that explained the new bill, it didn't explain that piece of it. Anybody can take anything the wrong way if they don't, and then they spread this stuff out, and how do we react to that, right? Well we don't have a communications team to send something out saying, hey by the way, you know, da da da, whatever. So I think we need a communications team. I just don't know if it's right now but I want to make sure that we're not trying - if we don't feel that we should fund this this year, we just say that. It's pretty simple.

Alderwoman Kelly

I'm just going to make one final point and I appreciate all the conversation around this. What I see in my business is often times when you bring in someone to consult, they have an outside perspective and that's why I'm pushing for the idea of having someone to come in and look at an audit instead of bringing someone in, making them part of the culture, and then having them try to fix it. Because sometimes when someone comes in as a consultant, they can see things you can't see and so that's why if we want to talk about potentially putting some aside for that kind of thing, then you have an a perspective from someone who doesn't sit at a desk under the Mayor or whoever it is saying here's what I see as a communication specialist. Here's how you guys can potentially fix it and then you use that plan to build your communications program and/or department. Because it's very clear we all agree you need one.

Megan Caron, Chief of Staff

Right.

Alderwoman Kelly

But where do you start and that's what I see. Thank you.

Chairman Dowd

All set?

My problem and I've been on boards for a lot of years is we're hiring a person who's coming in here that doesn't know the problem and the first part of their job would be trying to figure out what the problem is. Once you hire somebody, you know, unless you fire them, which is not good, you know, you've got a position that's going to be there.

I think the first thing we need - and we all agree that communication is lacking but I think the people we need to ask are the taxpayers. What information do you want to see, and what aren't you getting, and what would be the best way to get it. So I think if we had that kind of information built - and now you can bring a new person in and say, here's the identified problem and come up with, you know, and that person would have to have some experience in coming up with solutions or that wouldn't be a good hire. I don't know how many people are out there that are communication specialists that you can hire that for that kind of money.

So I think we've identified there's a problem but we haven't identified specifically what the problem is. We know the communications is bad but we don't know what the people in the city want to see. We have Aldermen that put out their own personal weekly newsletters. Some of them you couldn't possibly miss anything in the city from reading. There are others that are some way in between and there are others that don't put them out. You can't put them out unless your residents give you their email. So there's that issue.

Once we have the idea of what communications the public wants to see, what's the best way to implement it, and how much is that going to cost? I can tell you that from everybody I've talked to, nobody likes the website because it's too hard to find things. The search engine in there is terrible. You know if you want to go in and ask it a question, you know, like where is this, it'll take you on stuff that goes back to the 1902 era. You know I mean it gets crazy. So I think we need to know what the people want. We've got to identify in more detail what the problem is before we hire somebody to solve it. Just my opinion.

Megan Caron, Chief of Staff

May I respond?

Chairman Dowd

Yes.

Megan Caron, Chief of Staff

Once again, completely valid. I think I'm hearing from the Committee that it's probably we're looking at maybe not this year but we really need a plan. So if that is the flavor of the Committee, we're a little pressed for time but what I can do is perhaps present - kind of go back, do some digging on what a communications audit or a plan would cost, and then propose an alternate for possibly an amendment. So because currently that, you know, an audit, a plan takes money, and we didn't budget for that in this proposed budget. So I'm certainly willing to do that if that's what the Board would - or the Committee would prefer, and we can definitely make it a, you know, a stipulation of when an RFP goes out, that some public engagement take place to really understand what the public wants to know, and what they feel is lacking, and how they like to be communicated with, and things like that. So it can be, you know, a fairly comprehensive audit and plan but.

Chairman Dowd

I would say in conjunction with that, see if we can find a way that we can ask the public, you know, what kind of information are you not getting. You know, I mean you get some in the Union Leader because I told Dean Shaloup he's writing more stories now than when he worked full time for the Telegraph. So the Union Leader covers a lot of things in Nashua.

Unfortunately, it's usually a day late but.

And the other piece is, you know, again, you find out what the problem is but in the interim if we could have a thing on the website where you could just click in and it would bring you up to the latest minutes of the various departments whether it's the Fire Commission, the Police Commission, or whatever without having to go in and search for where the heck the meeting was, and click on, you know, agenda, or and if you click on minutes like of our meetings, we're way backlogged because this Board has decided we need verbatim minutes, which is, you know, we'd have to hire a few more people to catch up on that and we don't have the money to do that but there's got to be an interim solution because people have the desire for this information now, not a year from now, not two years from now.

So how do we solve the intermediate problem and of course, it's not going to be perfect but it will be better than what we have and then come up with that plan so that we could present. If we do decide to do a new hire at some point, they have a problem to solve and they know all the background. So you just bring a person in blind, it'll take them six months to figure out what they're supposed to be doing. Just my opinion. All right if there's nothing else. Thank you.

Megan Caron, Chief of Staff

Thank you.

Chairman Dowd

Now before we table the budget, you would get that golden rod copy amendment and Miss Enwright had given out an explanation but I wanted to go over that. So if there are any questions relative to the first item we're going to take up on the summary meeting that we have later in the month will be this goldenrod copy of the Mayor's budget. So I'd like her to explain what's in there and then if you have any questions, you can ask before we table the budget again.

Dawn Enwright, CFO

Thank you, Mr. Chair. Dawn Enwright, CFO. So the golden rod amendment that was passed out and the memo that was corresponding with it from Director Cummings and myself, lays out the issues that we found early on in the budget process. It is comprised of three different components. Two of which affect the general fund. These changes that we are proposing have to do with corrections from the information that was presented by the departments, keying errors, process oversights, and some software uploading errors. This process we had for four retirements in the Financial Department this year and this process was pulled together with all new staff. So some of these things were oversights during it and were recognized very quickly after the printing of the budget so we came forward.

So the initial adjustments total \$111,000 for the general fund and then when we were talking about these adjustments - and that's a decrease to the proposed budget - it came to light that 14 Mulberry Street was not going to be purchased for a resource center for the city and in the budget were some appropriations to care for that building, for the maintenance, and the upkeep of that building, and that was a total of \$177,500. So that is also an additional decrease to the budget to the general fund budget, which is a total of \$288,000 decrease to the general fund budget.

On top of that, there was an oversight in the Wastewater Fund of a special revenue loan bond payment that was missed in the initial creation of this budget. So that has been added to the Wastewater Fund. At the same time, there was an adjustment to the revenue side to balance their budget. So there were two adjustments on the Wastewater. Those adjustments do not affect the tax rate in any way. It is a self-supporting fund. I'd be happy to answer any questions you may have about these adjustments.

Chairman Dowd

Any questions?

Alderwoman Kelly

All right. So thank you for that and thank you for your copy that you handed me. I was like very lost about the golden rod copy. So I guess I'm just trying to square going into wrap up next week. There's been some like, oh, the Mayor adjusted this. Is that included in that? Like what we were just talking about with the 229 now to 129 in economic. Is that included in your golden rod or are those additional things that need to be addressed when we go to do our wrap up?

Dawn Enwright, CFO

Thank you, Mr. Chair. Thank you for the question. The adjustment of the \$129,000 that was an oversight at the time of between the proposed and in the Mayor's budget. It was a keying error when that happened.

Alderman Kelly

But it's in your golden rod copy.

Dawn Enwright, CFO

It is in the golden rod copy. Yes, it is.

Alderman Kelly

So from a standpoint of what needs to happen for wrap up, can we just approve the golden rod copy or do we need to do line by line edits to these errors – clerical errors?

Chairman Dowd

I believe we can just approve the golden rod copy.

Alderman Kelly

And then we can go from there?

Dawn Enwright, CFO

Yes.

Alderman Kelly

Okay. Thank you.

Chairman Dowd

Anything? Anyone else?

Alderman Sennott

Thanks. I'm just going to gripe a little bit. I understand that the non-city buildings component of this is I think it was \$111,000. It's 15 or 16 different line items though. It's a lot of stuff and it to me, it just feeds more of some of what we've been saying about the budget in that it's this has been a really confusing budget season in so much now that we can't even look at the document in front of us as the budget that we're considering because the budget that we're considering, it's actually that less these 15 line items across various departments and sub lines throughout the city. Some of them, you know, come with their own sets of questions. There's cuts to salaries but not the corresponding benefit lines within them. There's cuts to benefit lines but not the salaries that would supersede those.

I feel like there's a lot more going on here than the memo really clarifies and I know that this will come to a vote at the wrap-up sessions and this is something even with it in front of me just like this because of the principle of the matter, I would struggle to say yes to. Thanks.

Alderman Kelly

Just to respond to that, I think that the wrap up I will agree with the budget book. I've got different leaflets and the one that has the, you know, up to date year to date and I'm trying to put that in. So I agree, there's definitely some confusion. So I guess my request would be for the wrap up sessions, I don't believe we're going to do it one night this year. Can we have some of the Directors here so that we have specific questions on all of these changes that have kind of come in we can get clarification as we're making changes.

Alderman Sennott

We've got them.

Alderwoman Kelly

We've got them? They're all coming? Okay.

Alderman Sennott

No, I said we have like we have to.

Alderwoman Kelly

Yeah. Yeah. I just - I don't - I want to be able to make the decisions and I don't want to have to wait. I hate to drag out Directors two nights in a row but I think there's going to be a lot of questions.

Chairman Dowd

All right. I'll take that as an action item.

Alderwoman Kelly

Thank you.

Alderman Thibeault

Yeah, I mean I would hope they would come just because we could be cutting or adding to their budgets. We're only going to have one night by the way.

So question on - so on the golden rod where their salaries are...I guess I don't know if they're cut, or if it was a mistake, and so if it was a typo, like a typo or a download, it wouldn't necessarily affect the benefits unless there was also a typo or something on that, right? So the salaries could have been wrong by whatever dollar amount but because the line for the benefits was typed correctly, that could be why it's not corresponding. Is that accurate or?

Dawn Enwright, CFO

Thank you, Mr. Chair. Thank you for the question. Yes, you are quite correct. A lot of these errors were manually entered and they were keyed in incorrectly. So if you see an adjustment to a salary, it is because it was keyed incorrectly or uploaded incorrectly and didn't correspond directly with the salaries. The Excel spreadsheet that they started from had all the calculations of salaries, and benefits, and how they correspond. How the information got into the document was keyed in incorrectly.

Alderman Thibeault

Follow up?

Chairman Dowd

Follow up.

Alderman Thibeault

So I guess my question here is now going forward, I guess it's two questions in one. So how can we in the future make sure, I guess, how do we prevent like simple mistakes from typing coming to us at the point, right? So everybody's gonna make mistakes but then how do we catch that before it now goes into a book, and comes out live to the constituents, and ourselves, and then have to go through it like that because I mean I would hate to have to go through another situation where people are keying wrong information again, or the copier is not copying one line, or something's going on. I just - I mean there's a lot of issues and I think that should be the one that we should catch prior to hitting the books here, I guess.

Dawn Enwright, CFO

Thank you very much for that question and I couldn't agree with you anymore. I have to tell you the day this was after this was printed, we've started meeting internally to talk about our process for creating the budget and how to improve it because it was obvious that there is a lot of improvement that can happen, and we have new players involved, and we're pulling everyone's ideas together on how to make it better. It was in the process is something that can significantly improve and I recognize that.

Alderman Thibeault

And follow up to that, please?

Chairman Dowd

Okay. We are also going to have a meeting after budget is approved to talk about what we want to see next year. So let's not go there yet.

Alderman Thibeault

Yeah, just a comment. I think, and again, I'm not blaming you. I'm not blaming anybody. We were already kind of in it at the time but I would suggest if we get something like this again, we automatically first thing send it back and I hate to say that. I really do because we got to get on talking to departments and all that but send it back and we'll take it up when we get a copy that has the corrected stuff. I hate to say that but it's kind of rough like having to add stuff in and circle stuff in. I mean I get the whole salary part and all that. We eventually got that so okay, whatever. We can fix that next year but the typos, and golden rod this, and that, it's just it's a lot. So I would think the first step as a Budget Committee would be to send it back and wait until it comes in correctly, I guess.

Alderman Sennott

Thank you, Mr. Chairman. So I actually had a specific question on this on the back of the response regarding some of the detail I had asked about. Miss Caron is still here so that's good. So if I understood correctly, it sounds like the decision to half fund the proposed strategic communications salary was a strategic decision, understanding that we're not going to be funding that or filling that role until July with it or January – sorry - would this pass. So are the numbers in here for benefits - FICA, Medicare, what have you. Are those in here contemplated at the partial funding?

Dawn Enwright, CFO

Yes, they are in there as the partial funding because that was the plan.

Alderman Sennott

All right. Those are the sort of just I understand typographical errors and I understand that these things happen, but those are the inconsistencies that make this really hard to track. Because we're basically talking about the four elements that make up a single salary, and three of them are right, but one of them is not, and I'd say probably the bulk of it is the one that's not, you know, it's. Even for somebody finance-minded, that can be really scattering the focus. Thank you.

Alderman Johnson

Thank you very much. How are we going to address - I keep coming back to this - the unaffiliated employees from Ordinance O-25-063 that were just taking it out of the budget because it was put in here that there we had to remove it. Are we going to take this up separately or are we going to just vote and pass it with the golden rod copy?

Chairman Dowd

I don't think the unaffiliated situation is in the golden rod copy at all.

Alderman Johnson

Further resolved. Am I correct here, Director?

Dawn Enwright, CFO

Dawn Enwright, CFO. The unaffiliated was addressed in the proposed budget and if there were any - I don't think there were any corrections - but there was nothing directly related to the unaffiliated adjustment in the golden rod.

Chairman Dowd

The only way to address the unaffiliated is if somebody in the Budget Committee makes a motion to re-instate that and it would have to be approved by a majority vote of the Budget Committee.

Alderman Johnson

May I follow-up?

Chairman Dowd

Follow-up.

Alderman Johnson

And that's that \$450,000, right, that was approved last year, I believe? Was that the amount that was in that Ordinance? Something to that effect.

Dawn Enwright, CFO

I don't have the exact amount. It was 4% I know that. I can get you the exact amount.

Alderman Johnson

That would be great. Thank you.

Chairman Dowd

We can get the exact amount and give it to the - send it out to the Budget Committee.

Alderman Johnson

Thank you very much.

Chairman Dowd

Actually, send it out to the entire Board.

Dawn Enwright, CFO

Yes, certainly.

Alderman Johnson

Thank you.

Alderman Sennott

I'm sorry. Now I do have to needle a little. Miss Enwright is FICA/Medicare still 7.65% of the salary?

Dawn Enwright, CFO

Yes.

Alderman Sennott

FICA/Medicare for this contemplated position is listed at the full funding.

Dawn Enwright, CFO

Okay.

Alderman Sennott

So there are additional changes that would need to be made on this golden rod copy.

Dawn Enwright, CFO

Okay.

Alderman Sennott

Thank you.

Chairman Dowd

Okay. If there's nothing else, Alderman O'Brien.

**MOTION BY ALDERMAN O'BRIEN TO TABLE R-26-028**  
**MOTION CARRIED**

PUBLIC COMMENT - None

GENERAL DISCUSSION

Alderman Thibeault

Thank you. Going back to Alderman Sennott's point. So if the FICA is wrong on that particular salary and if there's other salaries that are wrong on that golden rod sheet is the FICA wrong on those two? Like do we have to start looking at all the affiliate - not affiliate. I don't mean to use that term. Anything that's connected to a salary to see if the benefits are correctly in there, too, because I assume based on what you had said, that all the benefits and stuff were correct. It was just the salaries that were wrong but now it sounds like that's not true.

Dawn Enwright, CFO

I've made a note and I will come back with a report.

Alderman Thibeault

Okay. Thank you.

Chairman Dowd

All set?

REMARKS BY THE ALDERMEN - None

ADJOURNMENT

**MOTION BY ALDERMAN O'BRIEN TO ADJOURN**  
**MOTION CARRIED**

The meeting was declared closed at 8:36 p.m.

Alderman Michael B. O'Brien, Sr.  
Committee Clerk