

HUMAN AFFAIRS COMMITTEE

NOVEMBER 17, 2025

A meeting of the Human Affairs Committee was held Monday, November 17, 2025 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.

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

The roll call was taken with 4 members of the Human Affairs Committee present:

Alderman Thomas Lopez, Chairman, presided.

Members of the Committee present: Alderman Chris Thibodeau
Alderman Tim Sennott, Clerk
Alderman-at-Large Alicia Gregg
Alderman Thomas Lopez, Chair

Members of the Committee absent: Alderwoman-at-Large Shoshanna Kelly, Vice Chair

Also in Attendance: Heidi Peek-Kukulka, Health Officer (via Zoom)
Mike McGuinness, Deputy Health Officer
Bobbie Bagley, Director of Public Health and Community Services
LaTonya Muccioli, Housing Services Officer

ROLL CALL

PUBLIC COMMENT - None

DISCUSSIONS AND/OR PRESENTATIONS

- Rodent activity and prevention

Chairman Lopez

We start with rodent activity and prevention. Mr. McGuinness, you might want to just have a seat. Yeah, anywhere. Make yourself at home. The whole left side is free, you know.

Alderman Gregg

Join us.

Chairman Lopez

If any of the other members of Public Health Department want to come and participate, you're definitely welcome.

Alderman Gregg

There's plenty of seats.

Chairman Lopez

At least these ones have cushions, right?

Alderman Gregg

Yeah, these are much more comfortable.

Mike McGuinness, Deputy Health Officer

Yeah, those pews are awful - so sitting is fine?

Chairman Lopez

Yes, have a seat.

Mike McGuinness, Deputy Health Officer

Sorry, first-timer over here.

Alderman Gregg

Well, welcome. We're glad you're here.

Mike McGuinness, Deputy Health Officer

Yeah, thank you for having me. I appreciate it. So we'll do a little discussion on rodents and rodent activity in the City of Nashua as well as a brief overview, kind of what the picture is looking like kind of all around the country and in the world a little bit here.

So my name is Mike McGuinness for those of you that don't know me. I'm the Deputy Health Officer for the City of Nashua recently promoted in August. I was a Health Inspector for the City for about six and a half years before I became the Deputy Health Officer. So I've seen some things out there in the field and I've been kind of tracking the trends of what's occurring as far as rodents are concerned and this is our land acknowledgement for the City of Nashua. So we are located on unseated land, occupied land called the "N'dakinna". Thank you. The traditional ancestral homeland of the Abenaki, Pennacook, and Wabanaki peoples past and present. The word "Nashua" or "Niswa-ok" is. Sorry, I butchered that, in the Abenaki language means place of two rivers. And then if we could just briefly pause and acknowledge and honor the peoples that were stewards of this land for generations in the past, both land and water. Thank you.

Our mission statement in Environmental Health is to protect the public's health by promoting best prevention practices through science, education, and guidance, and fostering public trust, and enforcement of laws and ordinances, which we address along - this is our staff list.

Heidi Peek-Kukulka, Health Officer

Can you guys – sorry.

Mike McGuinness, Deputy Health Officer

Oh, no problem.

Chairman Lopez

Any comments Director Peek?

Heidi Peek-Kukulka, Health Officer

Health Officer Peek. Good evening, my camera does not seem to be working and the only way I can hear audio is with my phone.

Chairman Lopez

Okay. Is there a button you can press that would make an auditory tone just if you want to raise your hand?

Heidi Peek-Kukulka, Health Officer

I have no idea.

Chairman Lopez

Okay, then just say hand and then we'll know to recognize you.

Heidi Peek-Kukulka, Health Officer

Okay. If I can - Mike you want to pull up the next slide and I can talk about that a little bit.

Mike McGuinness, Deputy Health Officer

Sure. Just a quick introduction. The Health Officer Heidi Peek-Kukulka. This is our staff roster. Myself, the Deputy Health Officer, our Office Manager, and Quality Improvement and Compliance Specialist is Linda Alukonis. We have an Environmental Health Specialist II April Torhan; one Environmental Health Specialist I Tim Poitras, and we are currently vacant for our third inspector position. So we have a team of six fully funded by the City and we are just down an individual at this point in time.

Chairman Lopez

Heidi are you able to see where we are - are you able to see the presentation at all?

Heidi Peek-Kukulka, Health Officer

I am.

Chairman Lopez

Okay. Good. Awesome. All right, proceed.

Heidi Peek-Kukulka, Health Officer

Back to the previous slide. We also have a direct tie-in with the Board of Health where every time Board of Health duties are mentioned in the ordinances or in the Charter, it is the Health Officer and Environmental Health staff who complete those activities. So I just wanted to mention that and I'll go to the next slide, please. Services and functions - and I'll go through some of these things. Let's see. And you guys can hear me all right, right?

Chairman Lopez

Yep, your audio is great.

Heidi Peek-Kukulka, Health Officer

Awesome. Thank you. Good phone. Food Service is our largest program and it's the one that most people know us for and we license and inspect about 575 food service facilities. We conduct plan reviews, respond to emergencies, conduct site visits for compliance, do recall checks, and then are very involved in special events with a mindset regarding food service activities, and also portable toilets to make sure that there is no public urination during an event.

Whoops, are you guys still there?

Chairman Lopez

Yeah, we're here.

Heidi Peek-Kukulka, Health Officer

Okay. Hold on. Let's see. Just get rid of this. As far as pools and spas, we license and inspect about 102 of them and we test the waters for (inaudible), safety and health. We have a category called "institutional inspections" where we inspect foster homes, child care centers, and schools and that those are on behalf of different State agencies. We do not license them except for some child care licensing for food service.

We with the Animal Control Officer from the Police Department act as the local rabies control authority and that includes requiring say, animals that have come into contact with a rabid animal to be quarantined for a period of time and then every time there is a bite report in the City, we make sure that the animals, the pets are healthy afterwards.

And let's see. Mike's been very busy with a lot of our housing inspections recently. He's done rooming houses inspections on Temple Street, and Laton House, and we get some random complaints. Sometimes it's a neighbor, sometimes it will be a manager, or a landlord about living conditions and so we respond to those activities.

We also see the arboviral surveillance for the City. For demolition permits, we sign off for the presence of asbestos that it is either not there or it has been properly abated and we also work with – we both sit on Tech Review, which is the pre Planning Board group that gets together and hashes out the respective concerns regarding a) it's a subdivision, or something along those lines, and we also oversee all of the septic activities in Nashua, and that includes test kit, and bed bottom inspections, and we approve the plans as well as the State does. We license solid waste haulers, and we respond to general complaints, and that's kind of what brings us here.

Where we've been seeing rodent activity has been certainly in food service, and it's been a real challenge recently, and Mike will go a little bit over the theoretical why that has happened. But our complaints can be anything from smells - those are the scariest because you never know what you're going to encounter, to dog waste, to chickens, to all kinds of other things. Code Enforcement has primary jurisdiction over the chickens but if it comes to unsanitary conditions, we are involved, and then we've more recently become involved in hygiene and sanitation around encampments, and supporting all of the good work that the Division does, and that's about it for that slide. If Mike you want to jump right into the rodents.

Mike McGuinness, Deputy Health Officer

Yeah, absolutely no problem. So when we think of rodents, we're thinking of primarily rats and mice. We're not really worried about the chipmunks and, you know, things like that. But specifically, the Norway rat, which is the most common rat in the United States in this area, as well as the house mouse, which is very common in this area as well. Not say you couldn't have another species getting in your house but that's pretty much what we're looking at - the house mouse and the Norway rat.

So nationwide, well actually globally since covid, we have seen an increase in rodent populations in pretty much all urban areas. Rats and mice are commensurate animals and they live very well if not thrive off of people and the waste that we provide to them. So in Nashua since covid, I have personally observed an increase in rodent complaints both in housing settings, commercial property settings, and food service establishments. So there are a lot of contributing factors that aid to the rodent population increase. Some of that is climate change, which is observed globally. The warmer, more hospitable conditions allow for a larger breeding season, less mortality, and just overall favorable conditions for rodents in general.

Covid 19 really kind of kicked off the world's rodent problems in recent years as the restaurants began to close, the initial rodent population plummeted because of the lack of food that they were provided by from the commercial food service establishments as well as other commercial facilities. That induced panic in many of the colonies that rodents had in those areas, which led to a lot of infanticide and cannibalism among those populations leaving only the strongest, most, fittest individuals left. Those individuals proceeded to panic more and sought food elsewhere. Basically following us back to our residences which leads us to why we're seeing more complaints in residential settings and just places that are not urban downtown. We're seeing them basically all across the city, over by the airport, South Nashua, Main Street. All over the city, we're seeing more and more rodents in the area. So they pretty much live off of us so they'll follow us wherever we go. They primarily feed off of food waste and garbage, but are also known to feed on animal and human waste. A lot of things don't get fully digested and they become a food source for the rodents once they're dropped off, I guess.

Chairman Lopez

They're eating the corn aren't they?

Mike McGuinness, Deputy Health Officer

Absolutely. That actually leads me to my next topic of the increase in backyard livestock that we've seen.

Chairman Lopez

It's a good segue.

Mike McGuinness, Deputy Health Officer

It was a great segue. But so a lot of animal feed and just the backyard animals in general kind of lend to hospitable conditions for rodents. So that's both like the feed that we're giving them, and then the animal waste that the rodents are thriving off of, and then development and construction. So basically digging up new areas, disturbing burrows, displacing the rodents, causing them to look for food and water and harborage elsewhere that has caused them to move into areas and see them where we typically wouldn't see them. So cities are a challenge because like I said, they live off of us. They do very well in close proximity with humans. So as the human density increases, that can increase the refuse, garbage, and waste in an area which leads rodents to have more opportunities for success.

We could go to the next slide and just give a couple examples. So that's a pretty bad encounter in food service establishment. That's something we don't want to see at all but that is something we see. In the photograph is a dead mouse next to a bait station surrounded by droppings of other mice. Basically a situation like this, we would work with the operator of the food service establishment, coach them, guide them, train them up on how to mitigate rodents, and basically get them to work with licensed pest professional, and basically conduct a lot of site visits in order to get a handle on those situations. So it does chew up a fair amount of time but it is definitely a necessary part of the department to go out and do these site visits and outreach.

So just the next slide is an example of what we would see in a commercial - well really any facility but this was a good commercial complaint. Not food service related but this just goes to show that small openings the size of dime or less can allow mice to pass through an area. As you can see in that photo, there's droppings as well as the sebum trails, which is basically a scent trail rodents will lay down. So on the way to find food, they'll lay down these scent trails. Other rodents will follow those scent trails. If it doesn't lead to death, they'll keep going back to that same area. If it stops at a trap, you might cause those animals to reconsider their movement patterns.

And then the next slide is an example of a rat colony in a residential setting that is actually underneath the - so dumpsters are supposed to be placed on an impermeable surface. That is not an impermeable surface. That is just placed right on the dirt and that dumpster is the dinner bell for them. They're getting all their food right from that dumpster. So they're burrowing basically underneath, destabilizing the ground underneath that dumpster, and having a nice little home for them to live in. So that's just an example of what we see in, you know, residential settings and we see that in people's yards sometimes. We see that around dumpsters. We can really see that anywhere where there is a rat population, but that is specifically rat burrows.

As far as prevention practices go - so basically we want to deny them harborage food, which is hiding places, places to live, rest, reproduce, any food sources, and denying them water supply. So that's what we call "integrated pest management". Poisoning, trapping is great but it's not the only answer to be done in all circumstances. Sometimes all you need to do is deny them food, harborage, and water, and you can remedy the situation.

We encourage trapping. That definitely works but rats and mice tend to be very afraid of the new. So anything new. So there are recommendations when it comes to trapping not just setting a trap, baiting it, and letting it go. Generally what you want to do is set a trap, bait it - or don't set it but place it, bait it, let it sit for a couple days so they get used to it, then you put the bait on, set the trap and they'll basically fall for it thinking it's already a safe area for them, and they will have left that scent trail, attracting other rodents to that same trap.

So regard to the prevention food waste. Any food waste is going to be a food source for them as well as animal feed and waste. So we just got to pick up our trash, get tight fitting lids, and rodent proof containers for any food scraps, any garbage, any animal feed. Leaky pipes represent a water supply. So if we deny them water, they can't live. They're just like us. They can only go so long without food and water. Water being, you know, more dire. So if we deny them water, they can't live there. And then if you deny them clutter and debris, they lose their harborage, places to live, places to find refuge, and they won't want to be in that area. So what we want to do is we want to seal cracks, holes, crevices in the exterior of buildings or in the sides of units. If it comes to like a multi-unit residential complex, we want to seal all those gaps, prevent anything from getting in or out.

Maintaining a neat and orderly property. For example, keeping wood piles elevated up off the ground, cutting back brush, and leaf litter, and refuse from folks houses or buildings. And then we want to clean up any rodent sign which tends to be the scent trails and the droppings so we can monitor for new activity. As you can imagine if it's just the same pile of droppings over and over again, you can't tell what's new and what's old. So we really want to make sure those rodent droppings are getting cleaned and sanitized so then we can monitor for new activity. It goes a long way with pest when you get the licensed pest professional involved, they can monitor

better if they're not trying to cipher through older sign versus newer sign.

And then lastly after integrated pest management may or may not work, we would encourage working with a licensed pest professional. But our main role outside of food service establishments is like coaching, guiding, and offering education to any plaintiff that might be dealing with rodent issue or infestation or what have you. When it comes to like pools and food service establishments places we license, we get a little more hands on. Sometimes that results in ticketing. If the messaging is not being received that there's a problem and they need to get a hold of it but oftentimes is guidance and education to get them to do what they need to do in order to mitigate the rodent situation. But that is kind of my presentation. So thank you for listening. I really appreciate it.

Chairman Lopez

Okay.

Mike McGuinness, Deputy Health Officer

Are there any questions for me?

Chairman Lopez

One of the reasons for context that we were looking for these kind of presentations is particularly because as the weather gets colder people are in their units, in their apartments, and wanting to know what the city does provide. So I would say probably mice are second or third in order of most undesirable visitors and so we want to make sure people know what they can do. So if a person finds mice and they're in a rental property, what are their rights, what kind of actions can they take, what would you recommend?

Mike McGuinness, Deputy Health Officer

Yeah, so I mean feel free to call me. Call anyone in the Environmental Health Department. We'll give you strategies to practice on their own. We're not in the business of going into trapping mice ourselves but I believe we used to have a Rodent Management Program but that's before my time. But as far as say we get a rodent complaint from a commercial unit/multi residences, we'll receive that complaint, offer them guidance and education, refer them to generally - so if it comes in and the landlord is not doing anything about it, we would refer them to Code. Code Enforcement kind of handles the landlord/tenant disputes and Code gives the landlord a reasonable time to respond to the issue. I think it's 14 days. I could be mistaken so don't quote me on that, but I believe it is a set period of time for them to respond to the issue. Once that gets set in motion, you have to give the pest management plan time to actually come into effect and work to get rid of those rodents. So it's not something that's going to happen overnight but it takes a couple different parties involved. Both the landlord doing everything they can by hiring the pest professional and then the tenant doing everything they can on their part to manage the situation on their own. I hope that answered your question. I'm sorry if it's not ..

Chairman Lopez

No, I think it's pretty comprehensive. I think so for people who might be watching this educationally, they would understand they can get information and guidance from the Public Health Department. If they're going to make a complaint, then they really need to go to the Code Enforcement Department and making a complaint doesn't mean immediately everything can happen and be resolved. It takes, I guess, the department time to contact the landlords and then landlords also have some time to address the issues and resolve it.

Mike McGuinness, Deputy Health Officer

That's correct.

Chairman Lopez

Okay. Any questions from the Committee?

Alderman Gregg

Thank you for the presentation.

Mike McGuinness, Deputy Health Officer

You're very welcome.

Chairman Lopez

Thank you for that presentation. We definitely appreciate it.

Mike McGuinness, Deputy Health Officer

Of course.

Heidi Peek-Kukulka, Health Officer

Can I jump in?

Chairman Lopez

Sorry, Director Bagley's hand is up but I also heard Heidi so let's go with Heidi first.

Heidi Peek-Kukulka, Health Officer

Oh, thank you. I just wanted to mention a couple of things that we have on our inspection form - that's a Number 35, which is a critical violation and it talks about the presence of animals, pests, et cetera but it also covers open doors. So we always want to see for a licensed facility that the outer envelope is always closed and there are no holes or gaps that will allow rodents easy access to a building. So that's one thing.

We also advise people too in their home to not have their trash barrels right against a wall. Both rats and mice are extremely good climbers and can then access the rest of the building and the rest of the unit. So there should be some distance from where the trash is stored and to where the entry to the units are as well. This is actually become such a big issue that they're actually having rat walks in urban Massachusetts. I'd love to attend one. We talked about doing it as a field trip but they're typically at night and I know I would break my neck. But it's a huge issue and everybody with a degree of urban density is grappling with this issue. Not to say that your pastoral lands aren't affected because they've got plenty of food and animal waste to support rodents but this is unprecedented to see just the numbers that we have. But we're not alone and that's about it for me.

Chairman Lopez

Yeah, that's a very good, important thing to comment because obviously if somebody finds mice then the first thing is, I have somehow failed in my hygiene and my whatever. I am humiliated and embarrassed and the reality is there's a massive surge of them. I mean it's not like anyone who's living in Nashua in the last couple years hasn't noticed an abundance of bunnies. That's not explicitly one person's fault. It's a systemic issue. So if people do find mice or rodents, then reaching out to the Public Health Department is a very good step. You can get insight, input, knowledge of where to go, you know, to start from scratch and then, you know, the tools that you need.

Bobbie Bagley, Division Director of the Environmental Health Department

I'm just gonna add that the Environmental Health Department in its most humblest ways of all the work that they do with the team that size takes on a significant role in the City with helping with maintaining, you know, the businesses and the economic stability in our City because of the work that they do around, you know, enforcement and, you know, the biggest program that they talked about was the food inspections and all. So you're looking at a team that is providing health and safety for not just our food and environmental spaces, but also providing information and education to the community as well. So I do want to thank our Environmental Health team and hope that our Aldermen understand the importance of the work that they do. And you know one of the things that this team also focuses on is data collection, and collecting information, and being able to get information back out scores to restaurants to facilities really quickly and so we have a software need for this Department and I hope that that will be considered as well as we move forward in the rest of the year of service and understand the importance of the work that they do.

Chairman Lopez

Can you clarify that a little bit? I thought we talked about the software. Are you talking about report monitoring software? Because we had brought that up in the Committee here, I think, a couple of times in past years and then I thought that there had been a budget item for that.

Bobbie Bagley, Division Director of the Environmental Health Department

A budget item that wasn't funded, yeah.

Chairman Lopez

Okay. Well it works better when we actually give you the money then.

Bobbie Bagley, Division Director of the Environmental Health Department

Yeah, it actually does and it actually helps them do their work better so that we're not using an antiquated system but having more efficiencies because they're three people strong in the field, right, and then they've got over 500 restaurants inspections that are done.

Mike McGuinness, Deputy Health Officer

Yeah, about 525.

Bobbie Bagley, Division Director of the Environmental Health Department

Yeah, so ..

Chairman Lopez

Do you know off the top of your head how much that item is?

Bobbie Bagley, Division Director of the Environmental Health Department

For install? I think the install was a little over 20. Heidi can correct me and then there's the maintenance of it about 17 a year.

Chairman Lopez

Okay. I know not necessarily how to do the per year part but we do have unexpected fund revenues which are being transferred around, so maybe we should be including that in the requests.

Bobbie Bagley, Division Director of the Environmental Health Department

Hmm, mmm.

Chairman Lopez

Okay.

Heidi Peek-Kukulka, Health Officer

May I?

Chairman Lopez

Heidi.

Heidi Peek-Kukulka, Health Officer

Yes, thank you. Bobbie you hit the numbers pretty much on the head. I don't mean to belabor the point but I believe that we are the last self-inspecting jurisdiction to be doing our inspections on paper. The rest of the State has been able to do it. The current software that was primarily for Building Department will not support a robust

inspection that we need and the software we were looking at would take care of many of those other programs as well, including the pools and spas, rabies, all of those things. So it's it was very disappointing to see that that was not approved and we are also tremendous revenue generators as well.

Chairman Lopez

Okay. Well I mean certainly at the very least make sure that we're discussing this overtly. I know I think I focused more when we were doing budget season on the employee shortages and we were able to return that part but in the grand scheme of larger things that are being done in the City, this is about as much as we're spending on Christmas lights. So we really need to start investing where it does the most good and so we can advocate for that. I think the Finance Committee is probably the best place to directly advocate but also does need to go to the Mayor's office obviously.

Alderman Thibodeau

I'm just curious about that it's all currently paper. How voluminous is that paperwork? Is it multi-page, right? So there's obviously going to be a cost savings for the labor portion too I'm assuming because you're going to be able to process that more efficiently as well. So I mean just wanting to make that kind of observation.

Alderman Gregg

Yeah, that's a good point.

Alderman Thibodeau

But I don't know if there's a concept of what that how much time, you know, so you can if you wanted to put a label on that return on investment kind of thing but, you know, if it saves anything, it's probably still going to be worth it.

Mike McGuinness, Deputy Health Officer

If I may? Depending on the report, it can generate several sheets of paper. Some of those tend to be carbon copy paper, which I understand is a little more expensive. But just to break down time-wise for a small convenience store inspection, you might only be taking 5 or 10 minutes to write a report but for a larger full service restaurant where they might need a lot of help or there's some things going on, you could be writing that report for about an hour if not longer. Just handwriting a report and then going over it with the operator which is a mandatory part of every inspection. There's the inspection portion, the write up, and then the review but it is a very time-consuming task when most people nowadays tend to operate quicker on a keypad rather than pen and paper. It does chew up some time.

Chairman Lopez

Plus, would you be able to use previous inspection as a template and say – okay, well I don't need to start from scratch describing this. I can use last year's and then add on to it.

Mike McGuinness, Deputy Health Officer

In certain circumstances that can work out. Other times if they correct all the issues from last inspection, we kind of have to start at a fresh page. But yeah, there are certain facilities where you can almost carbon copy the last report and then that will segue into other problems but we don't need to get into that here and now.

Chairman Lopez

Okay.

Alderman Sennott

Chris is up again.

Alderman Thibodeau

And just do we also scan and store all those reports digitally too?

Mike McGuinness, Deputy Health Officer

We do.

Alderman Thibodeau

So yeah, another process, right,...

Mike McGuinness, Deputy Health Officer

We do.

Alderman Thibodeau

...which would be generated automatically with the software.

Mike McGuinness, Deputy Health Officer

Right. So every time we come back out of the field, we scan the reports into our system, save it on our hard drive, and then upload it into the current, I guess, software system we're working with. So there's a lot of steps, and it's kind of clunky, and it's not really as smooth as it probably could be. But yes, all that I probably spend - if I go out and do three inspections, I have to factor in probably 7 - 10 minutes per inspection of just logging that data somewhere and then uploading it. So I do three inspections, that's a half hour of work just applying it to the system and getting it to where it needs to go. I was gonna say some of that work can be cut out with a new system. Some of it because we have to always email the operator a copy of their report. So some of that work doesn't always get - some of that could be alleviated with a better system.

Alderman Thibodeau

But 20 grand is cheap money sounds like.

Chairman Lopez

That's the install money and I mean, I think, probably we could figure out how to from the legislative/aldermanic side, figure out how to allocate that. It's more like the yearly budget part that really we want to be more attentive to because that is the Mayor's role.

Alderman Thibodeau

Yeah, 17 grand is the ..

Mike McGuinness, Deputy Health Officer

I believe so.

Alderman Thibodeau

The maintenance? Still pretty ..

Chairman Lopez

Okay well less time spent writing reports might be more time spent inspecting and more time bringing in revenue from that.

Alderman Gregg

Sounds reasonable.

Alderman Thibodeau

I agree.

Chairman Lopez

There's every reason to do it. We just have to figure out how to do it. Okay. Any other questions?

Alderman Thibodeau

Thank you.

Chairman Lopez

All right, seeing none. If you guys want to hang out ..

Heidi Peek-Kukulka, Health Officer

Thank you.

Chairman Lopez

...we're going to go through some of our routine here but we were going to do an open-ended discussion which is like basically last so hang loose. There's nothing else on the agenda.

COMMUNICATIONS - None

UNFINISHED BUSINESS - None

NEW BUSINESS – RESOLUTIONS – None

NEW BUSINESS – ORDINANCES - None

TABLED IN COMMITTEE - None

GENERAL DISCUSSION

So I invited Director Bagley here and Tonia of course as well because at our meeting last Thursday we sort of - some of us were very - oh well, what we need to do is just stand up a shelter in the next couple of weeks and address the unhoused shelter population. I may be pessimistic but I've stood up shelters before with the Safe Station Program and bringing Maple Street online from a period of dormancy, I guess I would describe it as, and there's a lot of logistics to be talked about. So I wanted to have that discussion at least to say what would we be doing if we tried to have a cold weather emergency overflow shelter as a topic?

Director Bagley are there any things you want to start with or LaTonya?

Bobbie Bagley, Division Director of the Environmental Health Department

Well I'll start with just giving a little bit of an update as to where we are right now with getting the warming station. You know, we've got about 35 volunteers from the United Way that have signed on to that and we've interviewed probably over 20 individuals for the per diem support staff. So we've had the opportunity to complete at least orientation with probably a third of that staff and so we're still looking to try and be on target for December 1st opening which you know that's only what a week and a half now? A week and a half away and so it's starting to get cold. I think this is colder than it was last year around this time or even the year before. So we may need to look at as we move forward anticipating the need for this to be, you know, opened up a little bit earlier.

But it brings us right into that that segue of, you know, the need in this community for there to be another shelter here. So, you know, what we're working on right now is providing a warm space for people to be able to go inside overnight in addition to the shelters that we have in the City that are already at capacity. All right and so this extension of the warming station allows for us to take care of folks in the evening.

We also talked about opening up a resource center that will also allow for people to have a place to go during the day. But we're still going to fall short if we don't consider conversations about having another shelter available

where people actually have places where they can sleep and facilities where there's washer, dryer, and all those other things that people need. So it's a good discussion to start having as far as, you know, we listen to a lot of complaints and things and so I've come to this place of rather than just complaining, let us start planning, right. And so when we have these complaints, what's our plan moving forward? So we know that those are some things that we have to start considering very seriously for City of Nashua because it's not - things aren't going to change. Building a shelter is not going to bring more people here. We want to take care of the ones that are here right now and we're just not able to do that in as an effective way as we can. The warming station certainly is going to help, having a resource center is going to help but our ultimate plan that we need to look at is what kind of additional sheltering, bedding, facility, support are we going to have in the City?

Chairman Lopez

It's worth pointing out that the comments about complaints particularly as Alderman, they can be unfair but they could also be irresponsible because people - there were sentiments expressed periodically that oh, we haven't been doing anything. It's very easy for people to forget we didn't have a warming station until last year and the warming station that we had was only part of the time. I think we started it in January, right?

Bobbie Bagley, Division Director of the Environmental Health Department

We started in January.

Chairman Lopez

So this is still a very new prospect for the City to even be entering into. I think a courageous one because the City hasn't directly tried to operate these things. They've maybe partnered with people. Like with Safe Station, they were able to partner with Harbor Homes that would rent it. But from the City's perspective, we need to build the institutional experience. We need to pull together logistics and a lot of that has been done with not the traditional tools. We don't put into the budget this is what the warming station costs and this is what this costs. Last year when we were launching as a Pilot program, I think, primarily the opioid abatement funds were being used. So that was a huge step for last year and we haven't been doing nothing. That was a major step. And previous to that, we started adding the outreach workers, the outreach activities which did happen before but not in the targeted, specific way. So each year, we've been building and adding, you know, resources to this. So it's not like it's fair to say Public Health hasn't been doing enough or hasn't been doing what it should.

Bobbie Bagley, Division Director of the Environmental Health Department

Yeah and if I could just add to that. So three years ago when we had that really bad winter storm, December 1st - I remember it. It was like negative whatever degrees out there and what our outreach team - our Community Health workers and outreach workers did was we went out to find people to make sure that they had survived during that evening. We knew the temperatures were going to drop. We actually went out to tell people to go into the shelters that we have and there still weren't enough spaces, right, and so that's where the concept of having the warming station came into play so that at least we could get people out of the cold overnight into some place that would be safe and that would be warmer and then that, you know, led to even more planning as we started to see more individuals unhoused down by the railroad, downtown, you know, area and that led to us bringing on the Housing Services Officer position because we really needed to have a more planned approach with some strategies.

LaTonya has done a really good job and doing some of the research that's needed across the country. Every State is dealing with unhoused individuals and that population increasing for the myriad of reasons that we've already talked about. Every single State, large cities, small towns. I was on a call today and there was a person that's up in one of our smaller towns and he was talking about the unhoused population that they have in here. So it's affecting everyone and so by having a Housing Services Officer, you know, on board that's a part of the council - and she's going to talk a little bit more about that and stuff that she's doing, gave her the opportunity to look at some of the strategies that have come out nationally. There's 19 strategies that are in place for addressing homelessness and creating strategies within cities that they can operationalize to deal with this issue. So LaTonya can speak more to that. Alderman Lopez and even talk more about, you know, the need for the additional shelter as we move forward with the resource center. Even thinking further along as to what's going to be our future plans for addressing this issue.

Chairman Lopez

Okay. LaTonya do you want to start with the resource center and talk about the things that you anticipate us being able to support with, or even what the community might be able to do?

LaTonya Muccioli, Housing Services Officer

Sure. I think the main one is funding to support the staffing that's necessary to operate the resource center and there will be more. I'm sure we'll have a formal presentation with those exact numbers. I think there's a Budget Committee meeting next week.

But also we're still in the process of looking for a space. Our community partners showed up frequently throughout all the discussions about the recent ordinances for no camping. So just having their support as well. So I'm sure they're watching. I'm sure they're listening. They're close partners of ours. So just having their support as well because we do have outreach staff. Our Community Health workers are great at street outreach but we also really need the mental health professionals and the substance use professionals as well. As well as any service providers that are well versed in getting folks connected to Medicaid, Medicare because, again, we know that health has an impact on housing as well. So it's really a community effort and a city effort. I think that sometimes, you know, as Public Health leads the warming station and the resource center, a lot of that responsibility falls on us but all City departments are impacted by housing stability or instability in our community. So we really need to have a team effort to addressing this.

We will be coming out with, you know, like a wish list of what we need. So that'll be sent out to partners for the warming station and then similarly once we have a resource center up and running, we'll be looking for some of those donations as well.

Chairman Lopez

Some of the businesses that were concerned about activity downtown have also said informally that they would be willing to donate products. So things like old coffee or the day made the day of was that stuff that would be welcome or ?

LaTonya Muccioli, Housing Services Officer

We certainly have to vet some of those things with our Health Officer and Deputy Health Officer.

Chairman Lopez

When I said a little coffee every...

LaTonya Muccioli, Housing Services Officer

Yeah, there's certain things we can accept and we can't but that ..

Chairman Lopez

No old rice. I learned that much.

Bobbie Bagley, Division Director of the Environmental Health Department

Yeah, no old rice for sure.

LaTonya Muccioli, Housing Services Officer

Yeah. So again but we work as a team. We work very closely. Like even with the warming station right now, we've vetted out certain donations that we can't accept and our Health Officer has been very supportive last year with some of our extended hours and, you know, just bringing food to support some of the folks there as well. So we'll continue to do that. So there will be more to come once we have some more of the fine details in place regarding the resource center but certainly again, just supporting the work that we do, supporting the place, and just supporting the financials for the staffing.

Chairman Lopez

A lot of the organizational partners that we have in the community are worried about their funding, worried about the capacity of people they can serve, maybe a little bit conservative in their efforts, and it has, I think, been long past due to see people saying, okay well we really need to get in there and start doing it.

Do you contemplate the resource center not just being a place for pamphlets but maybe for people to be present like Rise Above or Revive to have a presence to assess, or do intakes, or like you mentioned mental health programs - Harbor Homes, Greater Nashua?

LaTonya Muccioli, Housing Services Officer

That's the goal, especially where we know there's going to be more enforcement with our encampments. So again as service providers, we meet people where they're at and if they can't be anywhere, they have to be at a resource center so that's where folks can meet them and provide those critical services. So we're welcoming any partners that are willing to come on site and provide those critical resources as well as paper materials and pamphlets. But we find that the most effective approach is human to human and just talking to folks, getting to know folks, even just showing up. So some folks might not be willing to engage right away but if they recognize hey, you know, Alderman Lopez is here every Monday, and he always asks me how I'm doing, and maybe when somebody is finally ready for recovery or just take those next steps, they'll feel comfortable approaching that person that they've seen for the past few weeks.

Chairman Lopez

Okay. So the resource center will also have volunteer opportunities similar to the overnight warming station?

LaTonya Muccioli, Housing Services Officer

Yes.

Chairman Lopez

Okay. Are you concerned that there might be like competition for it? Like now people who are very much moved to do something might say, Oh I'll do the day one or do you think maybe people who do it during the day might be kind of warmed up to the idea that okay, well I could work an evening or I could get up earlier.

LaTonya Muccioli, Housing Services Officer

Yeah, certainly. We find that with the overnight warming station, a lot of the folks have other obligations during the day therefore they're not able to volunteer their time during normal business hours. So we're hoping that maybe we can reach a population that does have some availability during the day.

Chairman Lopez

Have you heard from any organized volunteer groups like the Lions Club, or the Rotaries, or things like that, that might be willing to take on a day, or a shift, and then cycle their own numbers through it?

LaTonya Muccioli, Housing Services Officer

So they've been very supportive of the work we're doing more at the COC level. So I think there would just need to be some coordination. There's certainly partners that have been very involved in this work and trying to figure out how they can support so that would just require some coordination on my end to formally reach out and try to get that going.

Chairman Lopez

Okay. I guess any other Committee members want to give a shot?

Alderman Thibodeau

What exactly is a resource center?

LaTonya Muccioli, Housing Services Officer

Sure. So well we've presented a couple of concepts of it but ideally we would have a place where it's low barrier and it's meant to be like a drop-in center. So folks can come in, similarly to the warming station but it's during the day, and they can come in, they can warm up, they can coordinate services so they could work with a Community Health worker. So we would be doing an assessment for folks. We do an intake right now at our encampments. So this would just give us a building to do it in and we assess what their needs are. So we're seeing do you need help with transportation? Do you need help with employment? Do you need help with housing? Do you need help with food security? And once we identify their needs through that brief assessment, we try to coordinate them with the service providers that can fulfill those needs.

So we're really trying to serve as the community safety net. So any folks that aren't connected to some of these services, the resource center is a place that they can come to get connected to those services. Again, primarily our population is for our unhoused population. So you would call it a homeless resource center because we're really looking to get folks connected to emergency shelter, transitional housing, permanent apartments, or you know, any other place that they may want to be. We do have some folks as we continue to see more folks falling into homelessness, we're seeing more and more older adults with physical disabilities. So some of those folks are in need of assisted living and they might not have Medicaid. So we have to help them start that process, go through the process of getting connected through the Choices for Independence Program that helps fund assisted living for folks that are low income, and then we really try to provide that warm hand off. So we like to do a lot of wrap around meetings with multiple service providers to make sure that once we get folks connected to services, all of their needs can be met through a variety of providers. So that's the goal of the resource center is really to support anybody that's looking to get connected to any support.

Bobbie Bagley, Division Director of the Environmental Health Department

And if I could just add. Some models because we're hopefully once we open this resource center, this is something that will be year-round, right, because we already know that we have the issue with once the warming station closes - that's at night - you know, people were then well, what am I going to do during the day? So we have the resource center.

It also allows a place where people can just have some respite. For the most part, individuals that are unhoused. If they're - if they don't have a tent, or if they're not staying in their car, or if they have either one that they're staying in, this offers them another place to be able to go respite and they can, you know, use resources there. So sometimes people don't have a place to charge their phones. So they may be able to do that. They may be able to come in to make phone calls and get connected. We have some iPads that were donated to us from Rivier University during covid that we'll also be able to have so people can utilize those as well. So it allows for people to get connected to people, to places, and to things as well and some of the models. Actually, that's what they have. They offer in those different spaces. Just a place for people to come and respite and then be able to do some of those other things that they won't be able to do outside.

Chairman Lopez

So in my opinion .. oh, LaTonya. Sorry.

LaTonya Muccioli, Housing Services Officer

Yeah, I just wanted to say too a lot of communities have moved towards this model to also alleviate some of the burden on their public libraries. So we know, again, when folks need to charge their phone, when they need to apply for jobs, they're going to the library, or when they just need to stay warm, and, you know, library staff aren't necessarily equipped to deal with mental health, substance use, and some of the other comorbidities that come along with homelessness. So that would be the goal too is to alleviate some of what's going on at the library right now to kind of attract folks to a place where we do have the support staff that can kind of help meet their needs. And of course, we've had a lot of conversations around public restrooms. So this would be a place where folks could have access to a public restroom where staff are checking on them and just trying to make sure that they're safe.

Chairman Lopez

That dovetails into what I was going to say is the City has a vested interest in attracting people who are in the City and are in need of these services to a resource center so that we can help them navigate to solutions rather than sort of either a) be stuck in limbo, or b) put together solutions that don't work. Like maybe I'll get out of my unsheltered situation by panhandling but that, you know, frustrates or annoys all the businesses that are around.

So in my opinion, this is a necessary response to the situation we have and we have some amenities that are public but sort of being overshadowed by the needs that other people have too that are that are public but if we had a better tool, they could use it.

Have you contemplated things like having laundry access, or even showers, exam rooms, things like that?

LaTonya Muccioli, Housing Services Officer

We have. So I think it was last year we had presented a model that included showers, that included laundry facilities, that included shelter space, and transitional housing. I think given the current crisis, you know, it's unfortunate when we defer addressing some of the needs that folks have because now we're kind of in a rapid fire trying to quickly stand something up and all of those other amenities take significant time, especially depending on the building that we'll be using. So I think as of right now, you know, we're contemplating how we can just quickly get this open and hopefully we can address some of those other needs as time goes on.

Chairman Lopez

Okay. Is that a possible scenario where having the fund space for it, it might attract partners like Home Depot could bring in washers if we need them or things like that?

LaTonya Muccioli, Housing Services Officer

Yeah, absolutely. You know once we know where we're going to be, and when we're opening, and just kind of get an idea of - are people coming? What would attract people to come? We know folks need to do their laundry. That's something that we hear about constantly and I think that's also kind of what contributes to a lot of the costly encampment cleanups that we have right now. You know, folks don't have the funds to do their laundry and if you get wet, especially with snow and other things, your clothes are completely soiled. So folks just leave those things behind. So I think it would help the City overall if it was something that we could include.

Chairman Lopez

There's the obvious - sorry, Chris. There's also the obvious public health aspect of people who can't clean themselves and can't clean their clothes can transmit things or attract things, so people will be able to perform better. This isn't like a luxury amenity. This is a basic human need.

Alderman Thibodeau

Thank you. So it was brought up at our last meeting that some different locations have been looked at for renting and leasing and one of the other Aldermen brought up Elm Street School. So I'm just curious, why not, right? So why not transition the resource center? It does have a ticking clock on it, so it can't be the forever place I get that but if some of our neighbors are already there for the nighttime portion, right, and then they need the daytime place to go, they'd already be there. Could that work? What's involved in making that work and then what other things would be needed to meet those other goals, right? Because I know working there a few times that, right, Wi Fi, right. So if you were going to do that and you want to be able to have people access computers and job applications and forms and all that, obviously going to want to get some Wi Fi in there. But then you're not paying rent at another facility so that gives you more capital to work some other things, you know.

And I don't know when Alderman Dowd brought that up if that's been looked at and if so, what was the outcome of that and could we even do that? And then some of the other things - it's kind of a long question but - and then one of the other things you brought up was using it as the shelter space. Okay, again, has a ticking clock to it so it can't be the forever place but could it be the interim place until we can no longer use that so we can work on something more permanent?

Chairman Lopez

So as Chair, I just want to kind of moderate that a little bit. We're asking the Public Health Department if the Public Health Department had objections or a reason not to but if other departments might have their own reasons, they're the ones who need to explain their reasoning. You don't have to answer it for them.

Alderman Thibodeau

Right.

LaTonya Muccioli, Housing Services Officer

Correct. Well and that was kind of going to be my answer. So, again, this is a city-wide effort. So Public Health our role is really just coordinating the operation. So we coordinate the staff, we coordinate the resources. So in terms of finding a building and space, we have to lean on our other city partners to fully answer the question that you're asking. We're prepared. We have job descriptions ready, you know, we have a plan in place once we have a location. So that's really all we're waiting on and we're ready to go to start that process.

Chairman Lopez

So without putting too fine a point on it, there is one person who's in charge of all these departments you could ask.

Alderman Sennott

Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I'm glad you sort of led off with the job descriptions and being ready to go because that dovetails into the question I had, which I guess is sort of the \$300,000 question. Without having to refer to a crystal ball, set up the scenario where funding is in place, the City has said go. A building has been identified. What's the timeline on standing something like this up look like from that – from go to being online?

Bobbie Bagley, Division Director of the Environmental Health Department

So well when we think about what we've done - so the Resource Center was modeled very much after what we're doing at the warming station, right, and so we started our process with getting folks on board for that in September and we're in December, and we're still getting those folks on board. So you're looking at what almost 3 months just for that piece with getting the staffing on board. We have put job descriptions and all those are in place and we did it last year so we didn't have too many nuances that we had to change but that process still takes a little bit of time. Even if a space is identified, we still have that to work through.

The \$300,000 question is that covers operations. That does not cover the cost of leasing a space. That's just for operations by itself and that's a number that includes having additional full-time staff that works with the staff that we currently have right now because it'll be during the day and as LaTonya said our staff instead of having to go out to the encampments will actually be assigned to spend time at the resource center working with individuals and because this is Monday through Monday, there's a Saturday and Sundays that need to be covered and that's why we need the additional staffing.

Alderman Sennott

And thank you for that because I think you might actually have a crystal ball over there because you anticipated my next question as a member of the Budget Review Committee which was is \$300,000, which is what is being legislatively proposed right now, going to be enough? And what I'm hearing is yes but not really I think to reach the ideal state of what this resource center would look like online. So I'm more putting this out there just for the public listening at home or maybe, you know, anybody who sits in this chamber who's listening at home is, you know, it kind of almost feels like we're dangling this carrot out in this. Well no look, we have this lingering in the future. We're going to set up a resource center. This to me feels like it's still a long ways away and has a much higher ticket than I think we're anticipating at this point, which I'm fine with. I am prepared to spend the money to get this set up because to me, I had this discussion with somebody else last night. This is the City's priority right now and I think it needs to be. We've identified that - I mean it's conquered so many of our meetings right now, you know, in and out of committee that this needs to happen and so I just hope for any of my colleagues listening at home or the general public, know that this is coming. I've said since the beginning of my term, there is no magic wand.

Bobbie Bagley, Division Director of the Environmental Health Department

We're not that far off but the \$300,000 is not that far off. There are certain things that are uncertain, right? So, you know, the cost of utilities. We don't know that so that 300 is like right there, maybe it's 325 maybe it's 350 but it is very, very close.

Alderman Sennott

Right. But that that's for - and correct me if I'm wrong. Three hundred is a stand-up cost to get going but I have to imagine that going forward, especially as we get into the next term and the next year's budget, this is something that's going to need to be baked in for it to survive, correct? Thank you.

LaTonya Muccioli, Housing Services Officer

Yeah and I think that, again, it's only going to be as successful as the investment that we put into it. So again if we really want to attract people to come, then we need to have the resources that they need. And to Alderman Lopez's point earlier, showers, laundry, you know, things that people need that they're not getting elsewhere. Again, it's, you know, someone might come in so that they could take a shower every week and through those interactions with the staff, and getting used to coming to the resource center, and getting comfortable with the people that are there, they may opt into receiving other services. It's very expensive to support somebody who's experiencing homelessness in our community. So it's in everybody's best interest for folks to get moved on to some sort of housing. And again through those small baby steps, we can do that. We've seen it. We're doing it now. We do it in the encampments. So this is just changing the location of where we'll be doing that.

Chairman Lopez

There is also the public pressure and I call it a "profound misunderstanding of the situation", that if we start offering services to people, we're encouraging them to be or do what they're doing and to that, I would say that people who are very outspoken about how they felt personally impacted by what has been going on in other people's lives don't know what the full scope of it was. There was a lot of concern and complaints brought by the downtown community about a very small portion of the community that in my opinion and in my observation was characterized not by people who are homeless but by people who had extra needs that lived adjacent to downtown and still do.

If we don't address the situation, we don't make sure that there is a path for people who are struggling in crisis out of that crisis, then we are not going to see a reduction at all of anything. We're going to see escalation and more and more dangerous situations happening. So I think the resource center it's important as a message and for all of us at the Board, you know, we were invited to put our big boy pants on. That might look like actually having to stand up for something that other people don't understand and explaining to them that we're listening to our Public Health professionals, and they know what they're doing, and there is really only one way to help end homelessness, and it's by helping the people who are homeless end their homelessness.

I do think we've as someone who's had practical experience standing this up, you can scale upwards from a certain point. Like you can't do it with like 50,000. I mean maybe be it would be like one person there for some hours of the week. There is a starting point that you're gonna have to hit but you don't necessarily have to put all the bells and whistles on in the full rollout in order to do something that makes a huge difference.

LaTonya Muccioli, Housing Services Officer

Yeah, agreed.

Chairman Lopez

Particularly when it's cold and particularly when it's freezing out and people get increasingly desperate to go inside and find a place to stay.

LaTonya Muccioli, Housing Services Officer

And your point, I think - I'm very happy that we're having this conversation and that we're taking the steps to address this because it's only going to get worse. So just historically speaking, New Hampshire's Point in Time count numbers - so every year we have to count the number of individuals experiencing homelessness in our community. So the Greater Nashua Continuum of Care - Public Health kind of leads the Point in Time Count process just because we have all of the data on where our encampments are. So those numbers are creeping up every year. And, you know, we also know that there's significant cuts at the federal level to our permanent supportive housing and our Continuum of Care funding. So again, folks aren't going to disappear. Those folks are going to fall into homelessness unless they have some sort of contingency plan, which might be family or other places that they can go. We know that that's hard to come by.

So I think, you know, we need to start addressing the problem now because right now we're in a position of, you

know, deferring doing something. You know, we've been presenting what we need to do. We've deferred that and now we're at this crisis. Now the businesses are suffering and we're seeing larger numbers at our encampments because we didn't really do anything. So I think we have to continue moving forward and really try to focus on the understanding that this problem is getting worse day by day and it's going to cost money for us to address it. I'm happy that we can open up a resource center and I welcome the idea of scaling it up over time. I think that we're going to need to address the need unfortunately. Our city continues to grow in size but our shelter space doesn't. So we just need to be really realistic at creating a plan on how we want to address this and how we want to prioritize this.

Chairman Lopez

So in terms of shelter capacity when Maple Street was still operational I think like five years ago - I forget even how long it's been since it closed - that was an extra, probably 70 beds that were available. There were single male, single female, and then some higher level like need programs that were at work, and then that closed, and then at the same time, Nashua Soup Kitchens both of their individual shelters were extremely distressed buildings that needed to be not only replaced entirely but then reconceptualized. So they invested in the Spring Street project. The City helped to expand that capacity. And again, it's a narrative that the City hasn't been doing anything. It has been. It just hasn't been keeping up with it, but the City was very instrumental in making sure that the Soup Kitchen was able to not collapse under the weight of the problem. But that whole effort yielded us almost the same if not slightly less emergency shelter beds.

So when we say Nashua has been growing as a city and the capacity hasn't, the capacity has been the same and somewhat inadequate for at least 6 or 7 years and probably more than that because we also at the same time as we took Safe Station offline due to, I guess, I'm going to summarize it as State level meddling, we also lost the Peggy Gilmore Medical Respite Center. A number of efforts started to get off the ground at providing more intensive mental health intervention that didn't really get as far as they could have because covid happened, and programs got overloaded, or underfunded, or health professionals, you know, were not available to support it.

So it's not just Nashua. It is regionally our public policies have been falling short of where they should be. The only exception I could say - I could point to it all is the recovery community has been firing on all cylinders privately. I don't know that they've gotten the level at the State that they are that would really be pragmatic but a lot of privately-run sober houses and sober community programs have been developing in the Nashua area, and they're facing pushback too. So we are going to have to look at different levels of this as politicians and make sure that we're not creating policies or contributing to short term solutions to one thing that end up dooming our efforts on the other side.

But I think having a resource center period and the overnight warming station is a point where we can actually make a difference, a positive difference, and it does provide a demonstration model that this is where some of those other partners and other programs can partner with the City. Because to the data gathering point, it was my experience that the Point in Time Counts were nowhere near as effective or accurate until Public Health got involved and at that point, we started to get really useful data instead of we think we're doing good. We're just on the cusp of ending homelessness and yet somehow the Soup Kitchen's line is getting longer, and the Rescue Mission is adding overflow beds, and like all this contraindicating information. It's because the City and Public Health has been growing that we're even able to understand what we're up against.

Bobbie Bagley, Division Director of the Environmental Health Department

And I would just, you know, add to as we're looking at the picture, we have to look at the bigger picture, right? And so we have to look at the root cause of what is a contributing factor to the growing number of individuals that are unhoused. What are the circumstances and situations that people are finding themselves in? So if you're on a fixed, low income, you're on SSI, or you have an apartment and you're in that apartment with a partner, that partner dies, you're on a fixed income. Half of that income is now gone. That individual is going to struggle with housing stability, right? And so, you know, we want to think big picture of like what are some of the contributing factors as well as we're planning how we're going to address meeting the needs of those individuals that we've identified right now that are unhoused.

We've got quite a few folks that are staying in cars that we are not even aware of and then we've got folks who are, you know, in a place where their housing is being threatened for low income, or lack of income, or increase in rent costs. So it's what I call a "wicked problem" because there's so many different tentacles and factors that go along with this and so while we're looking at addressing this one component of it, we also want to think about what are the other things that we have to as a City, as a community, with our partners also focus on at the same

time.

Chairman Lopez

And it mean seem like a little bit of an out there comparison but we used to have a much more robust version of labor ready located right downtown and we don't now. It turned into people ready and then it went over to the little section of Nashua that everybody forgets over the bridge is actually Nashua and that meant that a readily accessible day labor opportunity for people who couldn't maintain regular employment, or struggled with, you know, needs and just could maybe make sprints isn't really available. So when we say we this resource center is a resource for people who are unsheltered, it's also a pot. It's also an opportunity for resources to go to and be accessed. So I mean maybe Able - I don't think Able actually is still existing right now. Maybe My Turn or temp agencies also take a shift. The age-old cry of well, why don't people get jobs? Well if we can make it feasible for them and they don't have to walk all the way into Hudson to do it, then we may see better return on investment. We may see people who are able to start increasing their income, and then stabilize their housing, and all those kind of things.

We touched on the shelter part. I had kind of imagined we need to be talking more about making sure we had physical space designated, and beds, and all those kind of things. In your opinion is it possible and pragmatic to try to do something like that at Elm Street? Like where the cafeteria is located would we be able to put something in proximity that would be reasonable to staff without trying to open up a whole building?

Bobbie Bagley, Division Director of the Environmental Health Department

So when we first looked at Elm Street and we took the tour through the building, we landed on the cafeteria because it was a nice space, large enough but also where we could contain ourselves. So we didn't have folks wandering throughout this big building. Where we are right now - and we've talked about this before which people weren't happy about - but the warming station is a warming station. It's not a shelter. It doesn't have showers. There's limited bathroom space in that area and so we haven't, you know, entertained the thought of let's make this a shelter space because it's inadequate. When we did our tour of Elm Street and we looked at other areas in the school, it was kind of difficult to kind of like lock some of these places off where you could keep it contained. It's a fun place to be in if you could just run a run amok.

Chairman Lopez

Well when it was open, that was half the reason we had a problem with it.

Bobbie Bagley, Division Director of the Environmental Health Department

Right, and so...

Chairman Lopez

You have a bathroom with no windows or anything, you know, everything was going on in there.

Bobbie Bagley, Division Director of the Environmental Health Department

Yeah. And so we want to make sure that, you know, while we're operating things, we have the capacity to do that well and safely. And so - and I know that our friend Bob is like, we got to make that a shelter space. It's like but that won't work in the confines of how that space is actually set up. You need more bathroom space. You need space for people to just be able to run water to brush their teeth. I mean it's just, it's not set up that way. But to be able to drop in, warm up, rest, go to the bathroom without having to think that you're going to be in there - for the ones who volunteer there, right? You get somebody in there for 15 minutes you can't - that can't happen. I know, right? That just can't. Well, I'm just doing whatever. Well you know what, you can go in there and you can do number one. You might have a little bit more time to do number two but you cannot go in there and try to shower and get yourself ..

Chairman Lopez

Day Four without a shower, you're trying to use the wadded-up toilet paper to sponge bath. Like you have to so.

Bobbie Bagley, Division Director of the Environmental Health Department

Yeah, so that's the only, you know, constraint with trying to turn that into a shelter. It just won't. That space is not designed for that.

Chairman Lopez

It was the space brought up, was the building. So like it was suggested, oh, just open up one of the gyms but I'm not super familiar with Elm Street's layout because every time I go into one part of it and I've never been to the whole thing, but I don't think the gyms are next to the cafeteria.

LaTonya Muccioli, Housing Services Officer

So there was an issue with partitioning. So, again, we have to look at the priorities of everyone and other departments. So I know that the Keefe Auditorium is still being utilized and there's a lot of sensitivity around that, and those folks that are utilizing the Keefe Auditorium need access to restrooms, and we didn't really want to have multiple populations in different restrooms.

Chairman Lopez

Within City Hall.

LaTonya Muccioli, Housing Services Officer

And last year there was also issues with there was Biddy Basketball in the bathroom - in the gym. So we didn't want to have children in the same restrooms as the guests of the warming station. So that's really how we landed on the cafeteria space. If we're looking at the rest of the school, we would need other departments here to kind of speak on that.

Chairman Lopez

Okay. Again, we know who's in charge of those other departments and if he wants to call an interdepartmental meeting and let us weigh in, that'd be fine but I suspect that would be more of an internal discussion.

LaTonya Muccioli, Housing Services Officer

And there's heat complexities too. So I know I think there was an issue with the heating in the larger gym on the - I think it's a not Lake Street side Chestnut Street gym and then there's a smaller gym, but I think that one isn't partitioned off from where the auditorium is so there'd be some cross uses of those restrooms.

Chairman Lopez

So there isn't a silver bullet that we've all been sitting on and just deciding we didn't want to use.

LaTonya Muccioli, Housing Services Officer

No. It's very hard to partition the area off because the school's huge. So it's really difficult to allow people to have access to the restrooms but not have access to the whole school, the staircase that leads up to the other floors, and we need an area that has heat that's working.

Chairman Lopez

So Daniel Webster was also brought up and I guess somebody who contemplates that has the ability to contact the guy who's renting it or to own it, rent it, pay for that, figure out how to do it without arousing the larger State of New Hampshire in conspiracy, and somehow give us access to it this year. But if we actually had somebody who could snap their fingers, I helped look at a model for that and one of the biggest concerns we had was it's nowhere near anything. So you'd have to literally create a shuttle bus down there and that's immediately going to shake off half the investment. People don't want to be relocated to another area and then be reliant on that bus to get back and whatever and then those neighbors aren't necessarily gonna be like, oh sure bring everybody here, you know. So has that been contemplated by your department?

LaTonya Muccioli, Housing Services Officer

So I know that that space is also being utilized. So I just went on the BIDA tour. It's being utilized by the Hockey

Academy. I don't know how much space they have over there, but I think there's like 200 students or something.

Chairman Lopez

There's like two different dorm rooms or dorm buildings. I think one of them was being used.

LaTonya Muccioli, Housing Services Officer

Okay.

Chairman Lopez

But that doesn't necessarily mean that if you use the other one, they won't need like a place to eat or, you know, it won't impact them, so.

LaTonya Muccioli, Housing Services Officer

Yeah.

Chairman Lopez

So the other tenants might have some say over that.

LaTonya Muccioli, Housing Services Officer

Yeah. I think with that there's certainly going to need to be staffing in that area there. There needs to be a community conversation with the neighborhood. So similarly to what we did for the warming station, you know, we put a mailer out to the abutters to the Elm Street property and had a listening session. So folks would come in ask questions. So I think that would be a step that's necessary in taking - not on our end. You know, again, we can really operate wherever we need to but there would just have to be a look at, you know, the cost and everything else for leasing that space out compared to other spaces.

But I certainly think it's a creative solution and I think that we need to have more out of the box thinking like that. I know that folks don't love the idea of dormitory style living or single room occupancy units, but we have a lot of very, very low-income folks who can't go anywhere else. So we need to get creative at looking at solutions like this. And again as we continue to see older adults falling into homelessness, we need to look at interim models that don't require them to be in the most restrictive settings such as long-term care facilities. There's folks who can function on their own with supports in place if they just had a place to be. So I think we need to look at some of these interim strategies. We brought some up before. Like I said, we brought up the resource center. We've brought up some of the transitional housing. We've brought up the potential safe parking lot programs. So we just have to get a little more comfortable with being uncomfortable with some of these solutions. I think it's going to take a lot of out of the box thinking and a lot a mixture of all of these things - additional shelter, a resource center, more housing and also some of these more affordable housing units whether it be tiny homes, or pallet shelters, or, you know, really any of these things and just getting prepared to have those conversations.

Chairman Lopez

Just a plug it, I did sponsor legislation for accessory dwelling units to get those going. Everybody kept asking about tiny homes and that's partly what that's partly what that's supposed to be. So it's going through our committees and should be approved very shortly. I can't predict it, but it seems like it's well written.

And then the last thing to bring up was kind of a blast in the past. About 15 years ago, the local churches partnered to have a rotating shelter. That was specifically for families and it ended up becoming Anne Marie House and then ultimately Family Promise took over that role. But has it been contemplated trying to see if we could get partners that might have general use space to do a limited run like you do it this week, and then next week it's over here, and so that none of no one partner is like oh, you can't take our hall over forever but maybe with some organization, we could at least do something?

LaTonya Muccioli, Housing Services Officer

I think we've thought about it. You know, we know that there's been some conversations just regarding some of

the unfavorable behavior that has occurred at some of the faith-based communities that have offered some of their space and they've had to scale some things back. You know, main example being the port-a-potty over at Saint Pat's, and just the kind of behavior that that was attracting, and the unfortunate move to have to trespass people from the property that were continuing to sleep there.

So I think it would just need to be a conversation with our faith-based partners as well as additional training. So we want to make sure that people are set up for success in working with a population that has some complex needs. So we want to make sure that if our faith-based partners are willing to do something like that, we're setting them up to be successful in helping them, you know, learn how to use Narcan, get comfortable using the Rapid Response Crisis line, and some of those things because it's very challenging to try to support people when you don't know how to. So we just want to make sure that that training is there but certainly open to a conversation. Again, any kind of creative solutions that folks may have and leveraging space that we already have available.

Chairman Lopez

If the City suddenly came into possession with a bunch of heavily used RVs and campers that it doesn't know what to do with is there any way to repurpose those?

LaTonya Muccioli, Housing Services Officer

It's a great question. I would hope so but it's not something that we have explored at this time.

Chairman Lopez

Okay. I know you guys will have to do inspections and make sure they're even sanitary.

LaTonya Muccioli, Housing Services Officer

Yeah, unfortunately some of the ones that we've received not really great shape. So I think it would have to be a case by case basis.

Chairman Lopez

Okay. Like I said ..

LaTonya Muccioli, Housing Services Officer

That's another thing ..

Chairman Lopez

I think that helps a person, right.

LaTonya Muccioli, Housing Services Officer

I don't know if we can plug that but, you know, we do see a lot of folks donating some of these RVs and campers to folks to help them but also to get rid of them. But the condition that they're in, like a lot of these don't move so that adds another complexity. So when we're closing encampments down, these things have to be towed out because you can't drive them, or they're just in really bad conditions, and they've been infested with pets as we've been speaking about the rat issue. So we've seen a number of those.

Chairman Lopez

Pets or pests?

LaTonya Muccioli, Housing Services Officer

Yeah, pests are pests and they're getting in everywhere, so. Just want to make that plug that, you know, maybe just consider all of these things prior to gifting some of these RVs because it does create some complexities.

Chairman Lopez

I mean I would be concerned if I were trying to gift an RV to somebody who's doing it on a handshake that if that person doesn't actually register or formally confirm ownership of it, then you don't know what they're going to do with it. You don't know that's going to trace back to you. Any questions from this side of the Committee? I've have been monopolizing? All right. Any further comments or statements or things we should be thinking of?

Bobbie Bagley, Division Director of the Environmental Health Department

No thank you for the opportunity.

Chairman Lopez

Besides actually funding the efforts we talk about wanting.

Bobbie Bagley, Division Director of the Environmental Health Department

Yeah. We just thank you for the opportunity to hear some of the things that we've been considering, planning, contemplating researching. So, we appreciate this your time.

Chairman Lopez

Thank you for taking the time in addition to all the work you're doing to try to walk us through this.

LaTonya Muccioli, Housing Services Officer

Thank you.

Chairman Lopez

All right. Any other topics of general discussion anybody would like to bring?

So just a quick walk through. There's a General Discussion part where Committee members can say we'd like to talk about this, and then we talk about it in General Discussion, and then afterwards is the Public Comment. Lots of public here and then Remarks by the Aldermen. When we get to the Remarks by the Alderman, that's not supposed to be discussion. It almost always gets confused but I mean, I'm not a heavy-handed Chair either, so.

Alderman Thibodeau

That's cause I did it last time.

Chairman Lopez

No, I've done it too. Someone says something and then I want to explain.

Alderman Gregg

I'm still on my tour of learning, so.

Chairman Lopez

Okay. All right. Well thank you for joining us. Feel free to have a seat unless there's discussion you want to participate in but I think we're gonna move to next thing here.

Bobbie Bagley, Division Director of the Environmental Health Department

Thank you.

LaTonya Muccioli, Housing Services Officer

Thank you.

Alderman Gregg

Thank you so much.

Alderman Thibodeau

Thank you for the tip of putting out the trap without loading it first, just baited.

Alderman Gregg

I never would have thought of that.

Mike McGuinness, Deputy Health Officer

Yeah, they need to get used to it.

Chairman Lopez

Oh yeah, I'm gonna go home and move my garbage.

Alderman Gregg

I've seen the new one with the bucket. You put a bucket and the lid like tips, so then they just keep dropping in the bucket.

Mike McGuinness, Deputy Health Officer

That can be effective if you have the right bait.

Alderman Gregg

Yeah, we've got some mice.

Chairman Lopez

You gotta empty the bucket.

Alderman Gregg

Not in the house but outside.

Mike McGuinness, Deputy Health Officer

Yeah, they need to get used to it.

Alderman Thibodeau

Just don't use the glue traps.

Alderman Gregg

Oh, I hate those.

Mike McGuinness, Deputy Health Officer

Oh, yeah, those are pretty gnarly.

Alderman Gregg

Yeah. Oh, they're not illegal. Oh, oops my microphone is on.

Unidentified

Yeah, we're live.

Chairman Lopez

All right. Any member of the public wishing to make Public Comment? Anyone at all? Alright, Remarks by members of the Board. Anyone got any remarks? Seeing no hands. I guess we're good.

PUBLIC COMMENT- None

REMARKS BY THE ALDERMEN – None.

ADJOURNMENT

**MOTION BY ALDERMAN SENNOTT TO ADJOURN
MOTION CARRIED**

The meeting was declared adjourned at 8:26 p.m.

Alderman Tim Sennott
Committee Clerk



Rodents in Nashua

Mike McGuinness
Environmental Health Department
11/17/2025

Land Acknowledgement



- We are located on unceded and occupied land called **N'dakinna**, the traditional ancestral homeland of the **Abenaki, Pennacook, and Wabanaki Peoples** past and present.
- The word *Nashua* or *Niswa-ok* in the Abenaki language, means *place of two rivers*.
- Please pause as we acknowledge and honor these People who have been stewards of this land and water for hundreds of generations.

Mission Statement



- To protect the public's health by promoting best prevention practices through science, education, guidance and fostering public trust; and enforcement of laws and ordinances.

EH Staff

- Health Officer: Heidi Peek-Kukulka
- Deputy Health Officer: Mike McGuinness
- Office Manager & Quality Improvement & Compliance Specialist: Linda Alukonis
- EHS-II: April Torhan
- EHS-I: Tim Poitras
- EHS-I/II: Vacant



Services and Functions

- As the Chief Public Health Strategist for the City of Nashua, Environmental Health Department (EH).
 - protects and promotes the health of the public by defining, eliminating, controlling and managing environmental health hazards.
 - accomplished through the enforcement of laws and ordinances that protect the public from specific harmful environmental conditions.
 - Programs and services provided by EH include:
 - Food service inspections, trainings, complaints, site visits, sampling, plan reviews, change of ownership inspections, pre-licensing inspections, emergency responses, and food borne illness investigations
 - Housing inspections
 - Pool and spa inspections
 - Child care, foster home, and Dept. of Education inspections
 - Septic system plan approvals
 - Rabies investigations
 - Oversight of the Arboviral Surveillance Program.
 - Dog/cat bite reports
 - Technical Review
 - Asbestos & Demolition Permit Sign-offs
 - Licensing of Solid Waste Haulers
 - General Complaints
 - Disinterment
 - EH is committed to providing education to the general public, business owners, and license holders on a variety of environmental health subjects. The Health Officer, Deputy Health Officer, Office Manager and three (3) Environmental Health Specialists deliver these services in the City of Nashua, but also provide technical assistance to the state and surrounding health officers upon request. This staff is fully funded by the City of Nashua.

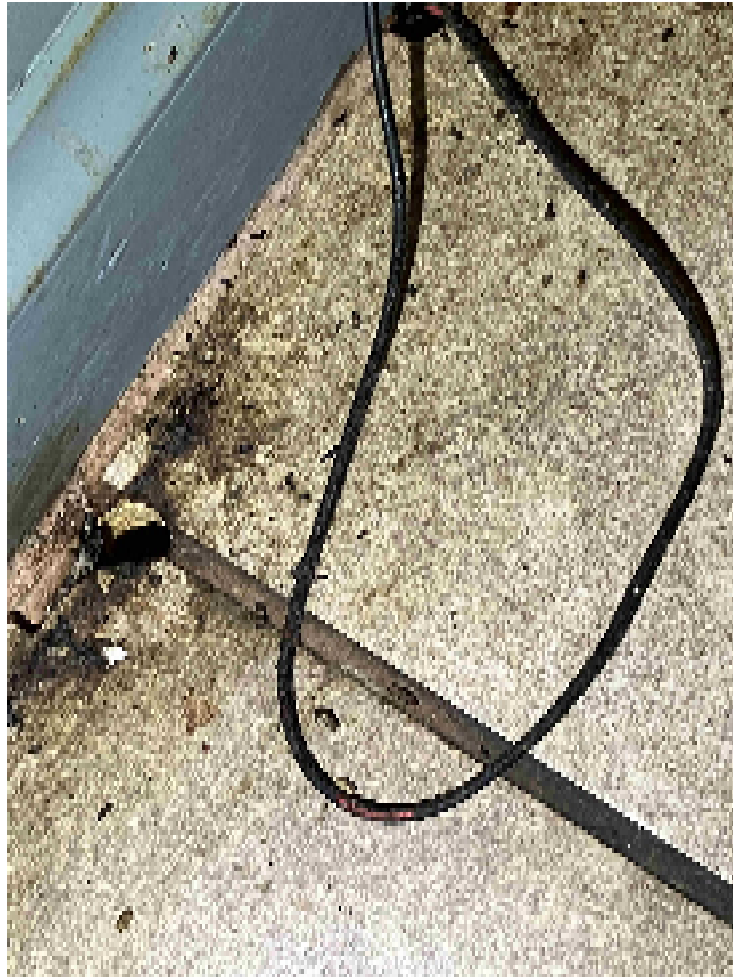
Rats & Mice



- Increasing numbers in Nashua
 - ▣ Increases in complaint calls in food service establishments, commercial establishments, residential settings
 - Variety of contributing factors causing rodents to be prevalent in areas where they have never been an issue before
 - Climate change
 - Covid-19
 - Garbage & waste
 - Increase in backyard livestock
 - Development & Construction



Foodservice Establishments



Commercial Facilities



Residential Settings

Prevention



- ❑ Deny food, water, and harborage
 - ❑ Food waste
 - ❑ Animal feed/waste
 - ❑ Leaky pipes
 - ❑ Clutter & debris
- ❑ Seal any holes/cracks/cervices
- ❑ Maintain a neat and orderly property
- ❑ Clean up rodent sign and monitor for new activity
- ❑ Work with a licensed pest professional to exterminate and exclude



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NashuaDPHCS



@NashuaPHealth



NashuaPublicHealth



Nashua Public Health



Questions?

Mike McGuinness

McGuinnessM@NashuaNH.gov

(603)589-4534

THANK YOU



CITY OF NASHUA
Division of Public Health
& Community Services

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