

# NASHUA POLICE DEPARTMENT



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To the Citizens of Nashua,

Recently, a resolution was presented to reconfigure and restructure the Nashua Police Commission. I oppose this resolution. This resolution is shortsighted and lacks the appropriate public discussion for such a significant change. The professionalism of the Nashua Police Department is a substantial reason why the City of Nashua is regarded as one of the safest cities in the country. Changing the leadership structure for an entity responsible for ensuring your safety should not be done hastily or haphazardly. *Please do not sign the petition for Resolution R-21-143 until you are fully informed of the implications for this change.*

The majority of the City's Alderwomen and Aldermen are in agreement with me in wanting to have a broader conversation relative to this issue. Recognizing the gravity of this decision, and the unintended consequences that come from rushed legislation, the Board of Aldermen Personnel Committee tabled the current legislation to form a study group on the matter. Yet the Mayor, a few Aldermen, and a citizen group, have ignored this process and are seeking a petition to get this matter on the ballot for November.

The proposed resolution will almost certainly have consequences for your public safety. This is why so many in the City are calling for a comprehensive review of this issue prior to it being offered as a ballot vote. The individuals currently going door-to-door seeking signatures for the petition are not informing the citizens of all sides of this issue, and in some circumstances, providing misinformation. There have been instances where the individuals soliciting signatures are very young, not informed on the issue, and unaware of the gravity of this decision.

Nashua Police has three Commissioners, who are nominated by the Governor and approved by the Executive Council. Each of the three current Police Commissioners were nominated by Governor Maggie Hassan (D). They have all been reappointed by Governor Chris Sununu (R). I was disturbed when I learned that the push for this change was driven by a dislike for the Governor, even though the sitting Governor did not originally appoint *any* of the current Commissioners.

Nashua Police Commissioners must have Nashua residency for a minimum of 5 years and undergo a comprehensive background check. The Commissioners are responsible for police personnel administration, to include appointing and promoting officers. They also have budget oversight. Fiscal responsibility is their primary objective with budgetary matters. The police officers are the Department's most valuable assets. As a result, 95% of the Department's budget is allocated to personnel costs. By any business measure, this is exceptional financial

management. Hiring and retaining talented officers does come at a cost, but these are costs the Board of Aldermen have overwhelmingly supported. Maintaining the highest standards and having the best officers translates into NPD being able to provide the most professional police service in the region.

The current commission structure is designed for better transparency. It is why the system was created 120 years ago and why it has continued to be successful. Regarding accessibility, to find out who the Commissioners are and how to contact them one needs only log onto the NPD website. Over the years there have been a number of investigations which involved individuals connected to City Hall. Our current system gave the public confidence in knowing that there could not be any influence from the political offices. Unfortunately, undue influence does occur with alarming regularity in other communities. Shockingly, the Resolution presented by the Mayor allows the Mayor or President of the Board of Aldermen to remove any commissioner *without cause*. This paves the way for Commissioners to be controlled by those who hold his or her appointment in the balance, lest they be removed.

The manner in which the Nashua Police Commissioners are selected provides a sense of leadership stability. This consistency has led to the Nashua Police Department receiving the highest reviews from CALEA, the national accrediting body for police agencies. Nashua Police is among 5% of all police agencies to receive, or attempt to receive accreditation. Within that small number of selective agencies, NPD has received the honor of being recognized as the best of the best.

NPD hires and promotes based on merit. This seems intuitive, but it is often not the case for many government departments. NPD's exceptional service comes from individuals who earned the privilege of being hired and promoted. Political influences in these decisions, which happens routinely in many systems similar to that proposed in the Resolution, will degrade the quality of personnel hired or promoted within the Department. This leads to offering a diluted service to the citizens.

I ask this question to the Nashua business community. If your business is highly profitable, responsibly managed, and recognized as an industry leader, would you change your organizational structure on a whim? You would not do that, because it does not make sense. The Mayor has referenced lack of diversity on the Commission as being a driving force for this change, yet he has never contacted the Governor to effect any change or request candidates. The Mayor has also said a change in the Commission structure would provide greater budget control. This is not accurate. The Department's budget is controlled by the Board of Aldermen. In fact, NPD is authorized to have 187 officers, yet in working within the budgetary boundaries established by the Board of Aldermen, the Department will not hire above 179 officers.

Nashua has won numerous awards for livability. Public safety is a key component for such a rating. Will a change to the Police Commission make Nashua a SAFER city? No, it will not. Will it result in hiring and retaining better officers? No, it will not.

I am opposed to this Resolution. The current system has served the City of Nashua exceptionally well for over 120 years. It is a contributing factor for Nashua being one of the best

cities to live and work. NPD's commitment to creating a safe and secure community is why many of you have decided to live here. I want to engage in a conversation with citizens to see if and where improvements can be made. However, people should not sign the petition for Resolution R-21-143 until they have had an opportunity to hear both sides of the issue.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Michael Carignan', with a long horizontal flourish extending to the right.

Michael Carignan  
Chief of Police